



Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
Minister for Health
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Canberra ACT 2601

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Dear Minister,

PROPOSED GRIFFITH HEALTH CENTRE

1. The Griffith Narrabundah Community Association (GNCA) is grateful for your past willingness to discuss plans for a Health Centre in the Inner South. Following the government's announcement, and advice from Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) about changes to the proposed storm water retention basin in Throsby Park, both on 1 July 2024, we seek further information on the following aspects of the proposed Griffith Health Centre which we generally support. In this regard we welcome the pop-up consultation sessions in Manuka, Griffith and Narrabundah as advised in your Directorate's email of 11 July.
2. We know, both from personal experience and our community outreach at Griffith shops, that the shops attract customers from throughout Canberra, and interstate. With their mix of healthy food outlets and alternative wellness businesses they are a Canberra treasure. The GNCA therefore seeks to ensure that any further development at Griffith shops is appropriate and enhances rather than threatens existing businesses.
 - A. **Urban open space**
3. GNCA members highly value our urban space. That is why we have devoted time, effort and money to Throsby and Blaxland parks. For example, our late President, Dr David Denham AM, was among those who hand watered the trees during the last drought. We regard our trees, including those in Throsby and Blaxland parks, as David's greatest legacy to his community. Our children and grandchildren play in the parks and students from nearby schools use them too. Our older residents enjoy sitting on the seats in the park.
4. The plans for the proposed Health Centre and the TCCS retention basin potentially concern the GNCA because of the lack of clarity on the impact of these developments on our valued urban open space. In particular we note Tim Norton's (Project Manager, Infrastructure Delivery, TCCS) advice that the childrens' playground currently located in Throsby Park is to be relocated to Blaxland Park as a result of the proposed location of the Health Centre in Throsby Park. We also notice in the same letter that as a result of this change in plan the relocation of the childrens' playground, which was to take place before the commencement of works on the Storm Water Retention Basin has now been indefinitely deferred until after the conclusion of works in Throsby Park.



5. Naturally, this change of plan will cause great concern in the area as the prior establishment of a new childrens' playground before demolition of the existing playground and commencement of building works was an essential part of the Throsby Park retention basin planning. Concern will be heightened as it is not clear why the new play equipment cannot be installed immediately at its new greenfield location rather than after completion of the retention and health centre works. Another issue of concern here is to precisely where TCCS proposes to relocate the play equipment. As you will appreciate Blaxland Park covers a large area (about 2½ hectares) and not all possible sites would be regarded as equally suitable by the public.
6. With two large proposals proposed for Throsby Park with little apparent coordination between the Directorates concerned, some have concerns that this uncoordinated approach does not guarantee that the cost, time of construction, and public disruption will necessarily be minimised. We urge that you and Minister Steele jointly direct your directorates to coordinate and cooperate as much as possible to maximise the public benefits and minimise the disruption caused by these projects.
7. We have expressed our concerns about all this in a letter to Minister Steel and attach a copy.

B. Consultation

8. Despite your very welcome on-site inspection of potential sites there has been very limited public consultation with residents of the Inner South on the most desirable location of an accessible and appropriate venue for their Health Centre. While we are grateful for the pop-up information sessions held between 17 and 29 July these focussed on what services residents wanted the Health Centre to offer, rather than its precise location. At the pop-up consultations the health centre was shown as being located in the middle of the existing car park behind the shops, which is unlikely to be welcomed by either shopkeepers or their customers.
9. You may be aware some long-term local residents currently use the Walk in Health Centre in Old Narrabundah. This dates from when it was open to everyone locally, but when it became Winnunga Nimmitjiah Aboriginal Health Service it was closed to the public except for continuing patients. At present we have no details on the proposed relationship between the two health centres but no doubt your Directorate is working on this, and we would welcome any available information in due course.
10. The GNCA notes that a "survey" is being conducted on the "Yoursay ACT" website. Many dislike these "guided surveys" which appear designed to nudge respondents' answers to a pre-determined outcome. Consequently, many refuse to participate. In these circumstances we urge the government to conduct a genuine consultation about this in order to avoid any unnecessary potentially disruptive impacts of the proposed centre on our community.

