

Protecting, promoting and enhancing the economic, cultural, social and environmental well-being of the residents of North Canberra

The North Canberra Community Council receives funding and support from the ACT Government



Members for the ACT

Alicia Payne MP
Andrew Leigh MP
David Smith MP

Senators for the ACT

Katy Gallagher
David Pollock

Dear Members and Senators

Firstly, congratulations on being elected to the Australian Parliament in the recent elections. We trust that there will be continuing and enhanced positive relations between the new Federal Government and the ACT House of Assembly that will benefit all ACT residents and other Australians.

In this context I am writing to you pursuant to a resolution of the North Canberra Community Council (NCCC) made at the general meeting held July 2022 concerning removal of Monash Drive from the National Capital Plan (NCP).

As you may be aware, Monash Drive was first proposed to run along the base of Mt Majura/Mt Ainslie by Walter Burley Griffin in 1925, and then gazetted by the Commonwealth in 1956. As shown in Attachment A, since the 1990s there has been on-going correspondence between the ACT Assembly and the Commonwealth about removing the road from the NCP, but to no avail.

Please note that the information in Attachment A was compiled in early 2018 by the Hackett Community Association from publicly available records; there may be other more recent information. For example, in late 2018 the ACT Government wrote to the National Capital Authority (NCA) to request removal of Monash Drive from the Plan. The NCA Board considered this request at its meeting on 17 December [2018](#). The records of this meeting show that the Board did not support its removal at this time and determined that “*the basis for any change was not strong at this time, including in the context of the current and future changes to transport arrangements which are relevant to the request (especially the operation of Light Rail Stage 1 and Northbourne Avenue).*”

With the opening of the Majura Parkway in 2016 and then light rail in April 2019, the NCCC, believes the need for Monash Drive is no longer warranted. Furthermore, the presence of the Monash Drive alignment breaks up Mt Majura/Mt Ainslie into a confusing patchwork of blocks on maps as shown by examples in Attachment B. The gazetted Mount Majura and Mount Ainslie Nature Reserves are east of Monash Drive. The area between the drive and the suburbs of Ainslie and Hackett are not gazetted as nature reserves but are managed under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*. Visitors to these reserves would not be aware of this fragmentation and assume that all land east of Ainslie and Hackett form the nature reserves, despite some of the maps attempting to show the administrative arrangements.

The proposal to have the road removed since the 1990s has been driven by north Canberra community groups with strong interests in Mt Majura/Mt Ainslie e.g Friends of Mount Majura. More recently there has been the issue of damage to Aboriginal sites of significance associated with the development of the former CSIRO site on Limestone Avenue. If the Monash Drive was to go ahead it is highly likely that other Aboriginal sites would be impacted along the whole route. Furthermore, noise from vehicles using Monash Drive would impact on the Remembrance Nature Park, on Treloar Crescent behind the Australian War Memorial.

The NCCC respectfully asks that the Australian Government gives high priority to the removal of Monash Drive from the National Capital Plan. Members of the Council would be happy to meet you or your representatives to further discuss this matter.



Jochen Zeil, Chairperson NCCC

Cc Members of the ACT Legislative Assembly

Andrew Barr, Chief Minister

Members for Kurrajong - Shane Rattenbury, Rachel Stephen-Smith,
Rebecca Vassarotti, Elizabeth Lee

Attachment A - Background information about Monash Drive

Attachment B – Example of maps of Mt Majura/ Mt Ainslie showing Monash Drive route

Attachment A

From pages 111-113 of the Hackett Community Association [book](#)

“Hackett - 50 years plus Story of a North Canberra suburb”

Monash Drive

The proposal to build a road along the base of Mount Majura-Mount Ainslie had its origins with Walter Burley Griffin, as noted in an ACT Archives ‘*Find of the Month*’, [March 2015](#)

‘The Road That Never Was

Walter Burley Griffin's 1925 'Statutory Plan for Canberra' outlined a road running along the base of Mount Majura and Mount Ainslie, linking Canberra's northern suburbs with the City. In May 1956, the Commonwealth Government gazetted this road as 'Monash Drive'.

By the 1960s, while still unconstructed, maps showed Monash Drive extending from the end of Stirling Avenue in Hackett, to the east of Ainslie and Campbell, terminating at Morshead Drive near Russell. Despite being planned for so long, the proposed road finally became a contentious issue with residents during the mid 1970s. Its construction, flagged to begin in the early 1980s, would remove the easy access people enjoyed to Mount Majura and Mount Ainslie. There was also a wider concern about the visual impact a proposed housing development would have to the 680m line along the base of Mount Ainslie.

