

Example Expressing Need for a Social Impact Assessment

I/we make representation in regard to development application (DA) 201221881.
I/We believe the mosque should be rejected entirely.

Firstly I/we want to make it clear that I/we are strongly in favour of religious freedom and have nothing against the persons proposing this particular mosque. My/our concerns are based on the effects on non-Muslim neighbours of mosques elsewhere in Australia and Europe.

It is not a valid argument that Islam in Australia will somehow be different or immune from the problems of violence, enclaves and no-go areas for non-Muslims that are so common overseas. Australia will not be the only country in the World where Muslims do not follow the Koran. The ACT Government as part of its planning responsibilities should take into account the potential longer term effects of developments on social harmony.

A mosque is not like a church or a temple because Islam is as much a political system as a religion and therefore seeks to dominate the area in which it is placed.

At the very least, the development should be halted while a fully independent social impact assessment is undertaken. This assessment should not be a problem for the proponent as their most recent Annual Return indicated they have only 9 members. The assessment should examine:-

- the effects of large mosques on neighbourhoods and districts in Sydney and Melbourne as well as in Europe and the USA;
- It must be done with a thorough understanding of Islamic theology; particularly territoriality, as theology is the root - behaviour follows beliefs;
- It should also include a description of territorial strategies and tactics used in the establishment and expansion of mosques; and
- obligations that come with funding from foreign sources.

We residents of Gungahlin deserve nothing less.

This DA should not be assessed under the Merit Track.

I/we request that our name and address not be included on the public register as we are concerned about possible reprisals, recriminations and personal safety. (Use your own words for the reason for wanting your details withheld so ever letter does not end the same way).

Example of a Migrant response

I/we make representation in regard to development application (DA) 201221881.
I/We believe the mosque should be rejected entirely.

I/we came to Australia to seek refuge from violence, intimidation and oppression under the Islamic regime in our home country. The mosques there were the source of much of this trouble for us. I/we feel afraid and betrayed if this mosque is allowed to be built in such a dominant position in Canberra. A mosque is a symbol of injustice and oppression to me/us.

I/we request that our name and address not be included on the public register as we are concerned about possible reprisals, recriminations and personal safety.
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Example expressing lack of adequate consultation

I/we make representation in regard to development application (DA) 201221881. I/We maintain that the mosque application should not be considered further before a proper public consultation process is undertaken across the whole of Gungahlin.

We have only just heard about the proposed mosque through a leaflet drop (or word of mouth) from private individuals. While the legal obligations may have been fulfilled, it is totally unacceptable that such a major and irreversible development should proceed without widespread opportunity for the public to be invited to express their views. Putting a sign on a block, a notice buried in a newspaper or on a website cannot be regarded as “consultation”.

Mosques often result in hostility to non-Muslims in surrounding area. Friends have told me of instances of being harassed just because they were near a mosque.

This is not to deny freedom of religion. There is something different about mosques and the ACT Government needs to acknowledge that. Why else would the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments set up Islamic advisory councils and security agents in Australia spend tens of millions of dollars watching them? No other religious organisations receive that attention.

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Example expressing traffic congestion and parking issues

I/we make representation in regard to development application (DA) 201221881. I/We maintain that the mosque application process should be restarted after the traffic Impact Assessment report is released and all who made representations provided with a copy and the opportunity to make further comment.

The “Statement Against Relevant Criteria” document under Item 4.1 states-*“The Site Investigation Report prepared for the LDA included a Traffic Impact Assessment (copy attached). The report confirms that the road network can accommodate the amount of traffic likely to be generated by the development. On the basis of this assessment, the land was leased to CMC for the development as proposed.”*

This Traffic Impact Assessment was not attached to the DA as claimed. We are therefore unable to give traffic impact a proper consideration. We request that (a) the document be provided to all who made representations and then (b) adequate time given to engage experts in the field to undertake a critical review.

In fact, even before seeing the document, it is likely that the proposed mosque would cause major traffic congestion. The DA indicates only 43 car parking spaces which apparently comply with the general code. The “Statement Against Relevant Criteria” document goes on to admit *“The subject site being within a Town Centre location, there is ample public car parking spaces available within walking distance of the site.”* But that parking is provided for business customers!

Then we now hear from members of the public that the ACT Government has licenced the proponent to use an adjoining block for an overflow carpark. Then there is the possibilities of later extensions to enlarge the capacity of the building as foreshadowed in plans submitted to the Government in order to obtain the lease on the block.

Consequently it is evident that the number of car spaces is insufficient for the size of the proposed building and at times during regular business hours there could be hundreds of vehicles wanting to enter the block by turning in front of west-bound traffic or exiting the site. Unlike churches and other meeting venues that meet on weekends, the peak period for the mosque is Friday lunch hour.

The DA misleads the public into thinking that there will only be a maximum of 43 vehicles. The question also remains as to what happens when the licence for the overflow expires. The need for car parking will remain and perhaps increase if extensions are made to the mosque but where do the overflow vehicles go then?

The Valley Avenue already carries substantial traffic and it is still largely a greenfields location. When all the zoned land in the whole general area around the mosque is taken up, the traffic congestion arising from the mosque on such a main thoroughfare during business hours would be totally unacceptable to the residents of Gungahlin.

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Example expressing concern at activity within the proposed mosque

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I/We believe the mosque should be rejected entirely.

The plan for the mosque includes a large chiller room and mentions “deceased wash + office”. If the chiller is for the storage of deceased persons then the DA is clearly in breach of its lease conditions. If the large chiller is for food storage, then again this is not an approved lease condition.

