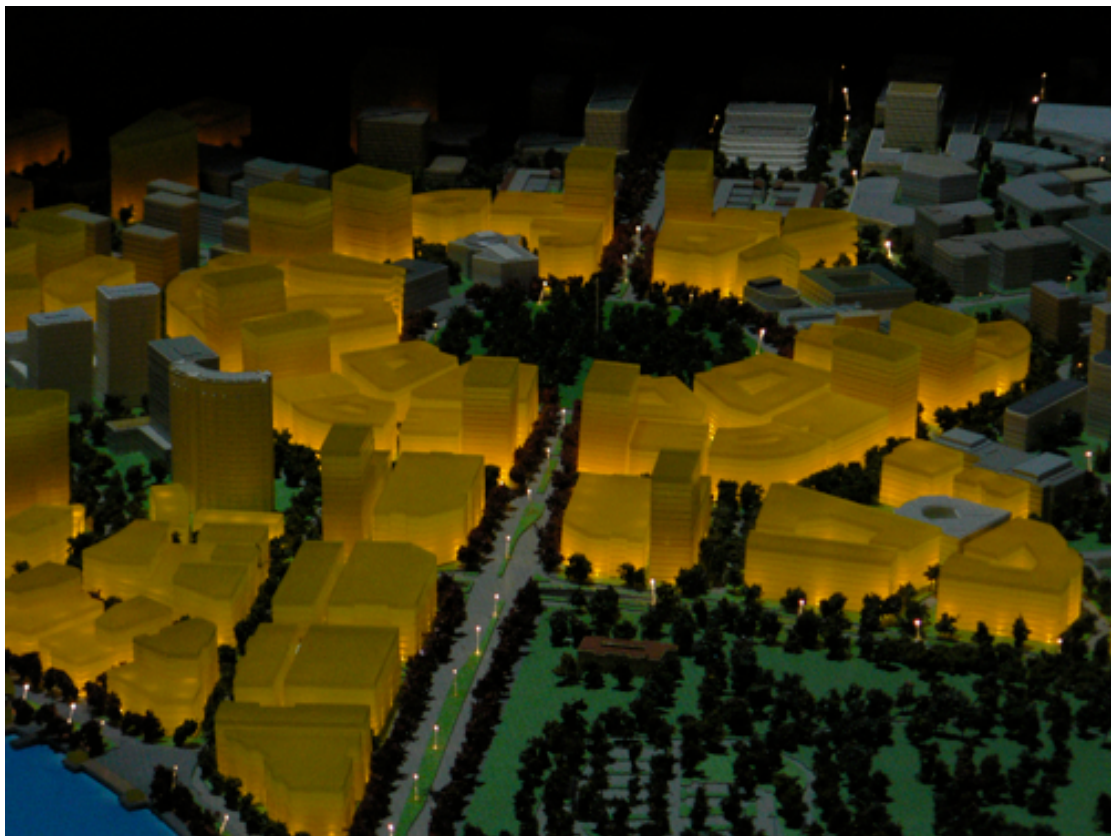


The Canberra Legacy: Griffin, Government and the Future of Strategic Planning in the National Capital

Stuart Grigg 3024296



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Declaration

I certify that this thesis is my own work and that it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person where due reference is not made in the text.

Stuart Grigg

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Introduction

Australia's colonial past seems to have resulted in a bizarrely divisive urban legacy. Our most well developed urban environments are the state capitals. All of which are more or less located at considerable distances from each other. As a result, this isolation bred competition between the different colonies and their colonial capitals, which were all products of the mercantile colonialism of the 19th Century. The fact that standardisation of railway gauges between New South Wales and Victoria was not achieved until well into last century demonstrates this situation. Even to this day, proper management of the Murray Darling river system is endlessly complicated by the fact that its course runs across four different states.

However, the subject of this thesis - Canberra, was not borne out of colonial rivalry or the need to house a fledgling population in any ramshackle arrangement possible. More so than any other Australian city, Canberra is an exception to the rule - a tall poppy in the field of Australian urban planning.

The ideas that underpin Canberra's creation and continued evolution are drawn from a wider base than any other Australian city, perhaps even any other city in the world. It is truly a product of the 20th Century, free from any vestiges of our colonial past that have contributed to the piecemeal patchworks that characterise many of Australia's other established cities.

The emergence of a national capital was an inevitable step in the evolution of European settlement in Australia. As such, the idea of Canberra was formed in the crucible of Federation at the turn of the 19th Century. Its creation was spurred by the pragmatic needs of housing a Federal government and monuments of national significance, as well as the symbolic need to galvanise the states into unified federation.

However, what really differentiates Canberra from its more established interstate counterparts is the deliberate implementation of visionary planning from its very beginning – a legacy that is still very much relevant nearly one hundred years later.

Walter Burley Griffin's plan constituted an elegant and well thought-out design for a city that was to be both grand in its execution and well integrated into its natural surroundings. The nature and details of this initial plan, the ideas that influenced its creation and the circumstances surrounding its conception is the subject of the first chapter of this thesis.

Equally interesting is the story of how such a promising start materialised in a city of arguably disappointing quality. The perceived shortcomings of Canberra as a lived urban environment remain to this day and this thesis asserts that they are largely the result of changes in planning ideologies that were implemented during the years following its inception through to the post-war era and beyond. These changes in planning ideology have substantially altered the city from a compact city of grand boulevards to a decentralised sprawl of suburbs, sub-centres and arterial roads. The nature and affects of these changes will be further explored in the second chapter of this thesis.

As it approaches its first century, Canberra, like most other Australian cities, is at a crossroads in terms of planning and future development. Although it has been neglected for most of the city's development, the unique and well-considered vision of its architect still remains within the structure of the city, waiting to be fully realised. Modern-day Canberra is still well positioned to reach out and reclaim this lost urban legacy. By looking to the planning ideas that informed its inception and adapting them to the requirements of today, Canberra can finally grow to meet its potential as both a vibrant and liveable city. A discussion of such future directions for the city will comprise the third chapter of this thesis.

Additionally, from the perspective of an urban planner, Canberra presents a unique and precious example of a century of planning ideas. The city stands as a living synthesis of planning ideologies during the prime years of the profession's development and crystallisation into a discipline of considerable complexity and potential significance. As such an analysis of the value of Canberra to the practising planner and planning historian alike will also be addressed within this document.

The research for this thesis can be described as a discourse analysis with material gathered from a variety of domestic and international sources. This information has been combined with a degree of tacit knowledge drawn from many years of living in and experiencing Canberra as an urban environment. The aim of this thesis is to create as intimate a portrait of the past, present and future direction of planning policy within Canberra as the constraints of this thesis will allow.

It is my assertion that Canberra is a city that is both a unique sounding board for urban planning and a unique place to live. As such, it is my intention in this document to give an appraisal of Canberra as both a student of planning theory and as a resident, and to outline the forces and ideas that have crafted a city that, for better or worse, remains true to its creator's intention that it should be unlike any other in the world.

Part 1 – The Griffin Legacy



Figure 1.1: Griffin's 1912 Competition Plan

Federation and the 1901 Melbourne Congress

1901 was a fortuitous year for Australia and Australian planning alike. After a decade of negotiations and conferences the Federation of the six Australian colonies commenced on the first day of the year in Sydney's Centennial Park with the swearing in of the first Governor General. With the inception of a new nation came the need for a national capital.

Interested parties within Australia's major cities had anticipated the coming Federation and the rivalry between Melbourne and Sydney had grown in intensity towards the end of the 19th Century. This rivalry for the role of national capital was only resolved by the inclusion within the constitution of a clause declaring that a new capital would be built within New South Wales but no less than 100 miles from Sydney and that Federal Government would remain in Melbourne until the new city was ready (Reid 2002 p.13). This measure allowed the formation of a capital city to proceed in a nation that was in all but name, still a collection of very separate and politically competitive colonies.

A regional battle for the site of the new city within this indeterminate area commenced and it was not until 1908 that, after extensive surveying by Charles Scrivener, the government's Surveyor General, that the Yass-Canberra area was chosen. A portion of land between the towns of Yass and Queanbeyan along the Molonglo River, deemed by the New South Wales government as relatively unproductive, was donated to the Federal Government. This was fortunate as the Canberra valley afforded a degree of topographical majesty unmatched by other potential sites such as Dalgety or Bombala and was free from periodic flooding unlike the near by Lake George site.

As such the Federal Capital Territory (as it was initially known), a land parcel of some 2,000 square kilometres, came into being. Significantly, the then Minister for Home Affairs, King O'Malley, ensured that all land within the Territory would be administered as lease hold entitlements, a decision that would serve the planning of Canberra well by reducing the impact of land speculation and allowing the government to tightly control development (Bourassa et al 1994 p.2).

While planning concepts were of course evident in the development of the established colonial cities and towns, the notion of an Australian planning body as a separate and independent entity was still far off. As Helen Proudfoot states, those charged with the duty of surveying and laying out Australia's first cities and settlements naturally looked back towards 'home' for inspiration:

The spatial expression of towns in the colonies was determined by a dynamic process which had more to do with contact with the parent metropolitan power than with a perception of the geographical nature of the country settled...the preoccupations of the age in which colonies were founded are transferred to colonial offspring and become the guiding principles of their foundation ethos. Thus, the English Enlightenment was the guiding hand for Sydney and New South Wales, but by the time Adelaide and Melbourne were founded, nineteenth century capitalism and utilitarian doctrines were on the ascendant. (Proudfoot 2000 p.11)

The inception of this nation building process at the very start of the 20th Century presented a unique opportunity to build a new city – a national capital. The timing of its inception coincided with an increased awareness of planning ideas that had been crystallising in Europe and elsewhere.

Like Washington before it and Brasilia afterwards, the construction of Canberra would serve as a focal point for the newly formed nation, and as a capital works project that could stimulate economic growth and industry. The need for a federal capital also necessitated the need for a new city plan and the time was right for the newly formed Federal Government and Australia's small group of planning professionals to abandon the strict colonial models that had informed the development of the other established state capitals in favour of a more diverse set of ideas.

Spurred by the activity surrounding the Federation, a 'Congress of Engineers, Architects, Surveyors and Members of Allied Professions' was held in Melbourne in May, 1901. The planning of the new federal capital was the topic of the conference and representatives of different fields presented a number of suggestions regarding both the location of the site and which characteristics would be important in the new

city. However, the most significant aspect of this dialogue was the desire for the capital to be more than just a reflection of overseas models and for it to exhibit aspects that were distinctly Australian in character (Reid 2002 p.11).

In this way, we can see the preliminary planning of Canberra as the catalyst for the coalescence of an embryonic Australian planning profession. A number of people, such as architects Robin Coulter and John Sulman and landscape designer C Bogue Luffman, either submitted or published designs for the new city or were in some way involved in the continuing dialogue that the need for a federal capital generated.

The Competition

The idea of having a competition for the design of the city was initially raised during the 1901 conference but it was not until 1911 that the Department of Home Affairs, under which administration of the federal capital had fallen, acquiesced to the opinion of a number of concerned professionals that the Department's staff did not have the required skills to plan the city and officially announced its inception. During this time, there was much deliberation over surveying the site around the Molonglo River and determining which particular aspect would be the most accommodating for development with regards to provisions for sewage, water supply and protection from the prevailing winds. The Department was split between either locating the city north of the river between Mt Ainslie and Black Mountain or opting for a location on the south bank, to the south east of Kurrajong Hill. This second option provided more shelter from the prevailing winter winds, which was a consideration that would become vital in the minds of Miller and his colleagues.

The competition was to be administered by Colonel David Miller, secretary of The Department of Home Affairs, and authorised by the Department's minister, King O'Malley. However, O'Malley reserved the right to decide on the final winning entry for himself after a three-man team, the Federal Capital Advisory Committee, made up of staff members from his department, including Miller, had adjudicated on the three most promising designs. The fact that no one with architectural standing was to be involved in this process and that a Minister with no professional experience was to be the sole adjudicator brought condemnation from The Royal Institute of British

Architects who advised their members not to participate in the competition (Harrison 1995 p.8).

The competition brief called for designs that considered a number of criteria. The brief included detailed descriptions of the site's topography, climate and considerations of water supply and flood levels for the ornamental watercourse that was expected to feature as a key design element (Gregors 1993 p.197) The need for the provision of a number of key buildings to vital capital functions was also required and the submission brief made particular reference that entries should embody in their designs 'all recent developments in the science of town planning'.

While there was no further indication of which 'developments' these were, the brief did cite the Transactions of the Town Planning Conference of 1910 as recommended reading. This document subsequently recommended John Sulman's 1890 paper entitled 'The Laying Out of Towns'. Sulman's work of this time focussed on promoting the use of radially oriented town centres and, significantly, championed the appropriateness of Garden City style neighbourhoods to the Australian context (Harrison 1995 p.8 and Proudfoot 2000 p.26).

Perhaps the most significant inclusion in the competition brief was a clause stating that 'the whole or any part of an accepted design may be used by the Commonwealth without further remuneration'. Clearly, while the competition gave the impression that a complete set-piece plan was being sought for implementation, Miller and his department were not seeking a unified vision for the city but a collection of ideas from which to draw from under their own discretion (Reid 2002 p.23). This was confirmed by a statement to his Minister O'Malley in which he proposed to combine elements of the three most worthy plans as required.

Additionally, Miller and Percy Owen, the Department's Director General of Works, had been busily making significant decisions about the layout of the city before the competition had even closed. As Paul Reid States:

Miller's officers apparently saw no contradiction in taking major decisions on designing and siting buildings while preparing for a competition for the city layout.

They saw the competition as providing support for their work rather than the other way around, as competitors would have assumed. (Reid 2002 p.21)

This was a situation that did not bode well for the future development of the city. Whatever the virtues of the winning entrant's design, it was clear that the survival of its integrity would be subject to the ambitions of the government administrators. However, the initial enthusiasm that influential public servants had for the federal capital prior to the announcement of the competition winner would soon result in tension between adopting the winning design and imposing their own agenda.

A Chicago Schooling

It would be difficult to imagine a more fortuitous locality for an aspiring architect or town planner to be raised in than Chicago at the end of the 19th Century. Walter Burley Griffin was born in the Chicago suburb of Maywood in 1876. It was growing up here that afforded Griffin exposure to a thriving and progressive architectural climate that included a number of significant practitioners of the day including Louis Sullivan, whose work pioneered the construction of the first skyscrapers and would lay the groundwork for the modernist period that would come to define the 20th Century. Other significant figures included Frank Lloyd Wright, whose firm would later employ both Griffin as an associate architect in his Oak Park studio, and Griffin's future wife and working partner, Marion Mahoney, as a draughtsman.

Despite all this, James Birrell states that 'to delimit the sources and influences that shaped the architecture of Walter Burley Griffin is impossible. Griffin probably derived his philosophy of design and his aesthetic ideas from as wide a field as any of the pioneers of the modern movement' (Birrell 1964 p.21).

