



Australian Government
National Capital Authority

Consultation Report

Works Approval No. WA-001793

Block 23 Section 19 City

Canberra Lyric Theatre

November 2025

Contents

Introduction	3
Public Consultation requirements	3
1.1 National Capital Plan (NCP)	3
1.2 Commitment to Community Engagement	4
Summary of Public Consultation	4
2.1 The public consultation process	4
2.2 Submissions Received, Comments and Response	4
2.3 Key Issues Raised	4
Conclusion	7
Attachment A – The Canberra Times Public Notice and Site Notice	9
<u>Attachment B – List of Submitters</u>	9

Introduction

Under the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988*, the National Capital Authority (NCA) prepares and administers the National Capital Plan (NCP) to ensure Canberra and the Territory are planned and developed in accordance with their national significance.

The Plan sets out the broad planning framework for the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). Areas designated as having special characteristics of the National Capital are subject to detailed planning policies and guidelines.

Any buildings or structures, demolition, landscaping or excavation works in Designated Areas require the approval of the NCA. The NCA considers such proposals in the context of the relevant provisions of the Plan.

On 3 September 2025 an application for works approval was received by the NCA from Purdon Planning on behalf of the ACT Government. The application is for the construction of a Lyric Theatre located to Block 23 Section 19 City.

This Consultation Report outlines the NCA's review of the key issues raised during the consultation period and consideration of the Works Approval application.

Under the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988*, the NCA prepares and administers the National Capital Plan (the Plan) to ensure Canberra, and the Territory are planned and developed in accordance with their national significance.

The Plan sets out the broad planning framework for the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). Areas designated as having special characteristics of the National Capital are subject to detailed planning policies and guidelines.

Any buildings or structures, demolition, landscaping, or excavation works in Designated Areas require the approval of the NCA. The NCA considers such proposals in the context of the relevant provisions of the Plan.

Public Consultation requirements

1.1 National Capital Plan (NCP)

Under the NCP, requirements for public consultation apply to:

- Major developments proposed for Section 9 Barton;
- A landmark building to RL617 adjacent to Commonwealth Avenue (within the Constitution Avenue and Anzac Parade Precinct);
- Detailed plans for development at Academy Close, Campbell;
- High-impact telecommunications facilities;
- All residential proposals within the Deakin/Forrest Residential Area Precinct; and
- All residential and commercial development proposed for Section 5 Campbell.

This application was not required to be publicly notified by the National Capital Plan.

Public consultation was undertaken on the application as community interest has been demonstrated regarding proposals within the City Hill precinct.

1.2 Commitment to Community Engagement

The NCA's *Commitment to Community Engagement* guides the way in which the agency engages with the community to keep people informed about decisions that have already been made and to offer opportunities for input to decision-making. The NCA considers how best to approach public participation processes having regard to the training curriculum delivered by the International Association for Public Participation.

The *Commitment to Community Engagement* sets out the following engagement principles:

Intentional

- Be clear about what we are trying to achieve.
- Be clear about the scope for people to influence outcomes and where other processes have made recommendations and decisions.
- Be clear about limitations and constraints for community comment and involvement.

Inclusive

- Use a variety of methods allowing as many Australians as possible to participate if they wish.
- Proactively seek appropriate participants where there are missing voices.

Timely

- Allow sufficient time for the community to participate in consultation processes.
- Begin engagement at the earliest appropriate stage in the life of a project.

Feedback

- Let people know how their input and feedback was used.
- Meet or exceed all statutory engagement requirements.

The NCA assesses whether a proposal is consistent with the National Capital Plan and if it requires public consultation. An assessment is made in relation to impacts on:

- public space and community amenity;
- environment, heritage, or landscape values;
- amenity of the locality in terms of materials, finishes, scale, massing, design, and quality; and
- consistency with an existing Heritage Management Plan.

When an application for works approval is lodged and consultation is required, consultation with the community and stakeholders may be undertaken by the applicant, the NCA, or both. Where consultation is undertaken by the applicant, the NCA may choose to stipulate specific requirements that the applicant is required to implement.

Summary of Public Consultation

2.1 The Public Consultation Process

Public consultation was undertaken on the application by the NCA between Saturday 27 September 2025 to 5:00pm on Monday 20 October 2025. Consultation took the form of:

- On Saturday 27 September 2025, the NCA published a public notice in The Canberra Times detailing the proposed works and inviting submissions to be made to the NCA in relation to the proposal.
- Between 27 September and 20 October 2025, the NCA published the proposal and plans on the NCA's website.
- Between 27 September and 20 October 2025, A1 size signs were installed to the perimeter of the site at key junctions.

2.2 Submissions Received, Comments and Response

The NCA received a total of 12 submissions on the proposal. Submissions were generally supportive of the proposal however raised a range of issues to elements of the proposal.