C. Footprint of the development

11. The GNCA believes it essential that the footprint of the proposed development **is** limited to what is reasonable and necessary. Consequently, when services identification and design are at a stage to permit this, the GNCA would welcome consultation on the centre's footprint as well as its location prior to any final design decisions being made. This will help ensure that

the amenity enjoyed by local residents and visitors to the shops and Throsby Park is maintained.

12. The GNCA would be grateful for detailed advice on how much of Throsby Park will remain once the Health Centre and storm water retention basin have been built, including how much of this space will be useable open space (as distinct from say 3m wide side setbacks)? Similarly, how many car parking spaces in the parking area behind the shops is it expected will be lost both during construction and permanently once construction has been completed. Again, the GNCA would welcome consultation on this prior to any final decisions being made.
13. At present Throsby Park and Blaxland Parks join along the path from the Griffith shops down to Frome St, allowing seamless access from areas on the Narrabundah side of Throsby Crescent to Blaxland Park, and across Blaxland Park to the children's play equipment in Throsby Park from those on the other side of Blaxland Park. This is regarded as an attractive feature of the area and we would seek an assurance that seamless access between the two parks will be preserved in development of the Health Centre and the stormwater retention basin.

D. Parking

14. The GNCA expects that an independent traffic and parking report will be provided assessing the expected impact of the proposed Griffith Health Centre and TCCS retention basin on traffic flows around and parking availability at Griffith shops. Such a report should include analysis of peak usage, including events at various venues at the shops. We would expect that shopkeepers, business owners, and their customers/clients will be consulted. We would be grateful if you could indicate when we might expect the release of such a document.

E. Pedestrian Access

15. The GNCA supports safe, accessible, and easy to use paths that are available to people of all abilities. It also supports the use of public transport where possible.
16. Inner South residents and workers are among those likely to use the Griffith Health Centre. They can walk, drive, use taxis, uber, or scooters, or catch the R6 bus which services Griffith shops. If they are unwell or have limited mobility this may be a challenge. For example, there is no pedestrian crossing on Canberra Avenue except at Manuka shops, no crossing across Sturt Avenue for Narrabundah residents that live to the east of that road, and no crossing across Stuart St at the shops. The GNCA suggests that consideration be given to the installation of pedestrian crossings across: (i) Canberra Avenue near St Edmunds College; (ii) Sturt Avenue near McMillan Crescent; and (iii) Stuart St near the shops.
17. In addition, depending on the details of the Health Centre's location, it may be desirable to install a pedestrian crossing across Throsby Lane and through the carpark.
18. The GNCA would be grateful for a copy of any analysis of access to the proposed Griffith Health Centre.

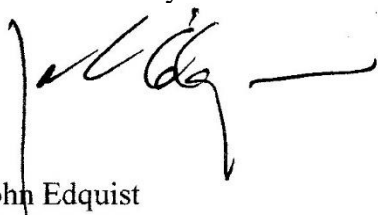
F **Security**

19. For some time, the GNCA has asked for the installation of security cameras at Griffith shops because of break ins. This request has not borne fruit to date. We are happy to provide further details if requested. Given that the presence of pharmaceuticals and expensive equipment at any Health Centre, we think it desirable for TCCS to reconsider its attitude on this question, if only to protect the Government's investment.
20. Our members also would also appreciate information about the possible impact of the proposed Griffith Health Centre on the local residential area, including the Baptist Care aged care facility, social housing (Throsby Court, Bishopsbourne Court) and local schools.
21. In light of the above the GNCA would be grateful for any available report on the impact of such Health Centres in other areas of Canberra and any plans for security at the proposed centre.

Conclusion

22. The GNCA would be grateful for advice on all the above issues so we can better inform our members, supporters, and the broader community. We will also liaise with the Griffith shop and business owners on these issues and keep our members and other interested parties informed of all developments.

Yours Faithfully



John Edquist

Committee Member
GNCA
2 August 2024

NB: As is our usual practice this letter will be placed on our website, together with any response received from the Government.

Copy of letter to Minister Steel