However, while it is clear that Griffin's work as an urban planner and architect constitutes a synergy of a number of established ideas, an assessment of his overriding design philosophy and the circumstances of his education and upbringing in Chicago belie two key stylistic influences, both of which made their mark on the young architect from an early age.

The City Beautiful

The first major influence on Griffin can be directly attributed to the Chicago architect and urban planner Daniel Burnham. Burnham is widely regarded as one of the key exponents of the City Beautiful movement, an idiom that draws on the work of Scottish urbanist Patrick Geddes, who asserted that the squalor and depravity that characterised the inner city areas of most post-industrial cities and their residents could be remedied by improvements in the spatial aspects of the built environment. Indeed, in a 1909 conference one of Chicago's social elite described the principle role of the city planning as the elimination of breeding places for everything from disease and moral depravity to discontent and socialism (Hall 2002 p.190).

Burnham's City Beautiful concept combined this idea of social reform with a neo-classical aesthetic amplified to a bold and ambitious scale. This style of planning was approached from a broad whole-of-city perspective and favoured an elaborate and often symmetrical axial arrangement of grand boulevards and avenues lined with dignified street trees and civic monuments. The architectural embellishments were mainly inspired by the European Beaux-arts tradition. This ambitious and extravagant aesthetic was principally intended to inspire civic pride and decency amongst the population, encouraging them to lift their own living standards to match such worthy surrounds.

Daniel Burnham eloquently surmised the underlying idiom of the City Beautiful Movement in this his most famous quote from 1909, which must surely have provided inspiration for Griffin:

Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realised. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once rewarded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever growing insistency. (Hall 2000 p.188)

British planning historian Peter Hall pinpoints the City Beautiful movement's origin to 'the boulevards and promenades of the great European capitals: Haussman's

reconstruction of Paris under Napoleon III and the almost simultaneous construction of the Vienna Ringstrasse were its classic models' (2002 p.189). The sheer scale of these plans, as well as the use of geometric axial features and a preference for decadent and elaborate design features evidenced the influence of such grand civic works on the City Beautiful movement.

Hall also points out that the grand sweeping works constructed under the name of the City Beautiful movement were pursued with mixed intentions, from entrepreneurial efforts to bolster a collective sense of civic pride in America to expressions of empirical dominance and racial exclusiveness in British India and megalomaniac visions of glory in Fascist Berlin and Rome (2002 .189).

Nevertheless, it could be argued that the City Beautiful movement comprised the last concerted architectural pursuit of the decadent and elaborate built forms that had come to define European architecture, before the onset of the modernist sobriety that would come to define the 20th Century. Chicago was the American epicentre for the City Beautiful and its key player Burnham would also get his chance to bring the aesthetic to fruition via two key examples of late 19th Century planning, the 1893 World's Colombian Exhibition and 1909 Chicago Plan.

The 1893 Columbian Exhibition comprised a temporary purpose-made built form construct that was to both house exhibitions of entrepreneurial and cultural significance as well as act as an architectural attraction in itself. The site was a previously barren stretch of swamp and sand dunes that fronted Lake Illinois in the southern extremities of the city.



Figure 1.2: Daniel Burnham's Court of Honour at the 1893 Columbian Exhibition

The 'Chicago Fair,' as it was known, was an ostentatious venture devised to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Columbus' voyage to the New World. It was pursued by Chicago city's social elite and entrepreneurs as means of defining the city as a metropolis of international standing, reinvigorating a sense of civic pride after the disastrous fire that swept the city in 1871.

When Daniel Burnham was granted the role of architectural overseer after the sudden death of one of the previous coordinators, he seized the opportunity to redefine the exhibition as a crystallisation of the City Beautiful aesthetic in all its extravagant glory. As such, when the exhibition opened to great public enthusiasm in 1893, Chicago residents and international guests alike were treated to a sublime manifestation of axial planning concepts that clearly drew inspiration from Pierre Charles L'Effant's 1791 plan for the Washington DC capital area and Haussman's design for Paris. The architectural vision of the so called 'White City' and its 'Court of Honour' comprised grand exhibition halls that were built from scaffolding and plaster in a neo classical style which in turn opened onto monumental public plazas and formal water basins complete with towering statues.

The design influences and vision that underpinned the Chicago exposition site, the fluidity in which differing disciplines of environmental design had cooperated to

achieve it and the sheer scale of the undertaking itself clearly left an impression on those who attended it.

The fair itself lasted only seven months before its buildings were removed... but it had in its brief life implanted in the popular imagination an idea of the City Beautiful, a basis for common action towards an ideal which flourished for a generation or more (Harrison 1995 p.12).

This was particularly true in the case of young Walter Burley Griffin, then aged 17, who surely absorbed the principles on display in Chicago into his own vision of an ideal city.

Having chaired a committee that successfully pursued the completion of L'Enfant's 1701 plan for the capital area mall in Washington DC, Burnham turned his attention to assembling The second key example of Burnham's City Beautiful concept was illustrated in his ambitious 1909 plan for the redevelopment of Chicago's inner city core area. This document proposed to carve a diagonally aligned geometry of avenues through the established perpendicular grid layout of city. These avenues would terminate in large public plazas rendering within what was a traditional modern American city a distinctly flamboyant Parisian character.

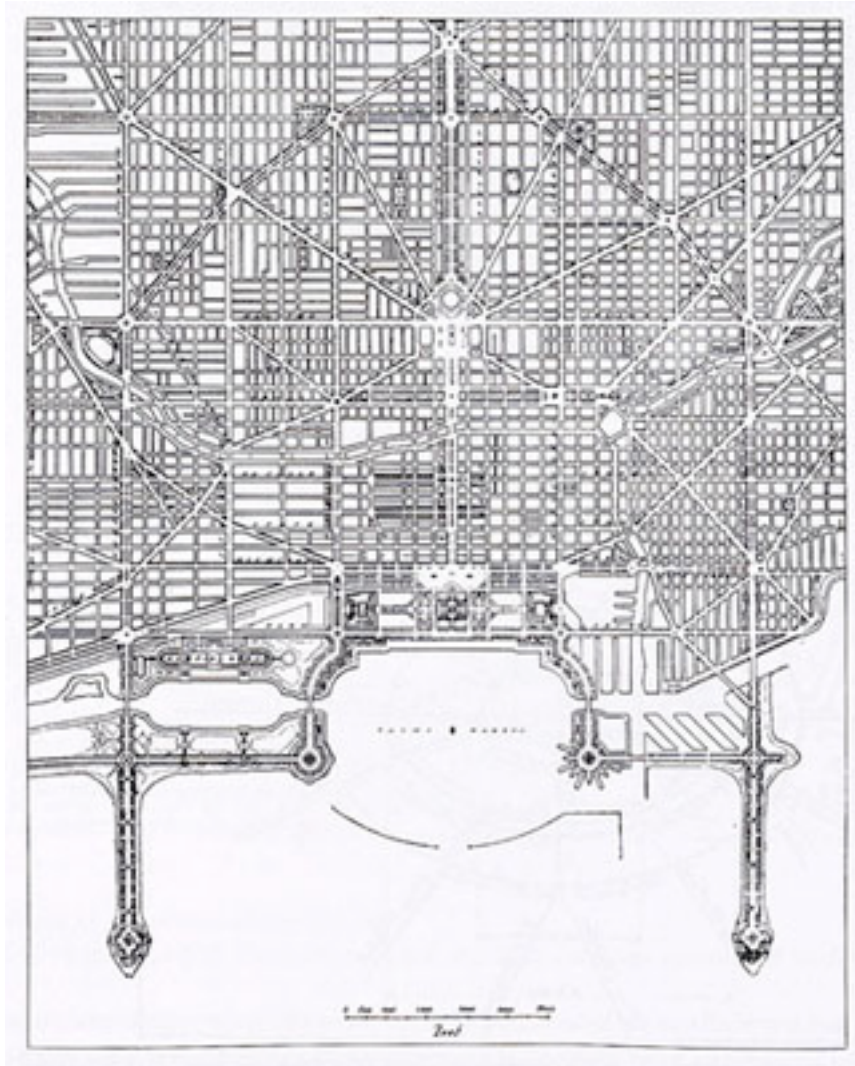


Figure 1.3: Burnham's 1909 Chicago Plan

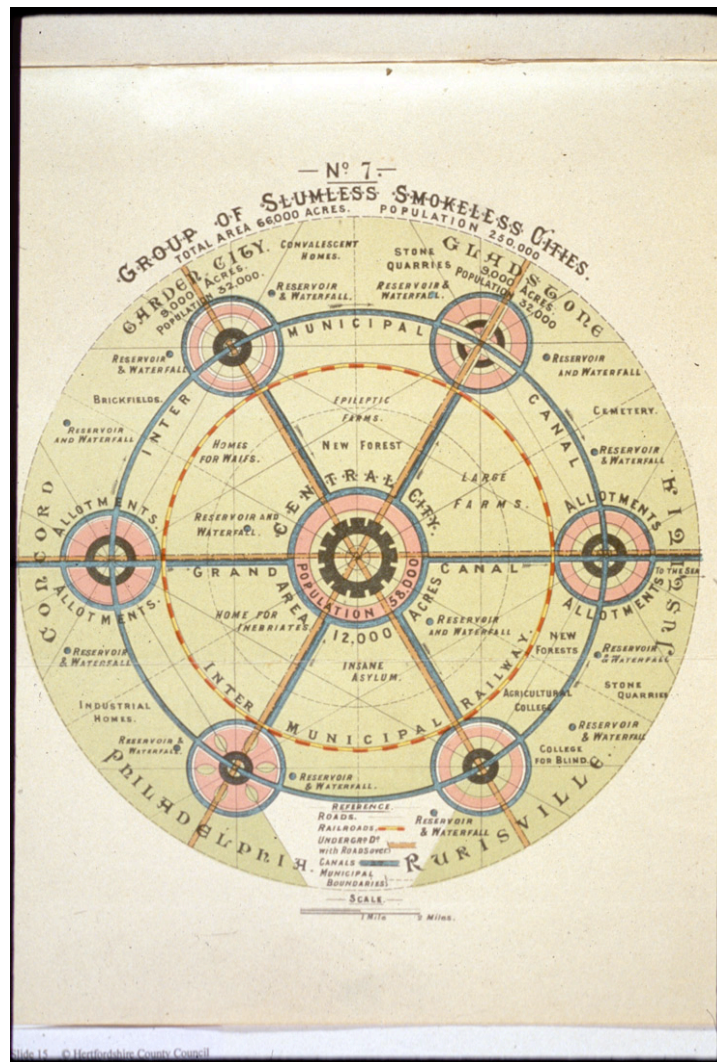
Robert Freestone states that Burnham's plan 'not only represents the zenith of City Beautiful thought, with its sumptuous images of a elegant Europeanised city centre, but a crucial transition towards metropolitan scale urban design, with its regional road network, parks and parkways.' (Freestone 2000 p.31)

While only partially implemented, this plan would have been widely absorbed by Griffin during his tenure in Chicago as a practising architect. As both a life long resident of Chicago and a student of its most prominent architectural contributions, it is undeniable that the grand geometry of the City Beautiful movement and its reliance on interconnected boulevards and avenues would prove to be a key aspect of Griffin's later work as an urban planner. As Paul Reid states:

Chicago provided a model of modern urban change on his (Griffin's) doorstep. In the years immediately preceding his design for Canberra, Griffin was surrounded by the creation of Daniel Burnham's most comprehensive City Beautiful proposal – The Chicago Plan of 1909. Griffin's inspiration was not just the design ideas; it was the force with which all Chicago citizens were carried along in enthusiasm for the future of their city (Reid 2002 p.36).

Ebenezer Howard and the Garden City

The Garden City movement was established by British urban theorist and parliamentary Hansard recorder Ebenezer Howard in 1898 when he published his landmark book *To-morrow: A peaceful path to real reform*. This publication served to define the semi-agrarian utopian ideals that came to define the Garden City movement of urban reform. Howard's ideology was drawn from a number of progressive architectural ideas from around the world including Riverside, a model suburb near Chicago, which was designed by the influential 19th Century American Architect Frederick Law Olmsted and Colonel William Light's Plan for Adelaide. Howard's ideas championed the pursuit of a hybrid community combining both the positive social and economic dynamism provided by city life within a semi rural setting. This was graphically represented in his seminal 'three magnets' diagram, which was included in his publication.



Much like the champions of the City Beautiful movement, Howard wanted to improve the living conditions of the burgeoning urban working class. But the Garden City ideal was much more progressive and was informed by a sense of ‘municipal socialism’, which flew in the face of the unchecked growth that had come to define the modern British city. Howard’s ideas did not escape ridicule from the social elite, none of whom lived in the squalid conditions he was trying to eradicate. However, considerable interest was generated by his theory and the opportunity to implement his ideas came about in the planning of the Garden City towns of Letchworth in 1903 and Welwyn Garden City in the 1920s.

The implementation of finite community sizes surrounded by agricultural land and greenbelts were integral to Howard's plans to pursue viable communities without the

squalor and depravity that he perceived to blight England's post-industrial cities. Howard's pursuit of purer and cleaner living gave rise to the concept of dividing up land use by function in an effort to separate industrial and residential uses, the conglomeration of which characterised so much of what Howard disliked about the cities of his day.

These first initiatives at social reform through land use regulation were the direct precursor to the zoning maps that would come to define modernist planning in the century to come. They would also become an intrinsic part of the emerging body of planning theory that would influence any contemporaneous practitioner of the built environment, including, of course, Griffin himself.

Although regarded professionally as an architect and by his association with Canberra as an urban planner, Griffin's interest in the built environment included a fundamental appreciation for landscape design, and as a child he would devote considerable time to planting and tending to shrubs in his parents front garden. As such, it comes as no surprise that landscape design would have been his chosen area of study had he not been advised to concentrate on the more financially rewarding field of architecture. Nevertheless, when undertaking his architectural studies at the University of Illinois he supplemented his curriculum with horticultural and forestry subjects (Reid 2002 p.39).

Griffin's well-developed understanding of the importance of integrating built forms within their surrounding natural environment would prove to be essential to his later work. So much so that Griffin is credited to have referred to architecture, landscaping and graphic arts as belonging together in a conceptual field he described as spatial arts (Harrison 1995 p.96). This clearly indicates that Griffin's conceptual understanding of city planning was a broad synthesis of more specialised art forms, a viewpoint that would prove to run against the perceptions of both his later contemporaries and the understandings of modernism in general, which approached city planning as a science.

In this respect, the influence of the so-called 'Prairie School' of architecture should also be seen as vital to Griffin's work in the built environment. During the late 1890s,

Griffin shared a loft studio space with a number of promising Chicago architects including Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright was a leading proponent of the Prairie School, a largely residential style that emphasised the integration of the built form with the surrounding natural environment both in terms of material choice and articulation of the form. Griffin's architectural work of this time shows a clear resonance with the work of the Prairie School and the melting pot atmosphere of this shared studio arrangement would have, no doubt, only further defined Griffin's own naturalist instincts.