Key issues raised in the submissions included:

- Parking Availability and Accessibility
- Public Transport Limitations
- Traffic and Loading Dock Design
- Pedestrian and Active Travel Infrastructure
- Acoustic and Technical Design
- Landscaping and Tree Selection
- Heritage and Urban Design
- Venue Design and Patron Experience

Emails of acknowledgment were sent to submitters advising them that their submission would be taken into consideration before a decision is made on the application. Key themes raised and NCA's response is outlined in Part 2.3 below.

2.3 Key Issues Raised

Issues raised in the submissions have been summarised below, with NCA consideration and comment.

Key Issue Raised	NCA Response
<u>Strong Support for the Theatre</u> • Broad enthusiasm for the project and its potential to elevate Canberra's cultural and performing arts scene. • Recognition that the new venue could attract national companies and reduce the need for interstate travel to access high-quality productions.	Noted.
<u>Parking Availability and Accessibility</u> • Most frequently raised concern. • Civic parking described as already at capacity, especially during daytime hours. • Lack of dedicated or accessible parking seen as a major barrier for older patrons, people with disabilities, and families. • Concerns about safety when walking to/from distant car parks, especially at night or in winter. • Repeated calls for: ○ Dedicated accessible parking. ○ On-site or underground parking. ○ Realistic parking demand modelling based on actual patron behaviour (e.g. 2 people per car, not 3).	The proponent has advised that the theatre will be supported by over 5,000 existing public parking spaces in Civic, including accessible bays at Constitution Place, City Hill and the Canberra Centre. Drop-off zones have been provided at Knowles Place and London Circuit. Refer to Attachment C – City Parking Map for further detail. Underground parking was assessed by the proponent, however deemed cost-prohibitive due to structural constraints. The proposed approach aligns with ACT Government Parking Strategy and avoids introducing dominant parking structures, preserving the public domain.
<u>Public Transport Limitations</u>	

• Public transport considered unreliable and unsafe at night. • Not a viable alternative for many, particularly those in outer suburbs or with mobility challenges. • Long walking distances from bus stops and lack of footpaths were noted as barriers.	The site is approximately 300m from the Alinga Street bus interchange and light rail stop. The proposal supports sustainable transport objectives under the NCP by encouraging public transport and active travel. The proponent has advised there are 22 Park and Ride locations across the ACT where you can park for free and catch a bus or light rail (see here).
<u>Traffic and Loading Dock Design</u> • Requests for improved traffic modelling and vehicle access analysis. • Concerns about increased pressure on Knowles Place and Theatre Lane. • Potential conflicts with pedestrian movement and lack of clarity around logistics access.	The project team has collaborated with adjoining property owners and the ACT Governments City Environment Directorate (CED) to review traffic considerations around the Lyric Theatre. A detailed technical review will be undertaken with CED at the next stage of the project, following Works Approval. Loading Dock traffic volumes are low, with expected truck movements on a typical day being trucks, with bump in bump out vehicle movements during (infrequent) large shows of 8-10 Semi-Trailers. The loading operations are actively managed by the Theatre at present and this shall be continued with the new Lyric Theatre. Trucks are scheduled allotted loading periods, with these being outside of traffic peaks. Trucks are also held outside of the precinct to avoid unnecessary circling or adding to city traffic. This approach will be formalised in a Loading Dock Management Plan, covering the entire Theatre Lane. These measures ensure compliance with NCP objectives for traffic safety and pedestrian amenity. The proponent is engaging with adjoining property owners and proposing minor adjustments at the Theatre Lane / Knowles (Constitution) Place intersection to minimise potential vehicular conflicts.
<u>Pedestrian and Active Travel Infrastructure</u> • Need for safe, continuous footpaths and compliant pram ramps. • Importance of retaining existing pedestrian infrastructure (e.g. Vernon Circle bridge).	Existing footpaths and pram ramps will be retained, with additional safety reviews during technical assessments post works approval. No major changes to pedestrian infrastructure are proposed; though stairs from Vernon Circle to

