

As we were: Canberra 1927



Canberra could not have had a more dramatic start, political intrigue that dogged the initial concept discussions to the tragic opening of Parliament House in 1927.

Over one hundred and thirty designs were received by the government for the proposed Federal City, right from the start the winning design by Walter Burley Griffin was seen by officers of the Home Affairs Department to undermine their authority, they believed that the city should be constructed and in fact should have been designed by them. King O'Malley, as Minister, appointed a Departmental Board to oversee construction of the National Capital, based on the winning design. Burley Griffin lobbied for his engagement to personally oversee construction. He was appointed Federal Capital Director of Design and Construction in October 1913 and the Departmental Board disbanded. For the next 4 years Burley Griffin's position was challenged by his critics. Accusations led to a Royal Commission, which reported in February 1917, confirming Burley Griffin's appointment.

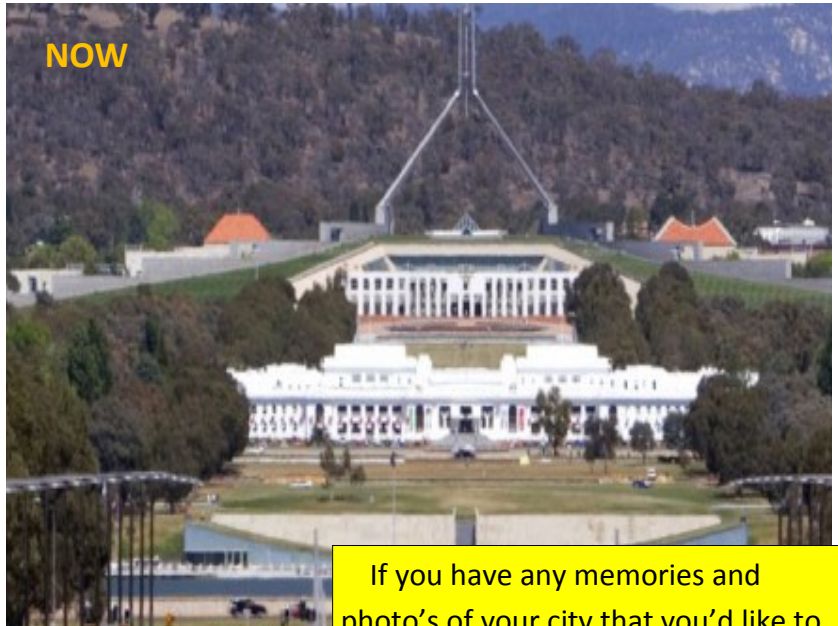
With his contract due to expire in December 1919, he could only get it extended monthly until December 1920. Changes in government administration led to the establishment of the Federal Capital Advisory Committee, from which Burley Griffin was excluded.

Parliament House was eventually ready to be opened with much pomp and ceremony on May 9th 1927. The day was marred by the tragic death of one of the air force fly-over members, whose aircraft crashed to the ground in full view of the gathered dignitaries and guests.

Canberra's early history should be read by all Australians not only because it is intriguing reading but also because it highlights Burley Griffin's own words, "the real need of an Australian national city is where politicians can be freed from domination of outside interests".

Most of us are interested in our family tree and our place in it. Even more general interest is shown when it comes to how our parents and grandparents lived, worked and survived in their personal environment and what that environment looked like. Over the next few months The Digger will reproduce city scenes from around the country in a "As we were" series, that we hope you will enjoy.

NOW



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Please do not send originals. If you would like photos returned include self addressed envelope.

Or email PDF copy to:

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