

# CANBERRA PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

# CANBERRA PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

*Canberra, Australia's national capital, has risen from the empty limestone plains of NSW's Monaro district in the space of less than 50 years. It is one of the few cities in the world that has been planned from its inception. It is beautiful and is largely without the problems that blight most other cities. Its rapid and varied growth will continue under the guidance of the planners so that it will rank ultimately among the great metropolises in the world. This booklet outlines Canberra's past, its present, and some of the things planned for its future.*



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# THE

A sparse gathering of frock-coated, stiff-collared politicians, their wives, a few soldiers and local farmers watched as Lady Denman, wife of Australia's Governor-General, took a card from a small gold case and announced: 'I name the capital city of Australia "Canberra".' Although a secret up to this minute, the chosen name was scarcely a surprise. 'Canberry' had been the accepted name of the area as far back as 1825 when John Joshua Moore, the first white settler in the district, had grazed sheep there. It had also been called 'Kamberra'. Said to be derived from the Aboriginal word for 'meeting place', it is also believed to have been the name of an Aboriginal tribe inhabiting the area when Europeans first arrived.

Also on the dais at this memorable foundation ceremony were Lord Denman, the Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, and the Minister for Home Affairs, King O'Malley, a bearded ex-real estate salesman from Kansas. The date was 12 March 1913.

About them lay the empty Monaro plains, limestone sheep country, stock tracks, and a small scattered village.

None of those present on this almost treeless site could have visualised the city which, only 50 years later, would have, among other things, more than three million trees.



*Walter Burley Griffin, the American architect who conceived the basic design for Australia's national capital*

# PAST...

This 910 square miles of silent land, supporting barely 2000 people, had been chosen by parliamentary ballot from 23 other possible sites as that of the National Capital.

As a federation of States, Australia needed a capital on 'neutral' ground to ensure that minority viewpoints could be heard, and that no one interest became dominant.

Canberra's first surveyor, C. R. Scrivener, appointed to make a topographical survey of the area, was told to 'bear in mind that the Federal capital should be a beautiful city, occupying a commanding position with extensive views, and embracing distinctive features which will lend themselves to the evolution of a design worthy of the object, not only for the present but for all time'.

In the 1820s the first white settlers had grazed their sheep where Parliament House now stands amid rose gardens and fountains.

Robert Campbell, a shipping merchant of Sydney, was the first to receive a grant of land, which was made to him as payment for one of

his ships chartered by the New South Wales Government.

St John's Church, Canberra's oldest building, had been started in 1841; the church was consecrated in 1845.

By 1860, when Mr Francis Williams opened the first post office, the village had a blacksmith's shop and a school to serve the small community of farmers and their families.

In 1911 the area of 910 square miles of mountain and plains country was transferred from New South Wales to the Commonwealth Government, and a world-wide competition was organised to find a designer for the proposed capital.

Walter Burley Griffin, a 37-year-old Chicago landscape architect and a disciple of American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, submitted the winning design from 137 entries for the modest \$3500 prize money, which some Australian and British architects had considered too meagre to warrant their professional attention. Several professional bodies, including the Royal Institute of British Architects, had also boycotted the competition because of their objection to King O'Malley being on the adjudicating committee.

Burley Griffin's plan included a grand triangle



*Canberra, in April 1910, showing the first building used as the Lands and Survey Office, and part of the survey camp*

of avenues divided by a 2½ mile axis from Mt Ainslie to Capital Hill.

The pivot point was to be a spectacular man-made central lake, reflecting the blue ranges of Mt Ainslie, Red Hill, Black Mountain, Mt Pleasant, and the monumental government buildings which Burley Griffin visualised 'rising tier on tier'.

Beset with frustrations during the next few years — petty quarrels with politicians and departmental officials, jealousies, accusations, and lack of funds to implement his ideas — Burley Griffin finally left Canberra for Sydney in 1921.

But during his years in the capital he had established a framework for his design not easily changeable.

