

TALKING TOADSTOOL

SCRIPT NO. 4

RED HILL LOOKOUT - WODEN SIDE

INTRO 5 SECS. MUSIC THEN FADE DOWN AND UNDER FOR....

NARR: From this side of Red Hill Lookout one gets a panoramic view of the city's Woden Valley new town area - Canberra's first great experiment in decentralised urban planning. This was begun only in nineteen-sixty-two and, along with an adjoining valley, Weston Creek, will accommodate some ninety-thousand people. The smaller Weston Creek area lies obscured just behind the small series of low hills in the middle distance. In nineteen-sixty-two Woden was largely an open, practically treeless sheep-grazing area of eight-thousand acres or three-thousand-two-hundred-and-forty hectares and had a rural population of nine. The first development contract for Woden was let in May, nineteen-sixty-two and the first government-built house completed a year later. Today, in a "partnership" of Government and private enterprise, eleven of the Valley's twelve suburbs have been or are being developed and will combine with the adjoining Weston Creek's eight suburbs to make a substantially self-contained town, physically separated from, but conveniently related to, the main City.

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NARR: The Woden district was selected as the first of the new areas to be developed because it was eminently suitable for the creation of an attractive living environment. Access to the main employment centres and connection to the existing engineering services and roads were most convenient. The National Capital Development Commission, the authority which plans and develops Canberra on behalf of the Commonwealth, expects Canberra's population could reach two-hundred-thousand by nineteen-seventy-five and more than three-hundred-thousand by nineteen-eighty. Growth almost certainly should go on from there, possibly reaching half a million before the turn of the century. Going back into history, Canberra was originally designed in nineteen-twelve by Chicago, U.S.A., architect, Walter Burley Griffin, as a city to accommodate twenty-five-thousand rising to a "possible" seventy-five-thousand. The twenty-five-thousand figure was reached in nineteen-fifty-two while the seventy-five-thousand "maximum" was

passed ten years later. The success of Griffin's plan, however, is that it has been able to accommodate new ideas. On the assumption that Canberra could continue to grow to five-hundred-thousand and beyond, studies were undertaken to establish the structure for metropolitan growth within the Australian Capital Territory. These suggested that the most efficient framework would provide for the extension of Canberra in a Y-shape development of new towns of more than a hundred-thousand each, separated from inner Canberra by hills, ridges and areas of open country but linked with Canberra by a comprehensive transport system to form a single metropolis. The hilltops and ridges will be left in their natural state and will form the outer walls of the towns. Other open space between the towns will become broad-acre sites for institutional uses.

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NARR: Each town is to be partly self-contained in employment, shopping and amenities and the whole city will be bound together by a continuous system of parks and parkways, linked to the recreational areas west and south of the Murrumbidgee River. In planning the suburbs of each new town, the Commission's main aims are to build-in safety and convenience, to give each suburb a distinctive character and to produce a design which is aesthetically satisfying and suited to the topography. Woden Valley set the planning pattern, which in many ways has been followed in Canberra's second new town, Belconnen, six miles or nine-point-six kilometres north-west of the city, where development began in nineteen-sixty-six. Planning and development of Canberra's third new town, Tuggeranong, south of Woden, is now proceeding for the first residents to move in during nineteen-seventy-four.

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NARR: Each new suburb in Woden and Belconnen is planned to have a population of four-to-five thousand centring on a mothercraft centre, a pre-school, a primary school and a small privately-built and operated shopping centre. Sites are provided for group centres serving three to five suburbs and offering a larger range of goods and services, including community services, as well as high schools for students up to eighteen. Sites for independent schools are also provided.



Because it is believed that these new towns should have the characteristics of cities, each with its individual character, but each an integral and essential part of the national capital, Government and private enterprise are also collaborating to create busy and attractive town centres which will be the focal point of each new town. The Woden Town Centre, in the heart of the valley, was begun in nineteen-sixty-seven and is the first major centre of its type to be constructed outside inner Canberra. It will eventually accommodate sixteen-thousand employees in offices, shops, hotels, clubs, a theatre and light industry.

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NARR: Immediately below are the fairways and clubhouse of Federal Golf Club, one of Canberra's three private golf courses. Canberra has six golf courses - three private clubs, two nine-hole Armed Services courses and an eighteen-hole public course. There is a seventh eighteen-hole layout at Queanbeyan. The large building to the left is the city's second major medical centre, the Woden Valley Hospital. The larger hill in the middle distance behind and slightly to the right of the hospital is Mount Taylor which, at two-thousand-eight-hundred-and-seven feet or eight-hundred-and-fifty-six metres is forty-five feet or thirteen-point-seven metres higher than Mount Ainslie. The group of suburbs stretching around its base are, from left to right, Farrer, Torrens, Pearce and Chifley with Lyons and Curtin to the far right. Suburbs in the middle distance, closer to Red Hill, are, from left to right, Mawson, O'Malley, Garran and Hughes. The high-rise central group of buildings is part of the developing Phillip Town Centre. Most suburbs are named after former Australian Prime Ministers or Cabinet Ministers. Five exceptions are Mawson, named after famed Australian Antarctic explorer Sir Douglas Mawson; Farrer, after pioneer wheat experimenter William Farrer; Torrens, after Sir Robert Torrens who introduced the revolutionary Torrens Land Title system in Australia; Garran after the first Secretary to the Federal Attorney-General; and Phillip after Captain Arthur Phillip, first Governor of the infant New South Wales colony.