In December 1976, the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) released its proposal for this area as part of an overall urban infill plan taking in the suburbs of Ainslie, Hackett, O'Connor, Yarralumla, Campbell and Deakin and comprising over 2000 houses. In the National Capital Plan, the NCDC had zoned the vacant land between Monash Drive and the suburbs of Hackett, Ainslie and Campbell for over 1000 of these homes. This resulted in the formation of a residents' action group called The Mount Ainslie-Majura Protection Association who protested the development on the grounds of environmental and heritage concerns as well as the contradictions between the infill proposals and the Griffin Plan.’

The proposal to remove the road from the Territory Plan has been a drawn out process over several decades. The NCDC was abolished in 1989 and its functions transferred to the National Capital Authority (NCA), which is a Commonwealth statutory authority.

The road continued to be shown on maps, and in the mid 1990s it was considered from time to time by the ACT Legislative Assembly as shown by this exchange in late 1995:

‘MR WOOD: My question is directed to Mr De Domenico in his capacity as Minister for Urban Services. In the letters to the editor in today's Canberra Times you state:

... there is no current proposal for Monash Drive being considered by the ACT Government nor, based on current plans, is there a likelihood of such a proposal in the next 10 to 15 years.

Why are you still holding over the heads of North Canberra residents a threat to build this road, when the former Government took action to see that this destructive road would never be built?

MR DE DOMENICO: I thank Mr Wood for his question. I do not think that I can make it any plainer than to say once again what the letter said. There are currently no proposals to build Monash Drive, and there appear not to be any proposals for the next 10 to 15 years. If I am still the Minister after 15 years and I change my mind, I will let you know.’

Source Legislative Assembly for the ACT: 1995 Week 11 Hansard (12 December)

In 19 October 2009, Zed Seselja asked the Minister for Planning, Andrew Barr, about Monash Drive. Mr Barr advised:

‘On 19 March 2009, the ACT Chief Minister wrote to the Commonwealth Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon Bob Debus MP, seeking the NCA's agreement to remove Monash Drive from the National Capital Plan. The NCA advised that it agrees with the removal of Monash Drive - ‘given the other transport planning and development that the Territory has undertaken’.

(2) The NCA will add the removal of Monash Drive to its work program for 2009-10 and has undertaken to discuss details around the removal with ACTPLA.

(3) The Government is committed to removing Monash Drive from the National Capital Plan.'

Source - Legislative Assembly for the ACT: 2009 Week 13 Hansard (12 November) QoN No 361 Page. 5037

In 2009, the ACT Government requested that the NCA remove Monash Drive from the National Capital Plan. However, the removal was not a simple administrative decision.

The proposal would have to be considered by the NCA Board. If the board agreed to propose an amendment, the NCA would issue a draft amendment to the Plan for public consultation. The consultation period would run for 30 business days and include a consultation forum.

Following consultation, the NCA would then consider public comments and alter the draft amendment in response to comments made. A consultation report is then issued to the public along with the modified draft Amendment. After that, a recommendation is made to the Commonwealth Minister for Home Affairs that the Plan be amended.

In October 2009, Draft Amendment 72 was brought to the NCA Board and was supported on the provision that the ACT *'provide the NCA with the relevant traffic modelling and environmental assessments to support the amendment.'* This information has never been provided by the ACT Government.

In 2014 the NCA released a report about the National Capital Open Space System. At a February 2014 hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories, the status of Monash Drive came up. The following exchange between ACT Labor Senator Kate Lundy and Andrew Smith, Chief Planner, NCA, highlights the complexity of the process:

'Senator LUNDY: We discussed it at length at a previous inquiry, so that is not quite right.

Mr Smith: So this report is proposing a seven-year review with community engagement at each of those seven-year terms.

Senator LUNDY: Just one more question: does this finally resolve the issue of Monash Drive and remove Monash Drive from the plan?

Mr Smith: We have asked for some information on that removal proposed by the ACT government, and that information has not been forthcoming. So we are still waiting on that.

Senator LUNDY: Okay, but are the recommendations in this report likely to be able to address the continued presence of Monash Drive on the plan?

Mr Smith: No, because from the land-use point of view Monash Drive is a road—kind of independent—and roads are allowed in the NCOSS.

Senator LUNDY: So that is a separate process?

Mr Smith: That is a separate process.'

Source - Official Committee Hansard, Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories National Capital Authority. Thursday, [13 February 2014](#).