Thus the grand vista of the city — the lake named after him, Commonwealth and King's Avenue bridges flanking Parliament House, the broad red sweep of Anzac Parade, the monumental buildings — is very much a picture of Walter Burley Griffin's dream growing into reality.

On 9 May 1927, the Duke of York (later King George VI) opened Parliament House, the *raison d'être* for Canberra's existence.

The capital's progress remained sluggish as building construction was brought almost to a standstill by the economic 'slump' during the thirties.

The testing time of World War II clearly revealed how greatly handicapped were the nation's leaders because of the still incomplete state of the capital.

Few Commonwealth departments had their headquarters in Canberra and Cabinet sometimes met in three places — Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne — in as many weeks.

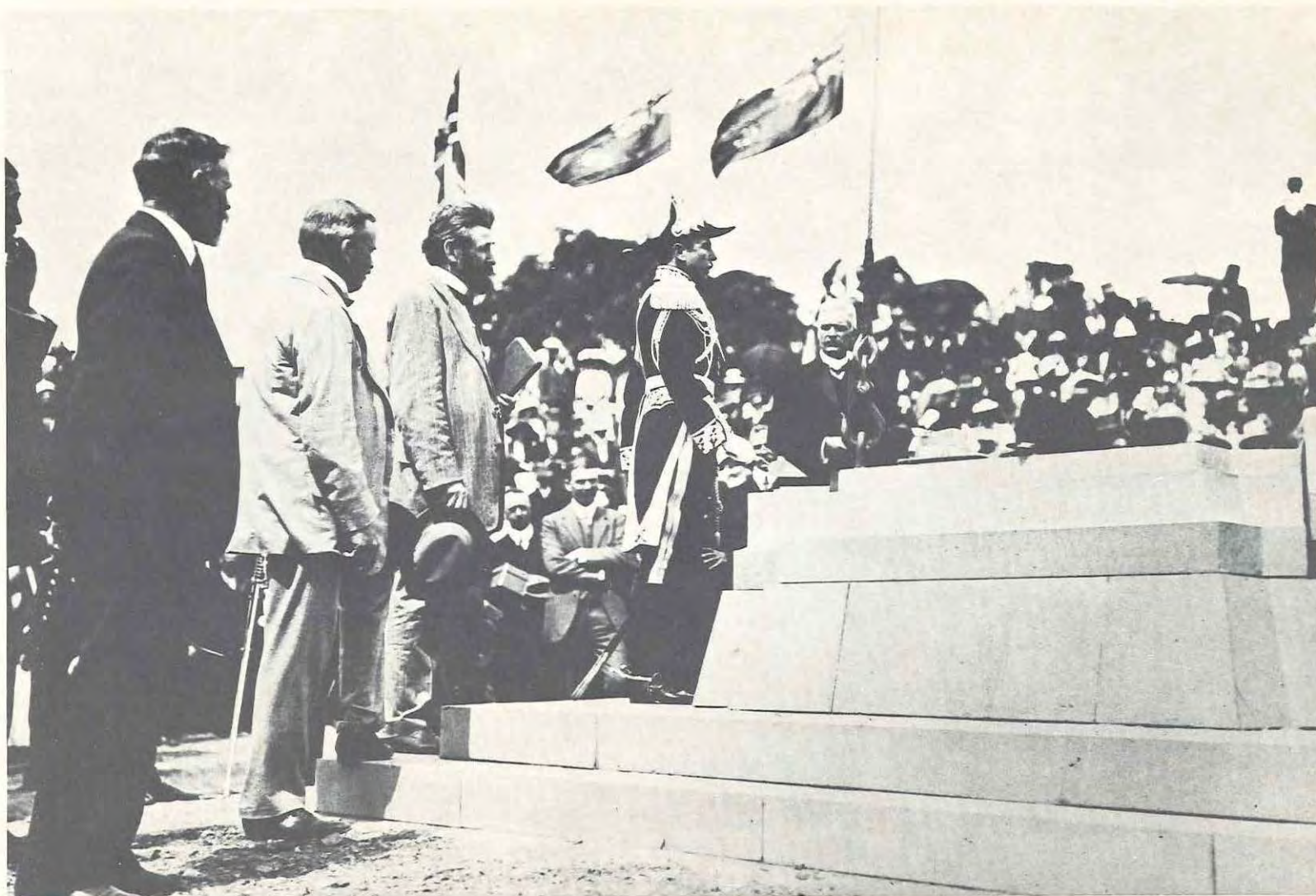
After the war acute shortage of accommodation, building materials and labour still impeded development.