It is also worth mentioning that an awareness of Japanese house design and landscaping was also an influence on Griffin's work during his years as an architect in Chicago, as evidenced by some of Griffin's architectural treatments such as his design for the Albert Fisher Cottage, in which the roof profile shows a strong resemblance to a traditional Japanese house. This influence may seem surprising at first, but there was a rising interest in the architecture of Japan in America at the time, as evidenced by the number of published works on the topic. Additionally, there were examples of Japanese architectural styles on display during the Chicago fair, which may have made an impression on Griffin when he attended the exposition in 1893 (Harrison 1995 p.18).

Both the British-based Garden City aesthetic and the Chicago-based City Beautiful movement experienced a considerable degree of cross-pollination, largely owing to their underlying utopian and social reform agendas. Walter Burley Griffin's childhood experiences and education in Chicago gave him considerable exposure to these planning ideas, and by early adulthood he was ideally positioned to accommodate aspects of both movements within his own developing concept of an ideal built form. It is the synthesis of these two ideas would come to define the most significant work of his career, and in turn provide the blueprint for a city that would, for better or worse, represent 20th Century urban planning like no other.

Griffin's 'Organic City' – Synthesis and Hybridity

The announcement of the 1911 competition for the design of The Federal Capital of Australia was an undeniable opportunity for the young Griffin, who had been

following the crystallisation of the young antipodean federation with interest for some time.

The award of first premium to Griffin's entry was certainly helped by the lavish presentation of Marion Mahoney's sepia toned depictions of the city. However, the venerated English urbanist Patrick Abercrombie was less enthusiastic in his appraisal of Griffin's entry, he stated that the design contained 'so many obvious defects' and that perhaps the judging panel were so impressed by the quality of the presentation package that they could not see the numerous flaws in the design itself (Harrison 1995 p.28).

Regardless of Abercrombie's pessimism, it is clear that, over just a few short weeks in his studio space in Chicago, Griffin produced a plan of startling clarity and intent. The design would draw together his two key influences into a grand vision for a city instilled with a sense of enthusiasm for an emerging and, in his view, progressive democratic nation - a nation newly freed from its colonial history and ready to take its place on the world stage.



Figure 1.5: Griffin's Illustration of his City Plan

Structural Elements

Griffin's plan is startling in both its grace and simplicity. Nearly a century later the plans that comprised his competition entry continue to fascinate and have lost none of their sense of inspired elegance. Clearly Griffin's innate concept of 'spatial art' came to the fore in his competition entry and despite John Sulman's disappointment that a more prominent architects were discouraged from competing by the circumstances of the competition, he did state that he still found Griffin's entry to be 'the only one in which the designer possessed an artistic grasp of town planning' (Pegrum 1983 p.163).

Reid gives a more enthusiastic appraisal of the design:

Griffin's competition entry...is a work of art. The drawings, the diagrams and the text of the report taken together provide a complete guide to the new capital... everything is there in principle. Every point in the plan is a seed containing all the necessary information for the growth and flowering of every part of the city. The parts are so finely attuned to the whole that any disturbance to a part produces a dissonance in the whole (Reid 2002 p.47).

This overriding sense of unity across the full scope of the design was paramount for Griffin and led him to liken a city to an organism. Griffin saw the functional synthesis of both the simplicity of the design as a whole and the comprehensiveness at the microscopic level as defining the organic aspects and integral to the city planning process (NCA 2004 p.34). Within Griffin's synthesis was clearly exhibited the cumulative influence of a long history of planning ideas dating back well before his era. As Peter Harrison states:

Parklands, planted avenues, gardens and water were designed to create a formal landscape in the Renaissance tradition, providing an impressive setting for the national buildings and monuments which would emerge over the years (Harrison 1995 p.12).

The most immediate aspect of Griffin's Plan is the bold geometric axial arrangement of the main avenues. While this in itself could be seen as purely an exercise in geometry with no apparent benefit incurred, Griffin's arrangement functioned to coordinate with the surrounding topography of the site and to integrate the city within its natural setting, rather than superimpose itself, as if in a vacuum.

This almost arcane geometric configuration featured a land axis that linked Mt Ainslie to Mt Bimberi to the south. This axis passed directly through the Kurrajong Hill (which would later become Capital Hill) the highest point within the area, where Griffin proposed to site his dominating Capitol Building. This vertical land axis intersected with a horizontal water axis at the Molonglo River, which was to be dammed to form a lake of ornamental basins and gentle curves.

These two intersecting axes were conceptual elements that defined the broader symmetry of the plan. This overriding symmetry was personified by the 'national triangle', three broad avenues meeting in vertices with its base on the northern side of the lake and its apex on the southern side in line with the land axis. This was the defining structural element of the city plan and also served to unite both sides of the city, as both the east and west sides of the triangle included bridges that spanned the lake and provided connectivity between the government sector in the southernmost area between the lake and the other centres to the north.

The base of the triangle comprised Griffin's grand boulevard (Constitution Avenue), which was intended to house the 'Recreation Group' functions and provide a dense corridor of retail and commercial uses and amenities of civic intent such as a grand amphitheatre. This 'Municipal Axis' was to link the 'Market Centre' and military headquarters, which was made up of the eastern corner of the triangle and the civic centre at the west. This was to house both municipal functions for the city, such as the town hall, and the university campus.

This western corner of the triangle (now known as City Hill) was intended to function as a 'municipal hub', providing a heart for the city independent from the Federal Government structures on the other side of the lake. From this point a dense web of

development was intended to radiate providing gateways to other surrounding areas such as the university or the lakefront (NCA 2004 p.60 – 68).

Avenues radiated off the terminating points of this simple but elegant diagram, which then produced an elaborate but perfectly functional assembly of arterial roads and broad avenues. Nestled between these were suburban subdivisions that featured a combination of interlocking traditional grid style allotments and curvilinear ring roads that responded to the surrounding topography as required. The intersections of these roads were adjusted to eliminate any acute angles caused by the hexagonal and octagonal bases from which they projected (Reps 1997 p.143).

Griffin treated the site as ‘an irregular amphitheatre’ in which the interplay of the democratic ideals he so wished to represent in his diagram was to play out. The base of the triangle represented the people, who symbolically support the government group located across the lake. The various buildings of the government group rose above the lake shoreline on terraces culminating in the triumphant and dominating sight of Griffin’s Capitol Building. The locating of this structure, a kind of secular public cathedral, at the apex of the triangle represented the unification and combined will of the people and was to be a place for popular assembly and the focus of national consciousness (Proudfoot 1994 p.94).

The hybrid nature of Griffin’s plan can be seen in the termination of his vistas that were dictated by orientation of his grand avenues. In the City Beautiful tradition, these vistas would terminate onto significant buildings and landmarks which dominate the civic form. In Griffin’s organic city they are deliberately oriented to views of landscape features (NCA 2004 p.37).

This sense of integration with the surrounding topography was to be a deciding factor in the selection of Griffin’s design. All featured strong geometric layouts, but Griffin’s was the only one ‘in which the man-made geometry and the natural topography seemed to be in complete harmony’ (Reid 2002 p.85). These basic components exemplify Griffin’s synthesis of grand City Beautiful structures tempered with the Prairie School’s attention to the natural environment. This was the principle

that underpinned Griffin's ambitious but elegant design from which a vibrant city was intended to grow.

Mixed Use Corridors

The way in which Griffin saw the areas in between his axes and key design elements was, however, not stated as explicitly in his plan, which may well have contributed to its eventual undoing. But while there might not have been clear indications on the site plans themselves of the intended building morphologies and density of development, there was a significant amount of supporting material that does provide some evidence of his intentions in this regard (NCA 2004 p.44, p.78).

The city's road network, for example, comprised a detailed system that dictated the function of surrounding areas according to its position in a hierarchy of roads. In line with the City Beautiful tradition, the city's main thoroughfares (such as Northbourne Avenue) were to include broad tree-lined avenues. These avenues were to be lined with terraced buildings of a consistently dense and imposing scale, using the greatest mix of land uses – retail, employment and residential. The buildings along these corridors were aligned to the street frontage with minimum set back to promote an unambiguous town atmosphere and a vibrancy of activity from the building frontage, pavement and adjoining street plantings (Birrell 1963 p.92).

As would be expected, the radial junctions of these main avenues were to be the city's liveliest business centres, supporting the highest densities of retailing and commercial uses, with the avenues providing fast and efficient connectivity between these hubs (NCA 2004 p.72 –74). Rapid transit between these areas was to be provided by a citywide tram network that ran along the generous median strips of the main avenues. The density of development within these corridors was foreseen by Griffin to support the tram network operation, providing an excellent degree of patron catchment (NCA 2004 p.72 –73).

With regards to transport, the city was also to be serviced by a railway line that extended from the existing track at the New South Wales town of Queanbeyan to the

south east of the city. The track was to enter the city from the south east and cross the lake on a dedicated causeway and ‘boulevarded embankment’ that divided the easternmost basin of the ornamental lake and the east lake floodplain beyond. The track was then to be partially undergrounded by running through a trench with street crossings elevated above, so as not to bisect the town. The line then adjoined stations at the Market Centre, Anzac Parade, near to City Hill and then north along Northbourne Avenue, eventually linking up to another existing line at Yass (Birrell 1964 p.89, NCA 2004 75 –76).

It was the combination of these building morphologies, an impressive structure of broad avenues and the scale of the surrounding integrated landscaped elements that were to comprise the ‘public’ face of the city. These aspects were intended to boldly engage with the city occupant giving the city a sense of destination, definition, vibrancy and grandeur.

Residential Neighbourhoods

While Griffin’s Canberra was to be at once a grand capital with impressive avenues and boulevards, it was intended to concurrently function as a city of well-presented residential environs:

Residential accommodation is principally provided in two forms in the Griffin Plan: higher density terraces lining the main avenues and lower density garden suburbs which are set back from the main avenues (NCA 2004 p.76).

These lower scale residential areas were to comprise the ‘private’ side of the city. Peter Hall states that Griffin was ‘not a true-blue City Beautiful planner: he admired the work of the Garden City movement, and of Geddes’ (Hall 2000 210). Indeed Griffin’s own description of his neighbourhood planning conveys his appreciation of the intentions of the Garden City movement:

The segregated sections, formed and separated by the general traffic lines, furnish not only suitable individual home sites, but comprise social units for that larger family – the neighbourhood group, with one handy district school or more for the children,

and with... social amenities accessible without crossing traffic tracks, or encountering the disturbing elements of temptations of business streets, since these family activities may best be directed internally toward the geographical centres of their groups... (Hall 2002 p.210)

In this way, Griffin proposed to hybridise his two defining influences. The grandeur and metropolitan vibrancy of the City Beautiful aspects would define the city's civic functions along its main avenues and boulevards, while suburban spaces would be removed from these aspects and community life would be directed internally towards a walkable neighbourhood that aimed to achieve the desired levels of environmental amenity and 'quality of life' espoused by the Garden City movement.

I have planned an ideal city – a city that meets my ideal of a city of the future – Walter Burley Griffin (Reid 2000 p.47)

So, as well as crafting an exquisite set piece design for Federal Capital functions within a monumental formal landscaped setting, Griffin's plan and subsequent explanatory detail also laid out a comprehensive design for a modern and fully integrated city in its own right. A city that, while obviously much more than a large scale recreation of Garden Cities such as Letchworth, still made good on Ebenezer Howard's promise of a synthesis of town and country.

Griffin's 'organic city' provided for vibrant and cosmopolitan urban environments as well as small-scale independent residential neighbourhoods, all within a comprehensively integrated landscape setting that afforded unparalleled access to the natural environment. This was the work that his formative years in Chicago had given him an ideal preparation for. He was, however, totally unprepared for the battle he would have to endure to have his winning plan implemented.

Part 2 – The Government Legacy



Figure 2.1: Artist's Impression of the NCDC's 'Y Plan'

Canberra Before Griffin

The great accomplishment of Walter Burley Griffin, and of the Australian nation which selected, and up to now has supported the Griffin Plan, was the capacity to conceive space itself as the basic design issue... Now that you have produced such a masterwork, the great issue is that you don't wreck it.

- Edmond Bacon, upon visiting Canberra in 1966 (Harrison 1995 p.96)

A city is not a work of art, although many of its aspects could be considered artful in their execution. True art has no predetermined functional purpose and as such there are no inherent limits on its creation or execution. A city is a work of design, and like all products of a design process it is crafted by an individual or individuals who are able to harness creativity fuelled by idealism as well as bound by pragmatism. It is the balance of these two factors that determine the success of the design.

In the case of Canberra, the Griffin Plan represents the creative spark, the vision that, ideally, would have been the reference point for all decisions on the construction of the new capital. However, no city vision can be put into action without the cooperation of others who will administer a plan of implementation with due consideration of logistics and other practicalities.

In light of the obvious agenda of Colonel Miller and his department colleagues, it seems an understatement to say that from the day of the plan's implementation, the balance had increasingly tipped in favour of pragmatic government bureaucrats at the sacrifice of the architect's vision. Bacon's above statement was made well after the city had been established and Griffin's plan discarded. This begs the question: had Griffin's plan already been ruined by the agendas and ambitions of government bureaucrats and politicians before he even put pen to paper?

Individually, the decisions made in the years and decades following the end of Griffin's involvement with Canberra can each be seen as a product of their time, and therefore the pragmatic reasoning involved should not be judged too harshly. What is clear, and what this thesis will attempt to show, is that the overall cumulative impact

of such repeated variation from and dismissal of the principles that underpinned Griffin's plan proved to completely alter the future direction of the city.

I do not know whether I shall be called to Australia to superintend the construction of the new city. I hope so. I rather expect I shall. It would be only fair to me. There is nobody in the world who can work out my ideas like myself... I have planned a city not like any other in the world.

- Walter Burley Griffin in 1912 (Harrison 1995 p.26)

Shortly after O'Malley announced Griffin's design as the winner, concerns over the practical issues involved in its implementation began. The level of ornamental extravagance was criticised by voices from the established state capitals that saw it as too costly a design (Pegrum 1983 p.163). Concerns were also raised over the scale of the city. Griffin's design was intended to accommodate a population of 25,000 residents with provision for expansion for up to 75,000 if necessary. To the interstate critics it seemed inconceivable that the population could ever even reach 10,000 (Linge 1975 p.9). Within the Department, the criticism centred around practical concerns for developing the city at three different sites simultaneously and the fact that the city's functions were separated by a stretch of water, which they disputed as having no precedent in Australia.

The growing criticism prompted O'Malley to bow to the ambitions of Miller, his Department's director, by reasserting the Department's right to use any aspect of the top three designs in whatever configuration they felt necessary. As such, Miller and his departmental colleagues set about assembling a composite design of their own which while retaining a superficial similarity to some of Griffin's key features, was incongruous and completely lacking the topographical consideration and elegance that defined the winning entry (Reid 2002 p.104).