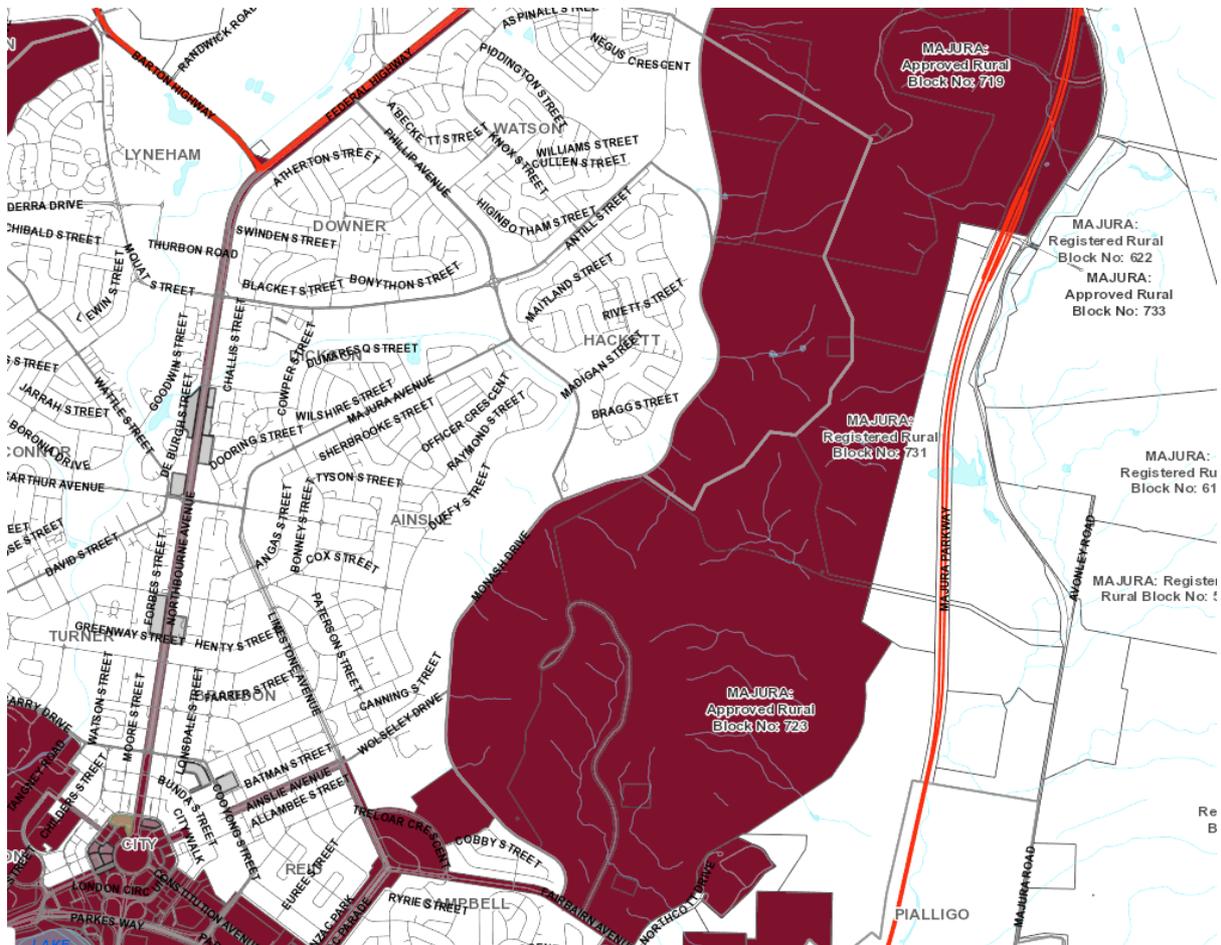
As at mid 2018, Monash Drive still remains on the National Capital Plan, but the ACT Government indicated that by the end of 2018, it will ask the National Capital Authority to formally remove it from the Plan.

Attachment B

National Capital Plan

Red area aligns with the areas designated as the reserves. Monash Drive is marked and named.

<https://app.actmapi.act.gov.au/actmapi/index.html?viewer=nca>



ACT Mapi Basic map

<https://app.actmapi.act.gov.au/actmapi2/index.html?viewer=basic>

Comments – these provide maps for the individual blocks that make up the two reserves.

The red line also marks Monash Drive but behind Hackett the line is yellow and not marked as Monash Drive. Readers could assume that the drive continues along the red line.