A Senate Select Committee of Inquiry formed in 1954 to report on the development of Canberra found that 'there is no positive determination to complete the National Capital, but merely one of living from hand to mouth', and advised that 'the time has come to take the responsibility of building the National Capital from the unborn backs of future generations, and place it firmly and squarely on the shoulders of people alive today'.

One result of their recommendations was the



*The Minister for Home Affairs, King O'Malley, who was responsible for the selection of Burley Griffin's prize-winning design for Canberra, drives in a peg on the site of the new Federal capital*



*The Governor-General, Lord Denman, lays the foundation stone of the Commencement Column on Capital Hill at an historic ceremony on 12 March 1913. At the same ceremony, Lady Denman named the capital 'Canberra', an Aboriginal name chosen by the Fisher Labor Government*

formation in 1957 of the National Capital Development Commission, a statutory body charged with the 'planning, development and construction of Canberra'.

Canberra's population at this time had reached 39,000. The inhabitants needed more homes, shops, schools and recreation areas.

The nation needed to see tangible evidence of a capital city worthy of the name taking shape, and the Commission made mighty efforts to supply those needs.

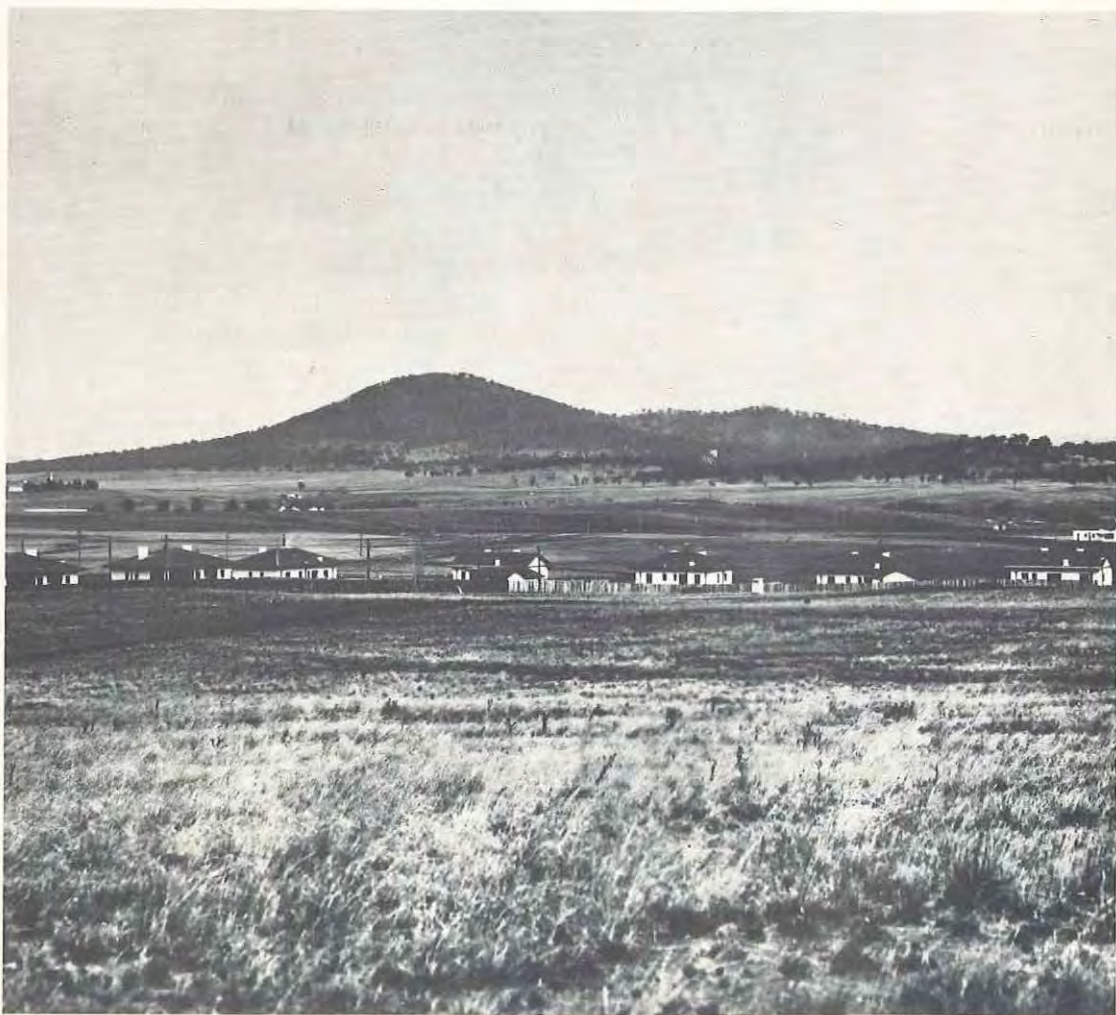
A surge of progress, especially in the Parliamentary Triangle area, saw the completion of King's Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue bridges, the Mint, the National Library, the Treasury and other groups of offices to house Government departments.