The Department's hybrid design featured the focus of the city on the southern bank of the lake, an aspect of the city that Scrivener and Miller had always wanted but somehow failed to adequately express to participants in the competition brief. Such

was their conviction that the city should be sited to the south east of Kurrajong Hill that Paul Reid states that all of their hostility towards Griffin in the years to follow was derived from this one issue (Reid 2002 p.103).

Many architects nationwide such as Walter Vernon, as well as interested parties overseas such as Patrick Abercrombie, voiced their outrage over the Department's architectural coup and made dignified appeals for the reinstatement of the winning plan. The then Prime Minister Andrew Fischer even received a petition for a Royal Commission into the incident, which he ignored.

However, the Department's design was approved by O'Malley in November 1912 and then authorised by Parliament as the official plan for the city the following January. Hearing of O'Malley's intentions, Griffin himself wrote to the Minister from Chicago, expressing great concern over the inferior replacement plan and offering to come to Australia to act as a consultant to the Minister regarding the planning of the city.

Griffin's concern was met with equal hostility from Miller, who advised his Minister that the Department was capable of all undertakings in the new capital and that Griffin's presence would not be required (Reid 2002 p.104 - 105). O'Malley again sided with Miller and moved forward with the Department's plans, officiating over a hastily assembled naming and commemoration ceremony for the city on the February 20th, 1913. After a protracted debate regarding its name the city narrowly avoided some truly awful potential monikers only to be simply christened 'Canberra', the name of the region in which the new city was to be built.

This would prove to be O'Malley's last act as Minister, as Andrew Fischer's Labour government was defeated at the May election and control over the Home Affairs portfolio fell to one William Kelly. This was truly a fortuitous turn of events for Griffin and his plan, as Kelly, much to Miller's frustration, invited Griffin to join him in Canberra so that his input could be balanced with that of the Department.

Griffin in Canberra

Griffin arrived in Australia in August 1913. Upon hearing the Board's critique of his design, he approached the Minister to defend his ideas. Kelly advised him to amend his plan to make it more acceptable to the Board. In an effort towards diplomacy, Griffin submitted a revised plan in October 1913, which included provision for a new 'initial city' southeast of the capitol site. Some sources describe this revision in favourable terms as a 'refinement of ideas in response to practical considerations' (NCA 2004 p.13). A cursory glance at the amended design, however, does not reveal any striking alterations to the overall city form.

Others describe the modifications apparent upon closer inspection as 'a desperate move, which was to have profound consequences for Canberra' (Reid 2002 p.109). Reid goes so far to state that 'seen in the light of the exquisite integrity of the competition entry all the changes are for the worse. The design could no longer be described as a work of art' (Reid 2002 p.112).

In fact the city hill site had most likely been 'dumbed down' due to the realisation that the Federal Government, at this stage, did not consider self-government of the city to be necessary or likely. Subsequent to this revision, the surrounding building frontages no longer engaged with the centre, and a hexagonal ring road diffused the centrality of the site, which began to resemble the large roundabout surrounding ubiquitous parkland that it would become. Additionally, Griffin's linear avenues and street layouts began to exhibit curves and circles that confused the once simple and elegant geometry, particularly around the newly inserted initial city site (Reid 2002 p.109).

Despite these changes, it is surely still fortunate that Kelly chose Griffin's revised plan over the Department's hotchpotch hybrid design. Miller's board of Department directors were subsequently dismissed and Griffin was appointed as Federal Capital Director of Design and Construction giving him sole executive control over the project. In theory, this should have given Griffin the opportunity to truly guarantee the success of his plan, but his role in carrying out his responsibilities was severely hampered by the fact that the dismissed Board members were to comprise his supporting staff.

Peter Hall describes these early days of planning in Canberra as ‘verging on the tragic-farcical’, stating that:

For seven years he (Griffin) nearly went mad as his attempts were systematically sabotaged: plans went astray, his own drawings disappeared from his desk to resurface only 30 years later (Hall 2002 p.206).

As Reid further explains, ‘Griffin’s integration of all the constituent parts that so impresses scholars was seen by the builders as a set of rigid and impractical restrictions’ (Reid 2002 p.2). It is certainly true that Griffin’s design was ambitious and would require a considerable amount of time and funding. It also required dispersed development at all three points of his triangle before any kind of functional city on the ground could be realised. However, it seems likely that his plan was far from being too impractical to be implemented, and that in fact the real problem was Miller and his staff members.

They viewed Griffin as a thorn in their side – as someone who as far as they had proposed, was never meant to be involved in determining what was actually going to be built in the city. As such, they consistently refused to cooperate with Griffin, denied him information necessary to his work, wrote malicious letters to the Minister misrepresenting his intentions and character and generally undermined his authority at every turn (Reps 1997 p.264).

The attitude of Miler and his colleagues constituted a deliberate and irresponsible course of action that took its toll on both Griffin and the construction of his city. This situation was exacerbated by the onset of World War I in 1914 and governmental changes, including the appointment of William Archibald as Minister for Home Affairs and a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, which scrutinised the cost of Griffin’s proposed structural elements while overlooking their inherent design virtues.

The following year saw the reinstatement of a newly supportive O’Malley to the Ministerial position and the subsequent resignation of Miller as Director. A Royal

Commission into the situation in Canberra was undertaken in May 1916, in which Miller and Archibald attempted to portray Griffin's plan as impractical and excessive and the man himself as a 'jack of all trades' who's time was occupied with grand theorising, moonshine and dreaming (Birrell 1964 p110). Regardless, the Commission eventually found in Griffin's favour and exposed the poisonous alliance between Archibald, Miller and the other Department heads (Reid 2002 p.121). Yet, despite these changes in fortune, construction of the new capital continued to stall as political interest in the project had given way to concern over the financial fallout from the war (Fischer 1984 p.34).

Griffin submitted his final revised plan for the city in 1918, which omitted his previous concession for the initial city site and reclaimed some degree of the linear geometry evident in the 1912 competition plan. Some indication of the bulk and scale of the built forms proposed for his avenues was also indicated here. These were drawn as continuous corridors of terraced buildings aligned along avenues, which stood in stark contrast to the dispersed city form desired by the Department (Reid 2002 p.144).

Griffin's unhappy tenure as Federal Director ended in 1920, after his position was abolished by the Federal Government, who were conscious of both the mounting costs of the city and desiring a more productive administrative arrangement over the construction process than Griffin's supposed sole control had provided. The establishment of a Federal Capital Advisory Committee was proposed in Parliament to report directly to the government separate from a ministerial portfolio. Griffin was offered a place on the committee but convinced of the potential for the frustrating stalemate to continue he turned it down (Birrell 1964 p.111). Griffin resigned his post as Director of Design and although he would continue to offer comment and criticism regarding the development of Canberra in the years to come, his official involvement with the development of the city had come to an end. He continued with private architectural practise in Australia until 1935 when he moved to India. He died there in 1937.

The result of this period of bitter feuding between Griffin and the Department of Home Affairs was that only the most rudimentary of works were completed during

Griffin's tenure. These principally included buildings that housed the Department's employees, a dam, reservoirs, the brick works, sewage works, a power station and two temporary wooden bridges across the riverbed. In fact the most fully realised part of the city was arguably horticulturalist Thomas Weston's tree plantings. The only elements of Griffin's design that were actually apparent on the ground were some graded but unsealed road works around City Hill and the Kurrajong Hill (Reid 2002 p.147).

Griffin's plan, like all the great set piece designs of city planning including Versailles and Washington, are dependant on a relatively timely degree of execution, lest they become ravaged by a subsequent waning of enthusiasm, expertise or funding. As Rodger Johnson asserts, 'Griffin appreciated this fact, and his energies during the time that he had control of the national capital works were concentrated on establishing the framework of his plan. But, the framework established, there was not the requisite follow-up to produce the integrated concept that he had in mind' (Johnson 1974 p.13). Griffin himself bitterly stated his situation in a departing letter to the Prime Minister:

Had my time and the energies of my meagre staff not been frittered away in meeting manufactured difficulties and obstruction, the essential guiding plans ensuring efficiency, harmony and in particular, economy would have been in existence long ere this. As it is, the essentials of all those matters necessary to constitute Canberra perfect in entity can exist only in the mind of the designer, such information being necessity incommunicable (Reid 2002 p.147).

The origins of the seven-year feud that wasted so much time and so many resources illuminates the ultimate gap between the architect and the bureaucracy - the Department's pragmatic reasoning was focussed around planning five years ahead, while Griffin's creative vision was aimed towards fifty years in the future.

G. J. R. Linge attempts to paint a silver lining on Griffin's tenure as Director, stating that 'his achievements had not been inconsiderable: in less than eight years he had turned some of his opponents into allies and cynics into supporters, and had managed to convince people that the main outline of his grand design should not be set aside' (Linge 1975 p.13).

However, Reid chooses to summarise Griffin's tenure in less conciliatory terms:

During his more than seven years as Director of Design and Construction, Griffin failed to convince the Australian Government to implement his competition winning design (Reid 2002 p.147).

Regardless of one's point of view, the fact that Griffin did not see a more substantial start to his ideal city realised before his death was a great disservice to him and, as this thesis will attempt to demonstrate, a turn of events that would prove to ultimately leave Canberra with an urban environment far worse off than he intended.

Canberra After Griffin: The Pre-war Era – Pragmatism and Priorities

John Sulman and the FCAC

Upon Griffin's departure from Canberra, the position of Chairman of the Federal Capital Advisory Committee was handed to John Sulman with the Board reporting to the Minister for Works and Railways. As an architect and an individual of unique professional standing, who had been involved in the capital project from its inception, Sulman was eminently qualified for the position to preside over the six-member team. The committee's primary mandate was fairly straightforward - to enable the Federal Parliament to meet and operate in and operate from the new city via the implementation of Griffin's plan. Sulman was a confident administrator and far more politically astute than Griffin, but he was also a visionary in his own right who had his own ideas for the development of the city.

The first course of action for Sulman was to continue the campaign for the abandonment of Griffin's plan in favour of the less expensive and more easily implemented hybrid design. This was fortunately rebuked by the then Minister and having been forced to implement Griffin's design, Sulman adopted a staged works

schedule with the siting of the Parliament buildings, a feature that was virtually identical in both plans, as the first priority and construction of the more unique parts of Griffins design to commence later. This plan was both a pragmatic attempt by Sulman to both fulfil his mandate and a move that would, ideally, allow him enough time to manoeuvre the Minister and his fellow Board members into abandoning the more monumental aspects of Griffin's plan in favour of an exclusively Garden City model (Harrison 1995 p.68).

As Peter Proudfoot states:

John Sulman and his advisory committee did noting to support the urbanistic component of Griffin's plan: the geomantic City Beautiful or 'public' city. The Garden City character would permeate even the central triangle according to Sulman (Proudfoot 1994 p.98).

From the very beginning it was clear that Sulman envisioned a low-density city. In his published conference paper recommended as required reading for prospective entrants of the 1911 competition he stated that:

As to dwellings, I may as well call attention to the fact that the Australian, of whatever degree, generally prefers what we call 'a cottage'. That is to say, a one-story building (Harrison 1995 p.8).

Additionally, Reid asserts that this early academic work of Sulman 'describes precisely the model that was to later replace Griffin's urban vision in the minds of all other planers and ultimately on the ground in Canberra - the city as a garden suburb' (Reid 2000 p.29).

Thus, although the idea of Canberra being a low-scale Garden City was clearly on the cards from the very beginning, it was only under the stewardship of Sulman that this idea was fully crystallised. Concurrently, the development of dense mixed-use development along Griffins main avenues was abandoned by Sulman's committee, which favoured the relocating of retail uses to almost exclusively within individual

residential neighbourhood centres (Birrell 1964 p.116). With the adoption of this policy, the fate of Griffin's proposed grand avenues was well and truly sealed.

The preferred low-density model championed by Sulman's committee and the Department itself, combined with a lack of funding to adequately develop the city, resulted in the spatial isolation of buildings, particularly prominent ones such as hotels and government offices. This policy was eventually applied to virtually all buildings, and ultimately led to the isolation of the two separate parts of the city, the southern half being concentrated around the Parliamentary buildings and the suburbs of Forrest, Manuka and Red Hill centred around the previous location of the 'initial city,' while the less developed northern half languished around the unrealised city hill site.

Griffin's proposed market centre and railway connections at the eastern corner of the Parliamentary Triangle had also been scrapped, leaving it as the exclusive domain of the military headquarters. Between this area and city hill the municipal axis also remained undeveloped and assumed a stagnant character, utterly unlike the vibrant transport oriented retail corridor that Griffin had envisaged.

Sulman and his committee were dismissed in 1925 in favour of a more independent body, The Federal Capital Commission (FCC). However, Canberra's future development as a low scale shadow of the Griffin's ideal city was now ensured with the gazettal of Griffin's Plan in November of that year. This should have safeguarded Griffin's vision for the city, but the approved plan was devoid of any comprehensive detail such as the intended land use zonings or any indications of building scale or form.

Rather than viewing these aspects as integral to the design of the city, they were simply deemed an impediment to flexibility in the plan to accommodate for future growth, or rather whatever future directions Department planners and administrators preferred. From this point on Griffin's plan effectively served as little more than a guide for street layouts.

John Butters and the FCC

The post-Griffin planning history of Canberra primarily constitutes a vividly illustrated process of planning ideas and models being introduced and in turn adapted to fit an already well-established idea of overall city form. This history can also be interpreted by the succession of federally funded planning bodies, beginning with the establishment of The FCC, the first truly independently administered government authority in Canberra. The Commission was also free from interference from the Federal treasury as it gathered revenue from the Territory itself (Linge 1975 p.17).

The legacy of the FCC was mainly an architectural one. One of the key tasks charged to Butters and the FCC was the completion of the provisional Parliament House so that Federal Parliament could be transferred from Melbourne to the capital. This was completed in 1927 along with other key buildings of Federal significance such as the Prime Minister's Lodge, the Sulman designed Melbourne and Sydney buildings, Canberra High School, several university buildings, Manuka Swimming Pool, as well as over five hundred cottages which today are among Canberra's most loved and historically significant dwellings.

However, criticism of the Commission within both Parliament and the by now disillusioned local Canberra population was augmented by tensions that soon developed among the small but growing army of public servants, many of whom had been reluctantly transferred from Melbourne to work in Canberra upon the establishment of the provisional Parliament House and associated administrative departments in 1927. These new arrivals resented the heavy-handed approach used by the Commission. With another change of government and the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, the tenure of the FCC was ended, leaving Canberra as still a disjointed and sporadic collection of buildings and tree plantings separated by the undeveloped and empty lake bed.

