



Mr Chris Steel MLA
Minister for Transport, City Services and Active Travel
GPO Box 1020
Canberra, ACT 2601

steel@act.gov.au

cc Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
Minister for Health

Dear Minister

THROSBY PARK RETENTION BASIN

1 We refer to the letter from Tim Norton , Project Manager, Infrastructure Delivery, TCCS dated 1 July, advising of changes to your Directorate's (Transport Canberra City Services (TCCS)) proposals for the proposed stormwater retention basin in Throsby Park in response to the announcement of a Health Centre for the Inner South to be located in Throsby Park, Griffith.

2 The letter advises that as a result of the Health Centre proposed for Throsby Park and announced on 1 July, the childrens' playground is to be removed at commencement of construction of the Throsby Park Retention Basin, but will not be relocated before work on the retention basin commences as had been initially proposed, because "this is no longer practical". Instead, we are advised that the playground will be relocated at some unspecified time to an as yet unidentified location somewhere within Blaxland Park (referred to very legalistically and confusingly as Block 51 Section 78: that area has been officially known as Blaxland Park since 2013).

3 Quite frankly this is not good enough. Your Directorate will be aware from its drop-in consultation session about the proposed retention basin held at Throsby Park on Saturday 26 November 2022, which is mentioned in Mr Norton's letter, many members of the public were concerned that the childrens' playground be preserved. Which is presumably why the original plan proposed that the childrens' playground be moved to a new location prior to any commencement of works on the retention basin. The GNCA believes that this arrangement is the only arrangement local residents would find acceptable. To our knowledge there is little or no demand for the construction of a retention basin in Throsby Park, which seems to be driven by engineers within your Directorate rather than in response to public concerns.

4 It is not clear why construction of a replacement childrens' playground prior to commencement of works on the retention basin project proper "is no longer practical". It is not as if the proposal to construct a Health Centre behind the Griffith shops should have come



as a surprise to your Directorate. TCCS distributed a flyer about the proposed retention basin on or about 21 November 2022, and even at this stage the document spoke about a new childrens' playground and one for one replacement of any trees removed. On 27 May 2023 Ms Stephen-Smith, the Minister for Health, was canvassing the possibility of a new Health Centre in Griffith at a 'meet the public' session at Griffith Shops, and on 11 September wrote to the Inner South Canberra Community Council (ISCCC) indicating the Government's intention to construct a Health Centre behind Griffith shops. So TCCS should have been aware of the Health Centre proposal from September 2023 at the latest, and it is hard to imagine circumstances in which the Directorate would have known this several months before it became public. We do not think it unreasonable for the public to expect coordination arrangements between the various directorates are in place to ensure everyone is rowing in the same direction.

5 Alternative arrangements or fall-back plans could have, and should have been prepared within TCCS from September 2023. Consultations with the public could have been reopened, to determine where the childrens' playground should be built if an alternative location within Throsby Park were not available. Or, at the least, TCCS could have identified the most suitable alternative sites, with a view to opening public consultation about this issue the moment that the Health Directorate publicly committed itself to the Throsby Park site. If this had been done, rather than receiving the letter we did, we should have received an invitation to further consultations. We see no reason why the residents, and especially the children of the area, should be penalised by loss of the childrens' playground simply because TCCS cannot coordinate adequately with other Directorates. This would seem to be punishing the public for failures within public administration, which could be interpreted as reflecting a low level of concern for public welfare.

6 It is not clear to the GNCA why the original plans to relocate the childrens' playground before commencement of works on the retention basin were abandoned. If the relocation of the playground leads to a delay in commencement of earth works, then so be it. We urge you to instruct your Directorate to initiate further public consultations as a matter of urgency so that any delay is kept to a minimum.

(ii) The GNCA does not have a firm view on the best location within Blaxland Park for a relocated childrens' playground, but notes that a couple of obvious sites are: (1) The area between Gryphons and the Griffith Community Centre. However, we note that this area is currently used by Gryphons as an outdoor beer garden, and if this area has been formally leased to Gryphons it may not be available; or (2) Behind (to the northeast) of the Griffith Community Centre close to the path between Frome St and the Griffith shops.

7 News that two separate directorates propose to undertake extensive works on adjacent sites in Throsby Park, apparently without any inter-directorate coordination, could lead the outside observer to wonder if this approach will lead to the lowest cost, shortest construction timeframes, and least disruption to the public. We would suggest that construction of the retention basin, and of the new health centre, be designed, built and managed as one unified project.

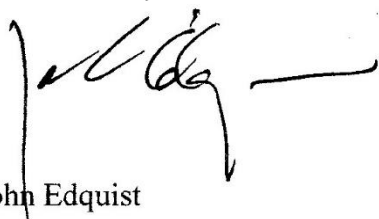
8 Again, to the lay observer it might appear that the health centre site might be more easily accessed if it were to be built before the retention basin were constructed. If the retention basin were built first the only access to the health centre site would be through the Griffith shops car park, and some of this might also have to be utilised as a works depot, creating unnecessary disruption for those who use the shops and unreasonably depressing trade. We would welcome advice that you are working together with Minister Stephen-Smith on this matter.

10 As a final point in relation to access to the proposed Griffith Health Centre, it seems likely that many of the Centre's clients will be pedestrians. As at least some of these will have health issues, it would be worthwhile giving some thought to improving and facilitating access. In this regard the GNCA recommends 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.

11 In summary we ask that you instruct your directorate that:

- 11.1 It continue with the original plan that the childrens' playground be relocated to an alternative site before the existing playground is removed prior to the commencement of any construction on the proposed retention basin;
- 11.2 Public Consultation on the site of the relocated childrens' playground commence as soon as possible;
- 11.3 Consultations be immediately commenced with the Health Directorate to ensure that the works for the stormwater retention basin, and the health centre, are completed in the least time, with the least disruption, and at the lowest cost that is possible; and
- 11.4 Investigations to identify the best locations for pedestrian crossings over Canberra Avenue, Sturt Avenue, and Stuart St to facilitate pedestrian access to the proposed Griffith Health Centre commence as soon as possible.

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.