A Theatre Centre, a Civic Square, shopping and commercial office complexes, hotels and motels now gave Canberra a semblance of an international city.

And unifying the national and commercial elements of the capital into a harmonious whole was Lake Burley Griffin, focus of the architect's dream.

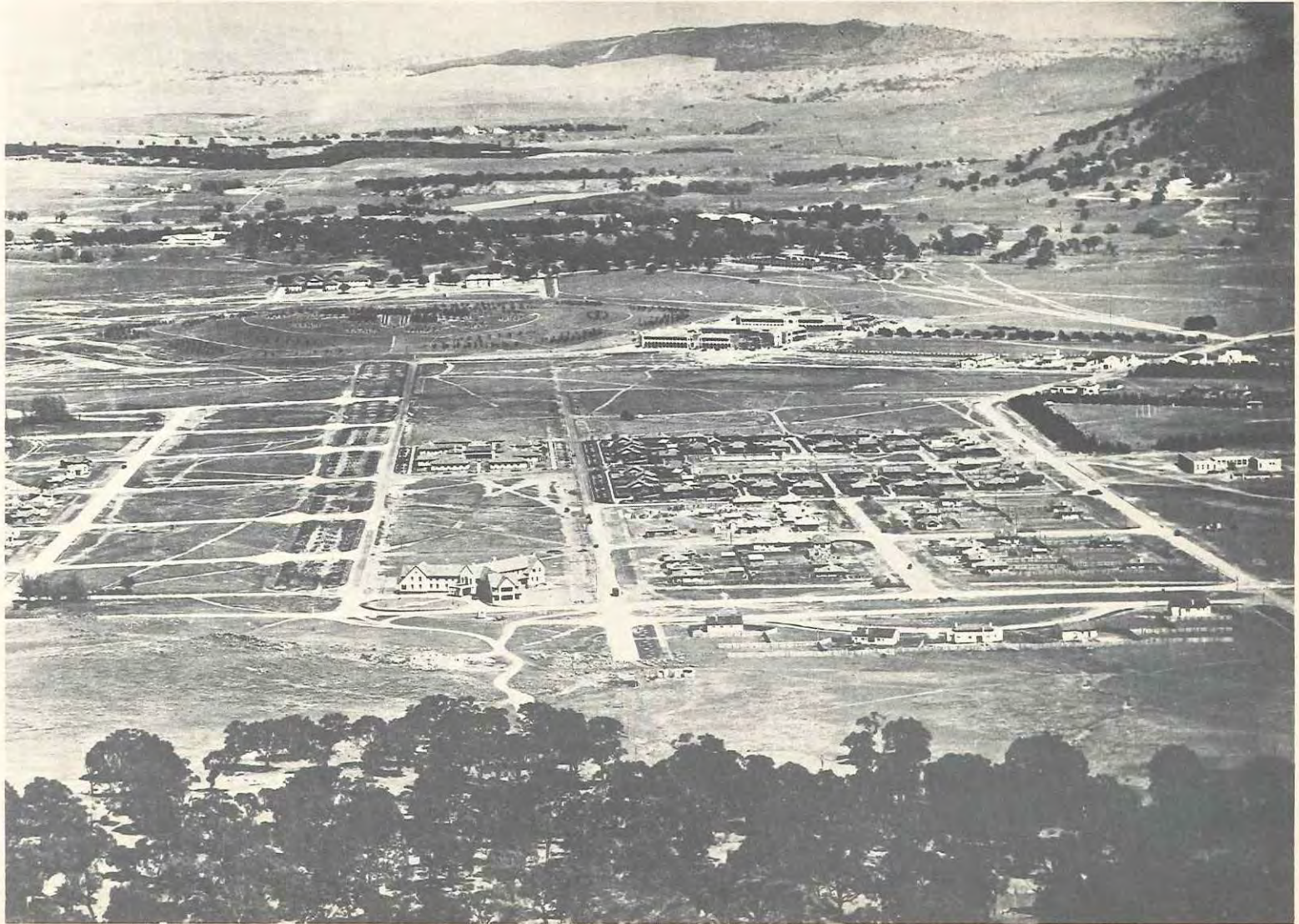
By 1966 Canberra's population had passed the 100,000 mark (Burley Griffin had designed the city for 75,000 people), and the transfer of public servants and the population growth rate of more than 10% a year made Canberra Australia's fastest-growing city.