The NCPDC - 1930 to 1957

From 1929, responsibility for the development of the city was reassigned to multiple departments under a semi-elected Advisory Council, which was appointed to advise a

Minister regarding matters concerning the capital. This rather ineffectual arrangement resembled the one that characterised the stalemate of a decade earlier, only now in the face of the looming economic crisis, political interest in the Canberra project was truly starting to wane. In fact, the Federated Taxpayers Association called for the city to be abandoned altogether (Harrison 1995 p.73). This resentment in the state capitals over the cost of development in the capital city was understandable, as described by Linge:

The average Australian taxpayer still wondered bewildered bureaucrats bundled into such a remote oasis of prettiness could make decisions relevant to his daily needs: to him Canberra was merely a good sheep station being spoiled (Linge 1975 p.26).

Subsequently, development in the capital came to a virtual standstill for much of the next decade (Greig 1996 p.3).

In 1938, the National Capital Planning and Development Committee (NCPDC) was established and continued to preside over planning in the Territory until 1957. The Committee's mandate was established under the guise of 'protecting the Griffin Plan' and maintaining high standards of architectural quality. However, unlike the FCC, it functioned not as an independent department but an advisory body without executive powers, making recommendations to the Minister for Internal Affairs. This arrangement would prove to have a severe impact on the functioning of the committee during its tenure.

The onset of the Great Depression of the 1930's as well as World War II was an unfortunate turn of events that would draw both precious Federal funding and political attention away from Canberra during the early tenure of the Committee. These events significantly undermined the Committee's capabilities to develop the city and relocation of the Federal bureaucracy from Melbourne was still exasperatingly slow. Consequently, by 1939, the city's population was only totalled 11,000 (Bourassa et al 1994 p.5), less than half the amount Griffin's initial design had provisioned for.

In accordance with these financial setbacks, administrative conflicts and tensions that characterised Canberra's earliest stage of development, the on-the-ground reality was

that much of the city's core areas remained undeveloped by the end of the Second World War. Accordingly, strategic development of the city for future growth was not apparent in any accompanying legislation, as K. F. Fischer asserts:

In the period between 1925 and 1950, forward planning was practically non-existent, and so only minor variations were gazetted. Decisions involving important matters of principle were only made from the 1950's on (Fischer 1984 p.54).

Priorities for the city revolved around establishing Canberra as a national capital first and foremost and a city in its own right only when and as required. Although population had sluggishly grown to 40,000 in 1958, 70% of the land within the city area was still either fields or vacant ground (Fischer 1984 p.56). Several other notable features of the city's landscape at this time were quarries, a temporary hostel lodging on capital hill, sheep and dairy paddocks along the future lakebed and a rubbish dump adjacent to Anzac Parade (Fischer 1984 p.63).

With almost all functions of Federal Government taking a number of decades to reach completion, there was no real growth initiative for the city during the pre-war era, and as such the needs of housing, recreation and commerce were provided only for the live-in population, who primarily worked on Canberra's construction and development administration.

The adoption of this strategy, that prioritised the development of Canberra's federal capital aspects at the expense of elements that would contribute to its development as an actual place to live, was a pragmatic decision made under the rationale that the secondary consideration could only be justified by the pursuit of the first. However, the woeful neglect for properly developing the more public areas of the city would leave a lasting legacy that remains a defining aspect of Canberra's urban form in the present day.

The Post War Era – Planning for Growth

Menzies, Holford and the 1955 Senate Inquiry

Under such unfavourable administrative and economic conditions, it is no surprise that such little progress in development of the city had been completed during the NCPDC's thirty-year tenure. So much so that with interstate transfers of public servants finally resuming an acceptable pace, the population of Canberra only grew from 12,000 in 1940 to 15,000 in 1947. Still, the demand for housing and infrastructure had well passed supply (Linge 1975 p.27). This housing crisis impinged on the further development of the city in its Federal functions, and subsequently prompted a 1955 Senate inquiry into the development of the city 'in relation to the original plan and subsequent modifications' (NCDC 1970 p.14).

In defence of the NCPDC, having weathered the frugality of government spending during the war, they were now faced with a continued shortage of building materials and skilled tradesmen due to the unprecedented nation-wide growth in housing demand and public works projects such as the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric scheme. Additionally, population growth in Canberra was particularly daunting during this period as public service transfer rates were ramped up by a Federal Government, keen to see the city properly established.

This had a knock on effect on the provision of retail and recreational facilities, which had not been developed concurrently with residential expansion as was required by Griffin's plan. This caused significant frustration in the city's young people and further discouraged public servants from transferring from interstate. The city was viewed as a social death sentence and, as Greig states, to a certain extent Canberra has been unable to shake of this reputation even to this day (Greig 1996 p.4 - 11).

The haphazard administrative structure and uncertain budgetary allowances were found by the Senate enquiry to have been a key factor in undermining the development of the city. As such, the establishment of a well-financed and independently administered planning and development authority was called for. This

recommendation provided the impetus for the creation of the super department that was to follow.

Besides discussion of administrative arrangements, the Senate inquiry also seemed to briefly call upon the ideal of Griffin's ideal city. It was stated with dismay that the vision of a great city had been obscured by the desire for cheapness and quick results, and that the important areas of Canberra were not monumental regions that symbolised national character, but graveyards where the departed spirits of national pride awaited resurrection (Fischer 1984 p.64).

However, while invoking the name of Daniel Burnham and the City Beautiful ethos, the senators simultaneously asserted that the pursuit of Garden City style aesthetics was the priority for the development of Canberra. This was also a view that sat right alongside the general planning consensus that the application of the Garden City ideal to Canberra should be interpreted as only 'a city of gardens'.

It was surmised by the inquiry that Griffin's plan was 'aristocratic' and 'un-Australian' and as such, the pursuit of middle class ideals in the form of large and well-landscaped bungalow residences should be championed, as these building types better represented a modern aspirational democracy. This decision was explicitly made at the expense of higher density flats, which were indicated to hold no small degree of stigma associated with working class squalor (Fischer 1984 p.64 -65).

The English town planner William Holford, whose opinion on the development of the city was sought, most likely at the behest of the Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, only reinforced this point of view. Holford's 1958 report has been characterised as a discredit to one of the greatest city plans of the century and a transparent justification for the conventional wisdom of the day, rather than an objective critique of Griffin's vision (Reid 1993 p.222). Collectively, the inquiry and Holford's findings held the view that Griffin's plan was a significant factor in the underdevelopment of the city as 'it had failed to create a city' (NCDC 1970 p.15).

Holford's report recommended a number of key modifications from the gazetted plan of Griffin's design, including a rejection of any more monumental buildings north of

the lake, in case they impinge on the established cottage character and divert the eye from the scenic vistas (Reid 1993 p.221). These are considerations that Griffin's plan had considered and fully accommodated for without sacrificing the viability of either aspect.

Taking the low-density design policy favoured thus far by all the preceding government administrative bodies, Holford sought to take it one step further by combining the cultural and civic aspects of the city with the established garden city character, as he stated in his recommendations:

Canberra is already a city of gardens...One hopes that it will remain so... the maintenance of a garden character in the residential parts of the city is more important than raising the density (Proudfoot 1994 p.100).

Significantly, it was also one of his recommendations that the city be opened to high-speed freeways and arterial road systems to allow a greater degree of automobile amenity. This suggestion is concurrent with the post-war growth policies favoured by most major cities of the day, but as Reid states, this idea would have far reaching impacts on the overall coherence of the built form of the city:

Griffin had planned his roads as arteries of civic life along which the most intensive activities gathered and which provided the moving citizen with a continuous revelation of geometric order of the city. Holford was not interested in Griffin's order. He turned Griffin's settlement pattern inside out. For Griffin the avenues were seams, Holford was to make them barriers (Reid 1993 p.220).

The NCDC

Reid identifies 1957 as the turning point for planning in Canberra. 'The capital finally received political and financial commitment from the Federal Government, a powerful development organisation was established and the Griffin plan was finally abandoned' (Reid 1993 p.213).

The newly formed National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) took up Holford's recommendations with great enthusiasm and proceeded to completely shed itself of any remaining responsibility to more holistically implement Griffin's vision beyond its already established structural aspects. As an introductory chapter of a key NCDC planning document asserts 'there is an obligation to the integrity of Griffin's plan and it is in the area of aesthetics and symbolism rather than in land use, economic or social terms that this issue becomes crucial' (NCDC 1970 p.49).

To its credit, a staggering amount of development was accomplished under the NCDC but this can largely be attributed to two factors; the first was an unprecedented degree of population growth owing to both the post-war economic boom and the increase supplied by the wholesale relocation of government departments into the city. The second was the enviable powers and political support granted to the commission during its reign, a change dictated by Menzies' direct personal interest in the Department's success, in light of the decades of underachievement that had preceded it. Unlike its predecessor, the Commission was a fully autonomous body that did not have to report to a Federal Minister for his approval before commencing works. Additionally, the Commission was granted generous budget allowances based on guaranteed five year spending timeframes (Fischer 1984 p.66).

One key piece of work completed by the NCDC in 1964 was Griffin's conceptual water axis - the two bridges that defined the arms of Griffin's Parliamentary Triangle were completed and the lake was eventually filled by the construction of Scrivener Dam and the subsequent flooding of the Molonglo River basin. However, while the completed lake was subsequently named after the city's architect it could perhaps be that Griffin would have traded this legacy for a more substantial realisation of his city design, a prospect which under the NCDC's mandate had become exceedingly unlikely.

However, the NCDC's most urgent task was the provision of housing, which was undertaken within the northern portion of the city – an area that had remained relatively undeveloped in comparison to the more 'prestige' localities around the intended 'initial city' site of Manuka and Kingston. As such, the suburbs of Campbell, Dickson Ainslie and Lyneham were rapidly developed as dormitory

suburbs, with all retailing located within their respective neighbourhood centres (NCDC 1970 p.17). However, the continuing population growth, the mass proliferation of automobiles and relocation of public servants subsequently prompted the Commission's planners to look beyond the established city for expansion (Norman 1993 p.226).

Suburban Growth and the Y Plan

The success the NCDC enjoyed ultimately meant that the particular ideas and agendas that the Commission and its chief officers favoured were to have the most decisive impact on the development of the city in its post-Griffin history. Under the Commission, Canberra changed from a relatively small metropolitan nucleus grouped around the existing skeleton of Griffin's city core to a fully-fledged metropolitan region and Australia's largest inland city. While the policies and planning directions adopted by the Department were clearly works of their time, for the most part they were expertly implemented.

By 1959, the future growth of the city was divided between two options. The first was to pursue intensification of density within the existing city and then allow the city to gradually spread out at its borders in the way that all other Australian cities had done. The second option was to make a conscious decision to prioritise and maintain the open space aesthetics of Canberra by pursuing an overall metropolitan form comprised of spatially separate satellite town centres with adjoining dormitory suburbs connected by automobile dominated freeways and arterial roads (Linge 1975 p.32).

This second option appealed far more to the planners as it embraced both popular modernist planning principals reminiscent of Le Corbusier's 'Radiant City' as well as the preservation of the pastoralist Garden City character, which had been identified as a top priority. Additionally, it was a relatively new and untried concept that would allow Canberra's planners to both capitalise on the unique opportunities that the Canberra site offered and to learn from the mistakes made by the other state capitals (Fischer 1984 p.77).

Accordingly, in their 1965 document 'The Future of Canberra', the NCDC laid down a general plan of exurban growth for the soon to be decentralised city which accommodated a projected population of 250,000 (Norman 1993 p.226). This policy direction was further augmented by a transport land use study conducted by an American transport planning firm who were commissioned to further analyse growth options for the city via computer modelling of transport flows with regards to population targets and employment densities. The results of this study was soon to be dubbed 'The Y Plan' as it recommended development of a linear series of new towns extending to the south, northeast and northwest of the existing city, creating a 'Y' shaped conurbation (Morrison 2000 p.122 - 123).

These self-contained new towns were to each house a population of 80,000 – 100,000 and were to include a strong sense of spatial hierarchy from the dominant central town centre, to a group centre with community and school facilities which would then be comprised of a cluster of suburbs each with their own smaller neighbourhood centre and local shops. This basic pattern provided a template for virtually identical suburbs to be developed with a maximum of factory-like efficiency in order to meet the projected population targets, with an overriding zeal that seemed driven by the assumption that the city would experience virtually continuous growth (Fischer 1984 p.96). In this way, the post-war suburbs of Canberra represent a complete synthesis of modernist transport planning initiatives and the ever-pervading Garden City aesthetic.

The first new town centres proposed were Woden to the south, which was founded in 1964, and Belconnen to the north, which followed in 1966. These new towns represent the height of modernist planning in Canberra and the most visible impact of the NCDC's reign. To bolster the growth of these centres, government departments were dispersed away from Griffin's government group and into the new town centres. This policy of employment decentralisation was intended to provide an independent job base for the new satellite towns and encourage suburban growth around them, as well as sparing the now ornamental parliamentary area from 'overdevelopment'.



Figure 2.2: Woden town centre and surrounding suburbs 1972

The overall density of the now dispersed city form is clearly illustrated by a 1981 study which found that statistically, Canberra was the second lowest density city in a study of thirty-two other interstate and international cities, with only Houston and Phoenix, Texas coming in below it. The population and employment density of its central core area was also second lowest (Newman and Kenworthy 1991 p.15 – 18). However, it also found that the decentralisation of employment within these new centres had not reduced the overall amount of cross-city commuting undertaken in Canberra, which is comparable to or beyond that of a city developed without separate satellite town centres (Newman and Kenworthy 1991 p.19).

The degree of importance to which automobiles were to play in Canberra's future was implicit in the NCDC's adoption of a linear growth model over the radial or concentric patterns that underpinned both Howard's Garden Cities and Griffin's plan. This decision was made under the assumption that multidirectional transport flows would be minimised and better controlled under a linear network of freeways (Fischer

1984 p.94). Arterial roads now fragmented the city, inhibiting the potential for more vibrant and spontaneous forms of development. Although the implementation of neighbourhood centres throughout the city's suburbs has provided a certain degree of suburban self-sufficiency, this has not substantially reduced the total amount of car use. Automobile dependency is further entrenched by the lack of a competitive public transport network.

Although the concept of spatially segregating different land uses, such as the proposed industrial and manufacturing sector, is clearly evident in Griffin's design, the implementation of the NCDC's peripheral growth policies has resulted in a truly fragmented overall city form that is far beyond that of its creator's vision. However, although they may be spatially segregated, the fact remains that all the town centres in modern-day Canberra, blighted with surface car parking and fragmented by arterial roads, do not really differ from the established Civic centre. This is a testament to how far from Griffin's ideal city Canberra has strayed.



Figure 2.4: City Hill surrounded by car parks, arterial roads and emerging civic centre, 1960s

Ian Morrison asserts that the interests of Griffin's national capital landscape were well served by the Y-Plan (Morrison 2000 p.124). If this statement refers solely to the landscaped character of Griffin's plan then it is true, as the overriding theme of development within the confines of landscape topography has been maintained and Canberra's 'bush capital' character endures. However, to this day little has been done to strategically develop the more cosmopolitan aspects of Griffin's proposed urban form.