• Desire for clear pedestrian access plans that support safe movement to and from the theatre.	Theatre Lane will be removed for safety, under a separate approval. Safe access is maintained via Knowles Place and Northbourne Avenue entrances. The proposal aligns with NCP accessibility objectives and improves pedestrian connectivity between Civic Square, Knowles Place, and Vernon Circle.
<u>Acoustic and Technical Design</u> • Emphasis on suitability for non-amplified music and opera. • Recommendations to consult with performing arts companies on backstage and technical requirements (e.g. loading docks, rigging, dressing rooms).	Acoustic design prioritises suitability for both amplified and non-amplified performances, with specialist input throughout. Ongoing engagement with performing arts companies ensures backstage and technical requirements are met.
<u>Landscaping and Tree Selection</u> • Concerns about proposed tree species not being suitable for Canberra's climate. • Recommendations for alternative species and materials (e.g. avoiding timber seating due to maintenance and vandalism risks).	The proposed landscaping adopts native and drought-tolerant species suited to Canberra's climate, consistent with WSUD principles. Timber seating elements will be reviewed to address maintenance and vandalism concerns. Landscape treatments use high-quality materials and reinforce the precinct's formal geometry, aligning with NCP landscape objectives.
<u>Heritage and Urban Design</u> • Requests for more detail on visual impact, signage, colour palette, and potential effects on nearby heritage-listed buildings. • Concern about the change in architectural design from the original Henning Larsen concept to a more conventional Cox design, with calls for transparency and further consultation.	The design responds to the Civic Square Precinct's heritage significance by maintaining setbacks, using sympathetic materials, and screening service areas. Consultation between the proponent and ACT Heritage and the National Trust is ongoing. Signage will be subject to a separate Works Approval. The Cox design represents an evolution of the approved concept, building upon the strategic framework established by Henning Larsen and Arup while maintaining compliance with the National Capital Plan and relevant design codes. The proposal complies with the approved Conservation Management Plan and ACT Heritage Council advice.
<u>Venue Design and Patron Experience</u> • Suggestions for seating layout improvements and inclusive design.	The NCA does not assess internal building works but notes the proponent has confirmed that the seating layout incorporates inclusive design principles. Provision for specific mobility aids,

• Specific request for lift chairs to accommodate patrons with rare mobility conditions. • Desire for a venue name that reflects Canberra's identity rather than duplicating existing names (e.g. "Lyric Theatre" in Sydney)	such as lift chairs, will be addressed during the detailed design phase. The proponent has advised that venue naming remains undecided but will reflect Canberra's identity.
---	--

Conclusion

The NCA's consultation process was carried out in accordance with the Plan and the NCA's 'Commitment to Community Engagement'. The NCA has considered issues raised in the submissions as part of the assessment process.

The NCA has assessed the proposal as being not inconsistent with the provisions of the NCP and that the concerns of the community are considered to have been (or will be) addressed.

The proposal is not inconsistent with the provisions of the NCP and is supported by the NCA.

On 6 November 2025, the NCA approved the proposal.

Attachment A

The Canberra Times Public Notice and Site Notice



Australian Government
National Capital Authority

WORKS APPROVAL

Open for Public Consultation

Construction of a theatre, loading dock, and public realm works on Block 23 Section 19 City



The National Capital Authority (NCA) has received a works approval application for proposed works including a new 2,000-seat Lyric Theatre, a loading dock that will service both the new theatre and the existing Playhouse, and associated public realm works.

The plans and supporting documentation for the application can be viewed on the NCA's website at <https://www.nca.gov.au/planning/works-approval/wa-under-consultation>.

Submissions are to be made by email to: WAconsultation@nca.gov.au.

The NCA welcomes feedback on this application by **5:00pm, Monday 20 October 2025**.

For further information, contact the NCA on (02) 6271 2888.

 [nca.gov](https://www.nca.gov.au)  [nca_gov_au](https://www.nca.gov.au)  [@nca_media](https://www.nca.gov.au)

www.nca.gov.au

4065KM_5686



Australian Government
National Capital Authority

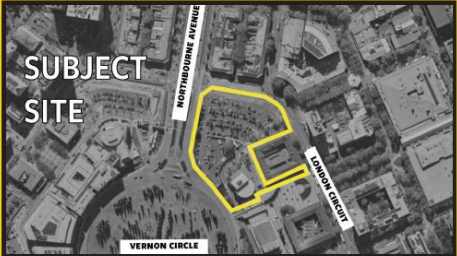
HAVE YOUR SAY

BLOCK 23 SECTION 19 CITY

CANBERRA LYRIC THEATRE PROJECT

The National Capital Authority (NCA) has received a works approval application for the construction of a new Lyric Theatre as part of the Canberra Theatre Centre precinct on Block 23, Section 19, Canberra City.

The proposed works include a new 2,000-seat Lyric Theatre, a loading dock that will service both the new theatre and the existing Playhouse, and associated public realm works.



The plans and supporting documentation can be viewed on the NCA's website at <https://www.nca.gov.au/planning/works-approval/wa-under-consultation>.

The NCA welcomes feedback on this application via email to: WAconsultation@nca.gov.au by **5:00pm Monday 27 October 2025**.

Please contact the NCA for further information on (02) 6271 2888

www.nca.gov.au

Attachment B

List of submitters

Organisations and Agencies

1. Pinchgut Opera – Performing arts company
2. Capital Property Group (CPG) – Property developer and lessee of adjacent sites - SCT Consulting
– Traffic and transport consultant (engaged by CPG)
3. National Trust (ACT) – Heritage organisation

9 x Private Citizens

City Parking Map