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NARR: To the right of the Woden Town Centre, on the tree-lined hills in the background, you should be able to pick out one of the domes of Mount Stromlo Observatory. Stromlo, some seven miles or eleven-point-three kilometres west of Canberra City, is one of the most important centres for astronomical study in the southern hemisphere. A specialised Department of the Australian National University, the Observatory has one of the world's largest telescopes with a seventy-four inch or one-point-eight-eight metre reflector. A larger telescope is being installed by the University at a site near Coonabarabran in New South Wales. The Observatory at Mount Stromlo has a special visitor gallery. In the hill country to the far left, the Brindabella and Tidbinbilla Ranges, are three Space Tracking Stations - Tidbinbilla, Honeysuckle Creek and Orroral Valley. All are administered by the Australian Government on behalf of the American National Aeronautics and Space Administration. These Stations play a key role in the United States manned and unmanned space research programmes. It was through Honeysuckle that the world received TV pictures of the first moon walk. All stations welcome visitors at certain times and one, Tidbinbilla, has a special visitor centre open daily.

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NARR: Another feature of interest in the hill country behind Canberra is Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve not far from the Tidbinbilla Tracking Station. The Reserve had its origins in nineteen-thirty-six when two-thousand acres or eight-hundred-and-ten hectares at the head of Tidbinbilla Valley, about twenty-five miles or forty kilometres from Canberra, were set aside for a National Park and Fauna Reserve. The outbreak of World War Two prevented development work being undertaken. In nineteen-sixty-four, a further eight-thousand acres or three-thousand-two-hundred-and-forty hectares were added to the area and approval given for the establishment of the Nature Reserve. Subsequent additions bring the park's total area close to twelve-thousand-five-hundred acres or five-thousand-and-sixty-two hectares. The Reserve ranks as one of the best places in Australia to see kangaroos and koalas in their natural state. Tidbinbilla also has emus and a wide variety of other Australian fauna including many bird species. Daily feeding of the birds by Reserve Rangers is a sight worth seeing in itself. There is an Information Centre where an audio-visual presentation explains Reserve features.



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NARR: The road to Tidbinbilla passes the city's first water supply dam, the Cotter, now augmented by two much larger water storage dams, Corin and Bendora. The Cotter, and a river of the same name which feeds both it and the two other dams that quench Canberra's ever-growing thirst, gets its name from pioneer settler Garrett Cotter. Cotter came to Australia from Ireland as a guest of the Government in eighteen-twenty-one for "insurrection and firing at His Majesty's troops". As a nineteen-year-old convict he was assigned as a servant on one of the early Lake George sheep stations, but soon ran foul of the local law and was banished for an indefinite period to lead a hermit's life west of the Murrumbidgee River, then the western limit of European settlement. There he lived among the aborigines, managing to eke out a meagre living by raising cattle in the hill country. Eventually granted a pardon, he settled south of Canberra where some of his descendants still live.

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NARR: The Cotter River and the Cotter Dam played a key role in the Canberra story, as an assured water supply was one of the essentials in the choice of a site for the Federal Capital. In the summer and autumn of eighteen-ninety-nine and nineteen-hundred, when most of the proposed sites were being examined, New South Wales was experiencing one of the worst droughts ever recorded. Almost all its streams had shrunk; some had ceased to flow. Thus the many assurances of abundant water supply, so freely given by the promoters of various other sites, were somewhat nullified by nature's revelations. Not so the waters of the Cotter. The original Cotter Dam, built between nineteen-twelve and nineteen-fifteen and later enlarged, was Canberra's first major construction project.

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NARR: The Cotter has traditionally occupied a paramount place in Canberra's recreational scene. With the Murrumbidgee, into which it flows, it quickly became the city's substitute for a seashore, a place to swim in summer and picnic all year round. The construction of Lake Burley Griffin has not measurably reduced the area's popularity with both residents and visitors. The area's facilities were not always as well developed as they are today. Indeed, one of the first groups to visit it, the Empire Parliamentary Delegation of nineteen-twenty-six, found that Canberra itself, let alone the Cotter, was lacking in

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facilities in more ways than one. The Federal Minister of the Day in charge of Canberra, the Honourable King O'Malley, had introduced an Ordinance banning the sale of alcohol in the fledgling Capital Territory - perhaps the only example of prohibition legislation in Australian political history. The Sydney "Sun" reported that the delegation could not obtain even a glass of lager at an official dinner in their honour. A subsequent, if unofficial, consignment from across the border ensured they did not go thirsty for long. In the words of the newspaper report, the Delegation was thus able to "enjoy life-saving spots on Mount Stromlo and after the tiring climb up the steps at the Cotter Dam". King O'Malley's prohibition law was repealed in September of the following year, though the great American experiment along the same lines introduced during the First World War went on for some years after. But, for a time at least, Canberra residents could only legally quench their thirsts from the waters of the Cotter Dam or some reasonable equivalent.

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NARR: For more information about Canberra's attractions and the visiting times for various public buildings obtain a free copy of the brochure "Canberra Points of Interest with Map Guide" from the A.C.T. Tourist Bureau, London Circuit, Canberra City (PAUSE)

NARR: This has been a Toadstool Automatic Advisory Service presentation. (BEAT PAUSE) Post Office Box Sixty-three, Mudgee, New South Wales. Thank you for your patronage.

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