It is clear that the achievements of the NCDC did imbue the planning authorities in Canberra with a new sense of professional purpose and confidence as well as allowing the city to finally come closer to meeting national expectations of what the Federal capital should be like. However, under their tenure the process of designing an urban environment became a systematic and standardised process that aimed to provide homogenous dormitory suburbs and sterile town centres that appear completely uninspired when compared to Griffin's vision for Canberra.

Furthermore, the population growth that could have filled Griffin's vibrant and dense inner city locations was spent on peripheral growth and the city was decentralised in line with contemporaneous developments within other Australian cities, as well as the majority of post industrial cities the world over. As such, the core of the city was abandoned and Griffin's vision of vibrant avenues and boulevards was once again denied in the name of pragmatism and a new zeitgeist that could find no room for such extravagances within the functionalist and modernist city that Canberra had become.

1988 and Beyond – Self-Government and Dual Control

Having completed its task of establishing Canberra as a city of national significance, the NCDC's political worth dissipated during the 1980's and it was dissolved in 1988 to coincide with the onset of self-government in the Territory. This was accompanied by a growing consensus that Canberra, as a city in its own right, should not longer be so dependant on Federal Government funding and should look towards establishing a greater role for the private sector within it future.

As the last decades of the 20th Century passed they provided little in the way of ideas beyond the status quo established under the NCDC. Four decades of low-density decentralisation have resulted in an urban form that can be described as a collection of suburbs in search of a city.

The latest town centres in Canberra's growing metropolitan chain, Tuggeranong and Gungahlin, represent the crystallisation of the modernist planning ideals that have informed the growth of Canberra in the post-war era – faceless low density dormitory suburbs grouped around town centres that have minimal internal employment capacity and relatively ineffectual public transportation linkages.

Rather than contributing to Griffin's intention that Canberra be an exceptional city, the proliferation of housing that comprises these areas are virtually identical to the sprawling suburbs that dominate the peripheries of any other Australian city. It seems fair to say that the north and south of Canberra's now significantly elongated growth corridor is more the result of subdivision design and private homebuilder's budgets than strategic planning.

The size and proportions of dwellings have been left to the economics of land development, and its aesthetic tastes dumbed down to a pitiful variation in built form. This has provided an urban environment that is packed with identical and poorly designed houses on minimum lot sizes, which are then grouped into collections of suburbs serviced by roads that do not act as any form of gateway into the town centres, but instead disengage with the urban form.

Now that the 20th Century has come to a close, we can see the city for what it is not and what it unfortunately was destined to become. It is not a city, as Griffin intended, that offers the best of both the vibrant public world and the secluded private world, but rather a city without balance and an urban environment in quiet crisis. Griffin's true vision for Canberra has been lost in the demands of the century that shaped it and Canberra's century long journey from an ideal city to an idle city is complete.

Part 3 - The Canberra Legacy



Figure 3.1 Cityscapes and landscapes merge

Today's Canberra

Over the course of the post-war era, Canberra has grown from an unrealised vision into Australia's largest inland city, with a population of 329,000 people. However, what has remained constant throughout this period is that planning has been very much at the forefront of its evolution over the course of the 20th Century. Fischer succinctly summarises this situation:

During its major phases of growth Canberra enjoyed planning conditions that planners elsewhere can only dream of. In its role as the capital of a young, patriotically minded federation, Canberra has been treated through most of its history as a prestige object and has consequently been endowed with a great deal of idealism, finance and planning expertise (Fischer 1984 p.1).

From a planner's point of view, Canberra presents an exceptional test case for a variety of planning ideas. Due to its special circumstances as both a city created for a specific purpose and given exceptional consideration by the planning profession during its lifetime, each of the different ideologies and paradigms that have guided planning policy in Canberra after Griffin has been given the opportunity to meet their full potential, and each idea has been executed to a degree of exactitude unsurpassed anywhere else in Australia.

An important aspect of this 'success' can be attributed to the presence of a series of influential planning authorities from 1925 until the inception of territory self-government in 1988. While these departments varied in levels of autonomy and power from the ineffectual NCPDC to the 'super department' that was the NCDC, each department, either through their collective action or inaction as the case may have been, has exerted an influence over planning in Canberra that would ensure that the impact of their collective legacies would come to define the city in a way that Griffin's plan could never approach.

Despite the decades of planning, growth and different policies and personalities that have altered the course of Canberra since Griffin's departure in 1920, the architect's name and the city will forever be intrinsically linked. However, some degree of

interpretation is required in assessing just how far from Griffin's vision planning policy in Canberra has strayed.

Peter Harrison (1995 p.92-93) finds some degree of synergy between the original plan for the city and its modern day reality by crediting Griffin with an innate understanding of a number of key planning principles that would later come to define modern-day Canberra. These ideas primarily involve both the sub-centralisation of functions within well-connected but functionally independent suburban centres and the favouring of dispersed employment centres and decentralisation of city functions as opposed to an adoption of a conventional business district.

Both these ideas are certainly evident in Griffin's plan and they maintain an ideological link that begins with Howard's Garden City and carries through to the modernist growth policies that have shaped the city where they have found a more contemporary resonance within new urbanism and, to a degree, within modern concepts of sustainable environmental design.

However, the reality is that the more bold social engineering aspects of Howard's ideas have been disregarded in favour of a more superficial approximation of the Garden City aesthetic. As such, it should be noted that a strong link exists between these aspects of Canberra's urban morphology and the similarly pretty but ineffectual planned Garden City environs of Daceyville in Sydney's Eastern suburbs. This is not surprising because Daceyville was planned and built during that first decade of the 20th Century, by none other than John Sulman (Garnaut 2000 p.54), the man who perhaps more than any other deserves the most credit for altering Griffin's vision of a dense and vibrant inner city area to that of a more expedient and low density Garden City environment.



Figure 3.2: An example of Canberra's neighbourhood open spaces, Woden town centre in distance

The integration of the city with its surrounding bush landscape is the one element of Griffin's original design that has fared the best in terms of its continuation throughout the growth of the city in the century following its inception. While the post-Griffin history of planning in the capital has seen a number of departmental name changes, the Garden City aesthetic first championed by Sulman has remained unchallenged. The relatively unengaging low density neighbourhoods and the monumentally spaced formal areas that now define Canberra as a city are both differing expressions of the same overall idea that has been enthusiastically pursued in the post-Griffin planning of Canberra.

There is no doubt that a conscientious use of space is the defining aspect of Canberra that sets it apart from other Australian cities. This aspect was as vital to Griffin's plan as it was to any that have come after, but it is the way that this space has been used that sets them apart. Under the Griffin plan, open space was used selectively and with skill to highlight certain aspects while leaving other areas to accumulate an

appropriate degree of built form density. The plans of the subsequent government departments have pursued open space zealously from the small-scale densities of neighbourhoods to the massing of buildings along the avenues as well as within the landscape of the national triangle area.



Figure 3.3: The legacy of modernist planning – freeways in a garden landscape

However, this agenda was not just one sided. Having been established in its low-density garden character, the residents of Canberra were at times even more vehemently opposed any concession to medium density housing in their city than the planners (Fischer 1984 p.117 –118). This attitude was still fuelled by the same social stigma that motivated Holford and the Senate Committee in the 50s. In this way, we can see that Canberra's environment, having been shaped by the mind set of politicians and planners, has in turned shaped the perceptions of its residents, who now seem to regard the low-density Garden City character of their city as sacrosanct, and as their only safeguard against the moral and social disintegration that blighted other cities.

After nearly a century of Canberra's life as an urban environment it is now clear that Griffin's use of density and massing would have generated an amount of 'critical mass', which in turn would have encouraged a more vibrant and ultimately sustainable city than the at times sterile and overstated character that has come to define it. As Australian planning historians Robert Freestone and Stephen Hamnett state;

Implementation of the Griffin scheme saw its richly symbolic and artistic content expunged in favour of garden suburbanism (Hamnett and Freestone 2000 p.7).

So, while the continuity of ideas pursued by figures such as Le Notre, L'Enfant and Burnham that culminated in the City Beautiful movement provided the basis from which Griffin made his design and united the various elements of his plan, they are clearly lacking in the city as it is realised today. Reid asserts that modern Canberra is not the city that its creator envisioned and although a great deal of development has occurred within the area of Griffin's plan, not to mention what now lies beyond, there is still a distinct divide between the city that he envisioned and the reality on the ground.

Reid further adds that:

The Canberra that we know today is not Griffin's 'Organic City'. [He states that] Today, Canberra's citizens proudly claim Griffin as the designer of their city. They usually invoke his name to justify any particular interpretation of the plan they favour at its time. The impression given is that modern Canberra is Griffin's city, with a few changes necessitated by modern life, of which he would have approved. In fact, the vitality of Griffin's proposed urban terraces and monuments has been replaced by quiet suburbs in a serene landscape (Reid 2002 p.4).

Outside Opinions

It is true that many Canberrans, particularly those with young families, champion their city for providing what they perceive as high quality low-density suburban living.

Clearly access to the surrounding natural environment remains unparalleled in any other Australian city. However, these are qualities that remain unrecognised by Canberra's interstate detractors.

It comes as no surprise then that despite all the efforts and best intentions of the planners that have worked in the city since its inception, mainstream Australian culture continues to criticise Canberra as a place to live. Most of this often satirical content is written by Melbourne or Sydney-based journalists, whose comments aim to label the city as a 'soulless' and 'artificial' place dominated by utilitarian roundabouts and excessive land use zoning.

Australian comedian Jean Kittson satirically asserts in a 2004 magazine opinion piece 'Canberra is not the capital of Australia. Sydney is... the big deals that make and define Australia are not made in Shirl's Deli, ACT with glimpses of Fyshwick through the greasy windows, but in Sydney Harbour's unrivalled waterfront restaurants, with magnificent views of Kirribilli house.' Kittson also reiterates former Prime Minister Paul Keating's comment that 'if you're not living in Sydney you're just camping out' (Kittson 2004).

Telegraph columnist Joe Hildebrand has also provided his own satirical perspective on the capital in a 2005 opinion piece titled 'A Capital Idea That Went Horribly Wrong' which begins with the confession that 'last weekend I did something dodgy, deviant and downright un-Australian. I went to Canberra' (Hildebrand 2004).

Hildebrand also offers an appraisal of the city's bush surrounds by asserting that 'Canberra tourism types boast that while many cities have parks scattered through them, "Canberra is a city scattered through a park". What they neglect to mention is that it is a city scattered through a car park.' He also describes the place as a suburb in search of a city and derides its public transport system by stating, 'You are more likely to catch arthritis than a form of transport.'

Clearly these examples of 'Canberra-bashing' are heavily influenced by the author's bias towards their native Sydney. Let us not forget that Canberra was founded on a

piece of land that the New South Wales colony considered of little enough value to be donated to the nascent Commonwealth.

American travel author Bill Bryson, in his book ‘Down Under’ offers warm-hearted reviews of many Australian towns and cities, but can only describe his night spent in Canberra in similarly unimpressive terms, such as his arrival into the city from The Federal Highway:

You approach Canberra along a dual carriageway through rural woodland, which gradually morphs into a slightly more urban boulevard, though still in woodland, until finally you arrive at a zone of well-spaced but significant looking buildings and you realise that you are there – or as near there as you can get in a place as scattered and vague as Canberra (Bryson 2000 p.120).

His assessment of the Garden-City design principles of its inner city neighbourhoods:

I walked for two hours through green, pleasant, endlessly identical neighbourhoods, never entirely confident that I wasn’t just going round in a large circle. From time to time I would come to a leafy roundabout with roads radiating off in various directions, each presenting an identical vista of antipodean suburban heaven, and I would venture down the one that looked most likely to take me to civilization only to emerge ten minutes later at another identical roundabout (p.121-122).

And his experience with the city’s nightlife:

Canberra has quite a lot of this, as I was to discover – eating and drinking in large characterless hotels and other neutral spaces, so that you spend much of the time feeling as if you are on some kind of long layover at an extremely spacious international airport (p.124).

However, one example of a supposedly less satirically oriented piece of journalistic criticism of Canberra comes from Australia’s leading free-market conservative think tank, the Institute of Public Affairs. In September 2006, the Institute published a press release naming the creation of Canberra as the 13th biggest mistake to have befallen

Australia in the nation's history. In this release the Institute described the Canberra's inception as 'a grubby compromise between New South Wales and the other states' and described the city as 'sprawling suburbs of looping bitumen mazes, divided rather than linked by bloodless arterials and here and there punctuated by official buildings of intermediate style and uncertain purpose' (MacDonald 2006).

This particularly scathing and humourless attack could be motivated by the Institute's political agenda. Regardless, all the above examples of published anti-Canberra sentiment, and countless more not mentioned here, seem to fixate on a few key aspects of the city. These are namely a sense of artificiality, a lack of vibrancy, a lack of corresponding amenities such as public transport and an overall indistinct and under-utilised urban form. Unfortunately, the reality is that due to the cumulative decisions of Canberra's planners over the course of the 20th Century, their assessments are for the most part correct.

In fact, even local voices are now beginning to articulate a more critical stance about their city, as is evident in an article by Canberra journalist Alex Tricolas:

A lack of amenities along with the relatively low key life style attributable to suburban sprawl have given us a reputation for being a boring place to live and changing perceptions is going to take more than a cheesy marketing plan (Tricolas 2006 p.36).

One conclusion that could be drawn from these criticisms is that perhaps planning a city in some way robs it of all charm and vitality and that it is the sheer planned nature of Canberra that undermines its attempts at trying to become a city of worth and distinction. However, no city exists that has not involved some degree of formal or informal planning and the act of planning in itself has not prevented the establishment of vital and relevant urban environments all over the world. So, while this may be a reasonable assumption, it is clear that Canberra's problems lie not in the presence of planning itself but in the nature of its planning.

Accordingly, it is one of the main assertions in this thesis that the combination of Garden-City design principles with modernist satellite town growth planning is primarily responsible for the Canberra that we know today. Furthermore, the pursuit

of this planning agenda has robbed Canberra of the vitality and activity that is expected and needed in a city of its role and significance.

Which way forward?

Clearly, the pursuit of visionary planning is of paramount importance to realigning Canberra's urban future with the qualities that are expected of it. But while Griffin essentially had a clean slate to start from, every planner in the ACT since has had to take into account what has come before. So, discounting any differences in political interest and funding mechanisms, the main difference between being a Canberra planner in 1916 and 2006 is that, naturally, today's planners have to consider every bit of freeway and low-density dormitory suburb that have proliferated in the city during the post war period. The existing differences between older and more modern areas of the city will also result in differing challenges to adapting the existing built form to incorporate a more holistic vision for the city.