Moving on to the functions of a mosque, it should be noted that Islam is as much a political system as it is a religion and a mosque cannot be considered as the Islamic equivalent of a Buddhist temple or Christian church. A mosque is a seat of civic, political, religious, and military power. As such, a mosque is the functional equivalent of a town hall, a church, a military command centre, a law court and a civic rallying point all rolled into one.

The Articles of Association of the Canberra Muslim Community Inc. include-
Objective (f) To facilitate the performance of Muslim civil ceremonies and religious services according to Islamic Shariáh and principles, and

Objective (j) To conduct, facilitate and manage ALL[their emphasis] and activities ..in accordance with the Divine Quran and the authentic traditions of the last and final Prophet Muhammad..”

By their own words, we can thus judge the functions of a mosque. Sharia marriage (forced marriages, child brides, polygamy, etc) and divorce laws do not comply with Australian law. The Federal Attorney General said: ‘*there was no place for Sharia law in Australian society, and the government strongly rejected any proposal for its introduction.*’ (The Australian, 18/5/2011).

A court, especially one conducting illegal ceremonies, and a political centre are additional, not-approved uses in the lease agreement or indeed as allowed development on CFZ - Community Facility Zone land as set out in Planning and Development (Plan Variation No 302) Notice 2011 - 573.

Consequently approval of this proposed mosque must be rejected.

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Example for those who just don't want a mosque

I/we make representation in regard to development application (DA) 201221881 and say we are strongly opposed to a mosque being approved for such a domineering position in our wonderful Town Centre. I/We believe the mosque should be rejected entirely.

I/we are not against religious organisations and believe they should be free to do what they want within the law. Mosques are different though. They seem to cause trouble for non-Muslims in many places so there is something wrong with the beliefs and attitudes that cause them to be hostile.

The ACT Government should be thinking of the future here and not just assume that social harmony will flow. It is not happening with mosques elsewhere and it is not the fault of non-Muslims generally.

Where is the money coming from for this mosque? What strings are attached? Do they want to impose Sharia law on Australia? Will it be rallying point to restrict our freedoms - especially our freedom of speech? What sect of Islam will the Sheiks and Imams be imported from. Now is the time to find out answers to these sorts of question. It is too late later.

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Example for expressing fear about the future character of Gungahlin

I/we make representation in regard to development application (DA) 201221881 and say we are strongly opposed to a mosque being approved for such a domineering position in our wonderful Town Centre. I/We believe the mosque should be rejected entirely because it will change the character of the Town Centre and be a threat to social harmony in Gungahlin as a whole.

In the planning process, a mosque is not benign just as petrol storage facilities, jails or power stations are not benign in the planning process. For example someone no less eminent than Tayyip Erdoğan the Prime Minister of Turkey since 2003 said “*The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets and the faithful our soldiers....*” - not exactly words of comfort for Gungahlin residents seeking social harmony.

Muslims are members of society with equal rights and responsibilities and deserving of consideration, love and understanding that all humans need. Some people in the community rise to the defence of perceived Muslim “victims” who should not be “offended” or discriminated against little realizing there can be valid reasons for criticism and discrimination of anti-social behaviour.

The threat to social harmony in Gungahlin from a mosque can be illustrated by the following:-

- According to Islamic commentaries (for example ‘*The Opening*’ pp 1-5, www.muslim.org/english-quran.htm), the regular Islamic prayer used in all mosques quoting the first chapter (Sura) of the Koran effectively calls for Muslims not to associate with the accursed [Jews] and the wayward [Christians] - a highly divisive and intolerant declaration that builds distrust;
- An academic survey (‘*Shariá and Violence in American Mosques*’, M Kedar & D Yerushalmi, *Middle East Quarterly*, Summer 2011 pp 59-72) in the USA found that in over 80% of the sampled mosques, worshippers were recommended to study violence-positive material illustrating that this is the generally accepted role of a mosque;
- The threat to social harmony is further exemplified by an Islamic 2006 fatwa (a religious ruling) translated as “... *It must be the role of the mosque to guide the public policy of a nation, raise awareness of critical issues, and reveal its enemies. From ancient times the mosque has had a role in urging jihad for the sake of Allah, resisting the enemies of the religion ...*” This fatwa was issued by no less than Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, a trustee of the Oxford

University Centre for Islamic Studies and named by Foreign Policy Magazine as number 3 in a poll to determine the top 20 public intellectuals in the World today, when questioned about the role of a mosque. Such talk about “enemies” illustrates the foundational ‘we’/‘they’ attitude and hostility towards non-Muslims.

- The Koran teaches that a Muslim must have first allegiance to the *ummah* (the whole Muslim community) and Sharia overrides obedience to State law;
- The Koran also teaches that non-Muslims must be subjected to *dhimmitude* (made second class citizens), and *hijra* is to use immigration to take territory for Islam; and
- It is the experience in Europe that large mosques lead to the development of parallel societies and “no-go areas” thus threatening social harmony, intimidation and even violence.

We are not proposing a curtailment of religious freedom. Australia is a pluralistic society but as mentioned above, a mosque can become the focal point of the hostility and social disharmony generated by Islam towards non-Muslims. A mosque should not be given pride of place in the Gungahlin Town Centre.

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Legally, anybody can lodge a representation - you don't have to be in close proximity to the proposed mosque but you need to give an idea of how it would affect you.

To make a difference, objections really need to address some legal point in approval process

- DA breaches of lease conditions
- Failure to notify adequately
- Non-compliance with the permitted uses of the Zone
- Lack of social impact assessment
- Traffic
- Town planning deficiencies such as effect of the development on character of the Town Centre
- Wrong assessment track proposed

Representation can be made on line. Google "ACTPLA", click on home page, click on "Make a comment on a DA" on the left side of the screen, then click on the email address shown to open. You can then enter your comments and "send".

For your identity not to appear on the public register (your choice) you have to give a reason.