These considerations also include the differing roles and responsibilities of the two separate planning bodies that now have dual responsibility for the city as both a national capital and Australia's largest inland urban environment. The city now also has a significant degree of 'lived history' and established Canberrans will naturally hold preconceived notions about what it is like to live in Canberra. These residents will likely challenge, at least to some degree, changes to the city that they know. The public consultation techniques that are now a standard aspect of modern strategic planning is one area where a contemporary planner is better equipped to implement a strategic vision than Griffin or his contemporaries ever were.

Of course, administrative considerations and the presence of existing built forms are factors inherent in any established urban environment, but what is relatively unique to Canberra is that, despite the radical departures that have occurred since, the vision of its architect is still strongly embedded in the structure of the city, waiting to be realised.

Although his time in Canberra was clearly fraught with more difficulties than he had expected, it is a significant indication of the strength of Griffin's vision that his plan

can be still looked to as the blueprint for future development in the capital almost a century after its conception.

The Griffin Plan has proven to be remarkably robust, despite significant departures from it in the eighty-odd years since the Plan's formal gazettal. Many of its progressive urban design principles have renewed currency in contemporary planning, for they offer not only an elegant framework for the continued development of the National Capital's monumental core but a viable pattern for a sustainable and economically competitive city (NCA 2004 p.9).

It is this realisation that most firmly portrays the decisions that have occurred in the post-war period as failures to capitalise on the vision of Griffin's Plan. During this period, the proper development of the city's core area has been abandoned in favour of a frenzy of peripheral growth management. Although Canberra's planning history does indicate that these decisions were made under the best intentions of the time, in view of the city as it is today it is difficult to view them as nothing short of a ill-advised betrayal of the architect's vision.

However, it could also be considered fortunate that, rather than implementing a wholesale reconfiguration and marring of Griffin's city core, Canberra's planners have allowed this area to remain structurally intact and only underdeveloped. As such, the potential for fulfilling Griffin's intended vision of a vibrant and cosmopolitan city centre still remains and it is fortunate for both Canberra's future and the legacy of Griffin's vision that a shift towards a more holistic approach to planning policy within the Territory became apparent during the late 90s. As such, the start of the 21st century has offered a new lease of life for Griffin's plan.

The NCA and The Griffin Legacy

Griffin has always had his admirers and certain people have championed him and his vision. Unfortunately, none of these enthusiasts seemed to have any influence where it mattered during the decades that followed his departure. Planning officers within the ACT seemed to want to put as much distance between their policies and the ancient history that Griffin and his plan had been relegated to.

Nevertheless, in light of the history discussed thus far, it seems remarkable that it has taken almost eighty years since Griffin's plan was partially gazetted in Parliament for a planning document to be released that in some way recognises the strengths of the 1912 plan, and builds these to further develop the original and underlying vision for Canberra. The Griffin legacy is the first document to if not take planning policy in the ACT full circle by reinstating the ideas and principles of Griffin's plan, then to at least acknowledge that a debt of closure is owed to the architect of the city.

This strategic document has been coordinated by the National Capital Authority (NCA), one of the two bodies responsible for planning policy in the ACT. However, the NCA is a Commonwealth Government body and as such is only responsible for the areas defined as being relevant to the city's role as a national capital. As such, the study area to which this reassessment of the relevance of Griffin's Plan has been applied is limited to Griffin's parliamentary triangle and all areas around the lakeshore including the airport, Constitution Avenue, City Hill and the Australian National University campus.

The broad objective of the Griffin legacy document is to both promote Griffin's contribution to Canberra as being of national and international significance, to endeavour to protect the integrity of the established elements from future development and to reassert the Griffin Plan as the overriding strategic framework for the city's urban form, landscape and symbolism (NCA 2004 p.154). However, from a strictly strategic point of view the four main initiatives proposed in this document can be defined as: reinforcing the intended form and function of the municipal axis, re-establishing City Hill as the heart of the city, extending the city to the lake foreshore.

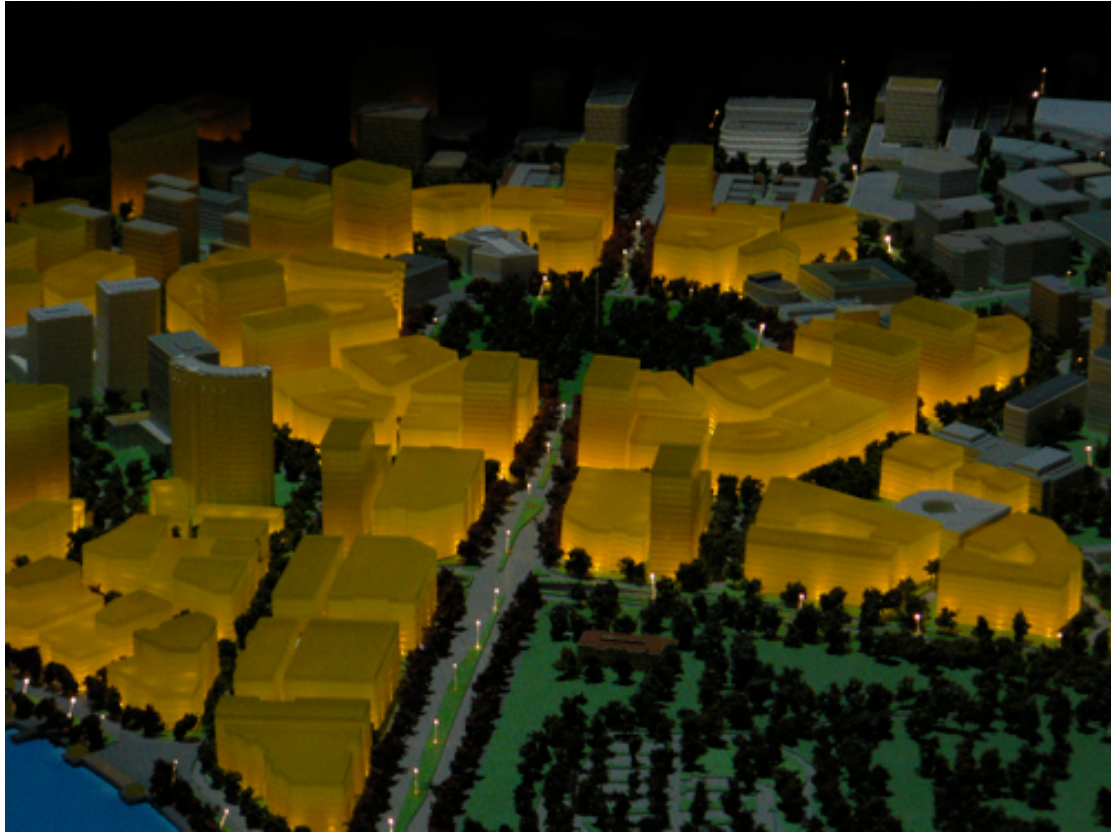


Figure 3.4: Proposed City Hill Redevelopment and Westlake Extension

Restoring City Hill

City Hill stands as a very physical reminder of how modern day Canberra has strayed from Griffin's integrated city plan. The site is a completely under-utilised and neglected facet of the city, which is isolated from the rest of the Civic centre by surface car parking and Vernon Circle, a main north-south arterial road. It is also structurally integral to the city centre and as such is a natural focal point for the redevelopment campaign.

Under the Griffin Legacy initiatives the reassertion of City Hill as both a symbolic and geographic nucleus for the city is to be achieved by surrounding it with a high density of mixed-use development and recasting Vernon Circle as an 'urban boulevard'. Pedestrian axis across Vernon Circle will be reprioritised by the implementation of crossings and other traffic calming measures while the cross city

traffic flow that currently blights this area will be diverted along other surrounding tributaries (NCA 2004 p.155 p.179).

University / Civic Interface

As City Hill is located between the Australian National University campus and the rest of the city, its redevelopment is integral in achieving better interconnectivity across the entire area. Several vistas connect City Hill to the university, but these two sites are fragmented by aboveground parking, vacant land and arterial roads. These avenues will be reinforced with corridors of mixed use development, that will link the development around City Hill with the university as well as the National Museum located beyond, overcoming this spatial segregation and creating a number of gateways between the sites which will in turn give rise to new areas of public space (NCA 2004 p170).

The university also has the potential to provide an across-town cycle and pedestrian path. The existing path from the suburbs to the north will be extended through the university campus and will join the existing lakefront cycle path, linking the National Museum of Australia with the Central National Area via a pedestrian bridge from the Acton Peninsula over the lake to King Georges Terrace (NCA 2004 p.173).

City West Lakeshore Extension

The main aim of this initiative is to more successfully link the city to both the lake foreshore and Commonwealth Park. Currently a considerable amount of underdeveloped land and an arterial road (Parkes Way) acts as a barrier between these two areas of the city, dividing the city centre from the lakeshore areas and Commonwealth Park, discouraging linkages between them. The Griffin Legacy document proposes to unite these two areas, primarily via the construction of a land bridge, which would effectively provide a platform for the continuation of built forms from City Hill over an enclosed Parks Way to Commonwealth Park and the lake.

This will extend the consolidated development around City Hill to the lake foreshore, enhancing vistas and corridors from the heart of the city towards the lake and

providing the city with an active lake front promenade. An additional land bridge towards the west will also unite the southern half of the university campus and Acton Peninsula, which now houses the National Museum of Australia.

Reinforcing the Municipal Axis

Constitution Avenue is Griffin's municipal axis and was intended to be Canberra's grand boulevard; a thoroughfare supporting a rich and vibrant mix of urban life and recreational activities. However, as it stands today, 'the people's axis' acts as merely an arterial road featuring only a haphazard collection of unintegrated buildings interspersed with car parks and portions of unengaging landscaping.

The Griffin Legacy initiatives propose to establish Constitution Avenue as a corridor of mixed-use development that will support its new role as a vibrant commercial and retail boulevard befitting its key position within Griffin's cityscape. This new vibrant activity corridor will link the City Hill and defence headquarters site and be punctuated at its midpoint (the intersection of Anzac Parade and the symbolic 'land axis') by a newly reinforced formal public gateway to the landscaped lakefront environs beyond (NCA 2004 p.162).

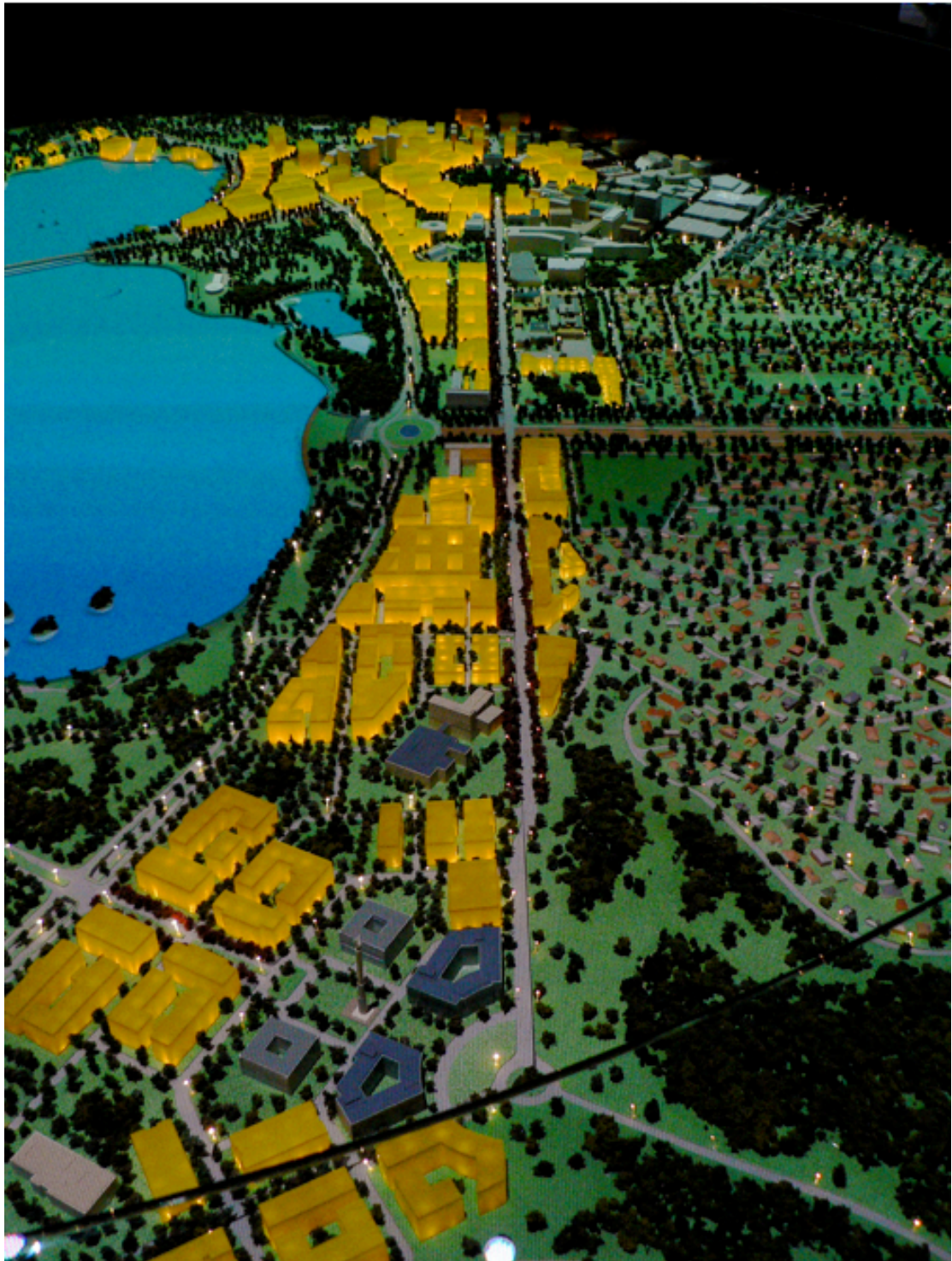


Figure 3.5: Proposed consolidation along Constitution Avenue

The Griffin Legacy – Consensus and Criticism

The announcement of the NCA's Griffin Legacy initiatives has provoked much interest in the project by the local press, ACT Government, local industry leaders and representatives of the private sector (Thistleton 2006). But despite the potential benefits these proposed changes may provide for the city, planning academic Professor Patrick Troy has expressed doubts over the appropriateness and feasibility of the initiatives proposed by the Griffin Legacy document.

In an August 2006 broadcast on the ABC's Stateline program, Troy criticised the NCA's initiative by asserting that the influx of development within the city centre is unlikely to be achieved under current growth rates. Additionally he stated that if the desired levels of development were achieved it would spell disaster for the growth of the other town centres, particularly the largely undeveloped Gungahlin centre. He also asserts that the redistribution of traffic from Vernon Circle around City Hill to London circuit would only disrupt and fragment the existing civic centre and that the proposed residential and retail developments proposed for the City Hill, Constitution Avenue and the Westlake corridor will only cater to the wealthy and will not contribute to a vibrant mix of residents or uses (ABC 2006 online).

These assertions may indeed prove to be true, but there are steps that the Government can take to prevent them occurring, such as providing traffic calming, integrated public transport within the city and legislating requirements for the provision of affordable housing and special uses within the new developments. It is, however, essentially true that the proposed development of the city centre and the surrounding central area will absorb much of the city's growth that could potentially be accommodated within the other town centres.

The lack of a well-defined and vibrant city centre has been the focus of much criticism of Canberra as a city. Furthermore, the establishment of a strong civic heart for Canberra has been recognised by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development as a key strategic priority for planning in the city (OECD 2002). Concerns regarding the welfare of the other town centres is clearly not ill-intentioned in itself, but considering that the city centre has been left fragmented and under-

utilised for most of the 20th Century, consolidation of this area should be considered well overdue and of the utmost priority for strategic planning in Canberra.

The initiatives proposed under the Griffin Legacy document constitute a well-balanced strategy for retrospectively reasserting Griffin's vision in the city without compromising the functioning of aspects that have been implemented following his departure. The main underlying objective of this initiative is to interconnect and de-fragment the city centre. Interconnectivity will be achieved between the existing civic centre, the defence headquarters, City Hill, the university campus, the lakefront and the National Capital Area beyond. This development has been planned to enhance and maintain the formal landscape qualities implicit in Griffin's design for the city centre while providing a density of development capable of supporting a vibrant mix of land uses. This will in turn help to foster a much needed cosmopolitan character.

Reinstating Griffin's Legacy Beyond the National Capital Area

Canberra's weaknesses, as identified by most criticisms levelled at it, are primarily in its inner core area. The lack of a vibrant and well-defined civic centre is the paramount concern for planners in the Territory. As such, the priorities of the Griffin legacy are aimed at redefining this central area at the expense of the other town centres and districts that comprise the ACT's modern day metropolitan area. However, this does not preclude that other areas outside the NCA's domain, including other town centres, do not require a reassessment of their urban form in terms of the virtues espoused by Griffin in his plan for the city's core area.

The NCA and ACTPLA – A Strategic Synergy

In order for these principles to be applied across the metropolitan region, the initiatives proposed under the Griffin Legacy document need to be adopted by the Territory government's planning body, The Australian Capital Territory Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA). But while this link between Griffin's vision and strategic objectives for the city today is not implicit, ACTPLA's 2004 strategic policy document 'The Canberra Spatial Plan' does outline plans to incorporate strategic consolidation of development within selected corridors and centres across the city. It

also professes a commitment to limiting almost all future urban growth to within the existing urban framework (ACTPLA 2004 p. 30).

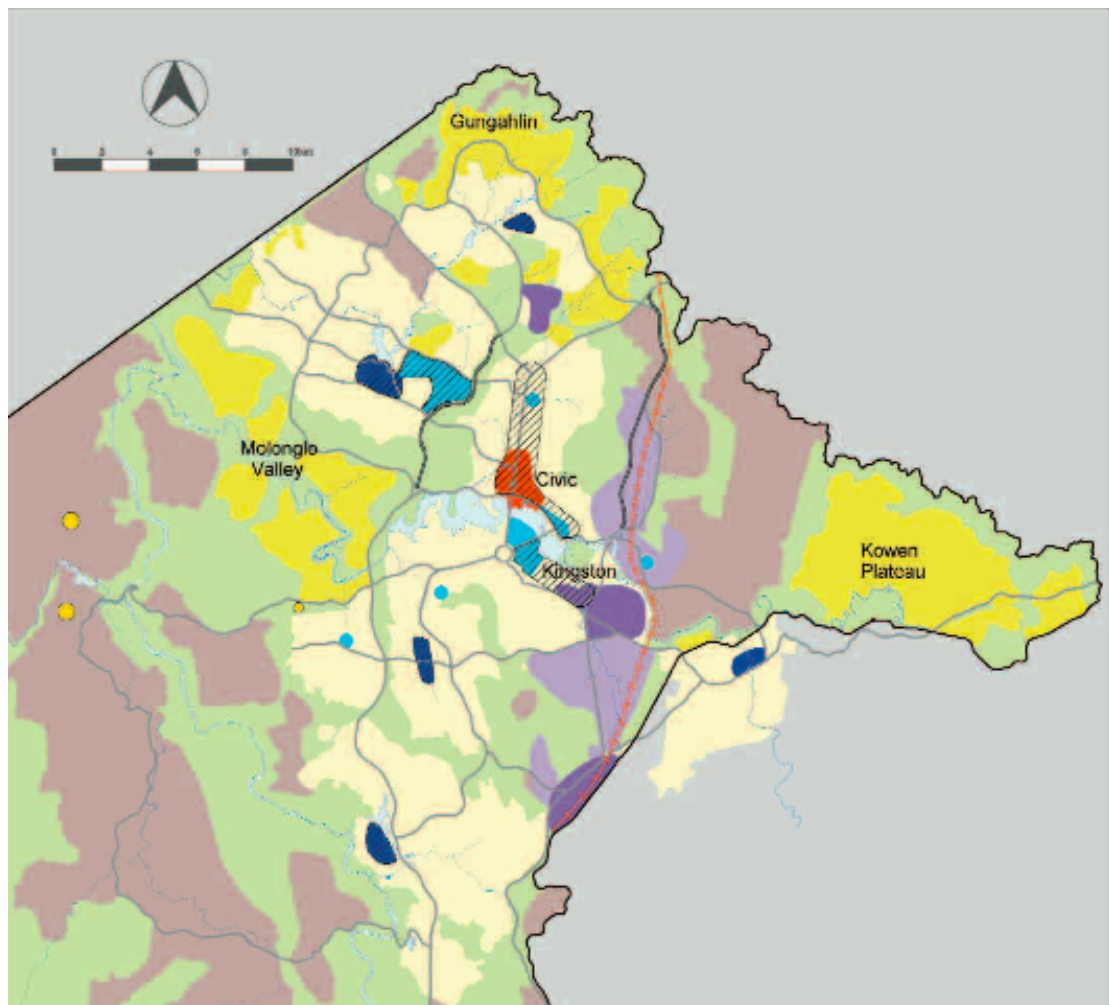


Figure 3.6: ACTPLA's 2004 plan for urban consolidation and future greenfields development

While this is encouraging, it is probably more appropriate to frame this policy direction within the context of similar consolidation policies being favoured in other Australian cities over the last decade, rather than a wholesale reappraisal of the principles underpinning Griffin's Plan. It is unlikely that both planning bodies are unaware of the renewed synergy between the design principles espoused by Griffin's vision for a cosmopolitan city centre and a modern understanding of what makes a city centre vibrant and sustainable.

This difference in agendas could be due to the differing political spheres in which these bodies operate. While the NCA is administered at a Commonwealth level and only deals with a specific area of the city that does not include a significant amount of residential land use, ACTPLA is more politically vulnerable as it represents the Territory government, who may well be held liable by their local electorate for implementing planning policies that boldly redefine areas of the established city and may alter their conceptions of present levels of amenity and property value.

Being constrained by political cautiousness is nothing new to any Australian planner and soft targets are a defining feature of strategic urban planning initiatives across the nation. However, the potential benefits to Canberra and Canberrans offered by an enthusiastic reclaiming of Griffin's vision is too great to be passed up by any government that is genuinely looking to improve the vitality and liveability of its city.

The importance of following the NCA's lead and adopting the principles implicit in Griffin's vision is particularly true in relation to further peripheral growth. Under the 2004 Spatial Plan, new peripheral growth centres have been proposed within the Molonglo Valley and the Kowen Plateau, to fully exploit the developable land left within the Territory.

Currently, Canberra is facing an unprecedented rental housing crisis. The level of available rental stock within Canberra is currently the lowest within any city in Australia. As such, many young and disadvantaged people as well as residents who wish to undertake short-term education or contractual employment activities within the territory may well find it increasingly difficult to secure rental accommodation. In the medium term this may have a subsequent impact on University enrolments and skills availability within the city.

Interest groups such as The Property Council of the ACT may exert pressure on the government to encourage further land release on the periphery of the city to maintain the housing market. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that almost all new development is occurring on the fringes of the metropolitan area and is generally comprised of model homes in housing estate lots. This kind of peripheral dormitory suburb development will be located far from most employment and education areas

offered by the more established areas and are principally being occupied by young couples keen to start families, not temporary residents or young people leaving home. This situation is worsened by the lack of public transport being implemented in line with residential development in these peripheral areas.

The Territory's newest established town centre, Gungahlin, has over the course of this decade become firmly established in its residential functions. However, it is still without any significant employment base of its own, which has resulted in the need to construct an additional freeway through an environmentally sensitive hillside area to provide commuters from Gungahlin with more direct access to jobs located within the other centres.

It is highly predicable that this kind of development pattern would also characterise the development of any further town centres, which would only further contribute to Canberra's low density and car dominated nature. This would not help to address the lack of built form definition and cosmopolitan activity. The above history has shown these aspects to be the most under appreciated and neglected components of Griffin's plan and the most commonly identified failings of Canberra as an urban environment.

As such, it is paramount for strategic planning in the ACT that past errors in pursuing peripheral growth at the expense of a vibrant and well-defined urban form are not perpetuated. Unlike their interstate counterparts, the ACT Government is blessed with absolute control over the release of land in the Territory. This gives them the opportunity to end Canberra's sprawl and pursue redevelopment of the existing city in line with Griffin's vision, a vision that remains as relevant to planning in Canberra today as when it was devised at the beginning of last century.

Conclusion

That part of Canberra bearing the Griffin stamp... modest in size and altered in many respects from Griffin's vision. It remains an extraordinary achievement deserving recognition and protection as one of the treasures, not only of Australia, but of the entire world (Reps 1997 p.267).

Despite the inherently cynical and not entirely unjustified perceptions that many Sydneysiders, Melbournians or virtually any one else in Australia may have of their capital city, there is clearly more to Canberra than roundabouts and flower beds. Canberra, like other cities, has a history of its own and a story to tell to those who are interested. The history of Canberra is important, as it is in itself a documentation of the growth and evolution of planning ideals in both Australia and overseas. Additionally, the story of Canberra is important and unique, as it is the story of a city that still holds within it the vestiges of an exceptional creative vision despite the enduring misfortune and neglect that afflicted it for most of its existence.

Despite the strength of his vision, Griffin faced an ocean of opposition during his time in Canberra, while many of the faceless bureaucratic departments that followed him had a comparatively ideal administrative environment to implement their plans. From what we know of Griffin it is clear that for all that he had in terms of creative vision, he was of a generally timid character and lacking in political acumen. But considering the attitudes of those around him it is debatable whether any degree of diplomacy or charisma on his part could have offset the manner of his government colleagues, who generally perceived Griffin as an unwanted interference in the construction of their city and his plan as mere fodder for their own ideas and agendas. This conflict has been the central crux in the deciding of Canberra's fate as an urban environment.

Despite the obviously degree of exploitation and misrepresentation inherent in the administration of the 1911 competition, the degree of opposition and sabotage that Griffin faced in Canberra still seems truly staggering. To his credit the architect put up a noble battle to preserve the dignity of his plan but the degree of autonomy he

required to implement his vision was far beyond that which his detractors and their egos could allow. As Harrison puts it, Griffin 'was laying claim to the divine right of the gifted designer to dictate as his conscience commanded, a right which a democratic society rarely concedes' (Harrison 1995 p.93).

Griffin himself summarised his frustrations with his years in Australia in a 1928 publication where he stated that:

The chief curse on Australian practise of architecture... is that the over balanced governmental power and activities have case hardened the shackles of mediocrity on individual freedom and scope of opportunity (Harrison 1995 p.72)

If Griffin had been given the appropriate degree of respect and support from the government planners and other interested individuals in power he would likely have implemented his design for the city as he had envisioned it. Indeed he was as he himself stated the only one qualified to do so. Instead, the portion of Canberra designed by him remains a half completed job to this day and the city that has grown up around it has done so without the full realisation of his vision or guidance.

It is fair to say that the city itself and the concept of city planning are so palpably intertwined that in fact the fate of one could hardly be extricated from the other. Indeed Griffin's wife and working partner, Marion Mahoney-Griffin states in her unpublished memoirs that:

Canberra is the only really modern city in the world... its history from the beginning is the history of Town Planning or Land Planning in modern times...(Proudfoot 1994 p.6).

If this statement is true, then Australian planners must recognise Canberra as being the nation's pre-eminent planning object. It is therefore paramount that all planners who are concerned with the public and professional standing of the discipline in Australia take an active interest in the fate of Canberra as an urban environment. If the idea of a capital city is to embody the aspirations and dreams of a nation then

Canberra should be developed into a city that all Australians can relate to and find benefit within. Currently, the city is saddled with a stigma that it does not deserve.

The story that Canberra's planning history tells is a testament to the virtues and nobility of planning as a discipline, to the wonders that a creative vision can achieve and to how easily such a vision can be undermined and degraded by pragmatic decision making and preconceived definitions of that which is conventional and expected, as opposed to what is timeless and inspired.

It is the main assertion of this thesis that the combination of pragmatic administrative policies and needless pursuit of Garden City aesthetics and modernist planning concepts have robbed Griffin's city core of its intended vibrancy and cosmopolitan character, drastically undermining the potential of Griffin's ideal city and leaving Canberra with a considerably inferior urban environment than the one its architect proposed. It is also asserted that Griffin's plan for the city represented a crystallisation of ideal concepts in planning that have been proposed and applied all over the world over a number of centuries, and that these concepts are still relevant and applicable today.

It is only within the last five years or more that ACT planners have realised the worth of the principles invested in the Griffin Plan. The dream of the dispersed automobile city has clearly delivered more and more traffic problems, increasing infrastructure costs and well-documented blows to both environmental stability and social capital. The higher density mixed use blocks that Griffin intended to line the city's broad avenues and define its central core have now become an appealing alternative to the under-utilised spaces that leave so many visitors to the city disappointed.

The adoption of the Griffin legacy could be seen as just a convenient way to rationalise changes in urban growth and design concepts that have become populist and now *de rigueur* within the strategic planning documents of other interstate and international planning authorities. Certainly there is a surprising degree of synchronicity between Griffin's original designs for the heart of the capital and modern concepts of a compact, accessible, sustainable and vibrant city centre.

Griffin's design for Canberra should stand as an inspiring example to planners worldwide that creativity and broad strategic vision will always outshine needlessly pragmatic decision-making and uninspired solutions. Whether, one views the potential realignment of future growth policy in Canberra with Griffin's original intentions for the city as coincidence, convenience or divine retribution, it is a step in the right direction for Canberra as both Australia's most important contribution to planning worldwide and as a city in its own right.

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“O Canberra, So much to answer for”

- Grigg via Morrissey