In 1971 it had almost 150,000 people, and current predictions forecast a half million population before the turn of the century.



*Canberra, 1923 . . . These houses at Blandfordia (now the Deakin-Forrest area) were some of the first built in the National Capital*

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*This panoramic view was taken from Mt Ainslie, looking towards Civic Centre, in November 1927*



## KING O'MALLEY

King O'Malley (pictured), the flamboyant, bearded Minister for Home Affairs at the time of the establishing of Canberra, has two enduring monuments to his credit.

First was his part in advocating in 1901 the securing of land for a Federal capital and his subsequent role in supporting Walter Burley Griffin's design for the capital.

His second claim to fame was as one of the instigators of the Commonwealth Bank.

He is also credited with advocating, in 1906, the establishment of Australia House in London.

In spite of his apparent flamboyance in public life, O'Malley was forceful, far-seeing and stubborn.

He is believed to have been born in Canada about 1858, but was educated in the United States, where he was in turn banker, sawmill owner and real estate salesman.

He migrated to Australia in the late 1880s and started a real estate business in Adelaide.

In 1896 he stood for the House of Assembly and became the member for Encounter Bay.

Five years later — in 1901 — he entered the House of Representatives as member for Tasmania, one of his election platforms being the need for a national banking system.

O'Malley remained in Federal Parliament until 1919, when he retired from politics to live in Melbourne. He died there in 1953.

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*Dame Nellie Melba (extreme left at top of steps) sings the national anthem at the official opening of Federal Parliament House, Canberra, on 9 May 1927*

# THE PRESENT

A centre for the nation to make its laws, honour the great, welcome important overseas dignitaries, and provide a suitable venue for national and international seminars and conferences . . . Canberra is all of these, and is also a place for people to live.

It has an annual average of seven hours sunshine a day, freedom from smog and industrial pollution, and a spaciousness that gives the city an almost rural air.

In developing suburban areas like Woden, Belconnen, Weston Creek — and in the near future Tuggeranong — new imaginative housing projects in 'greenbelt' areas have their own neighbourhood shopping centres, schools and sports facilities.

Parliament House, administrative and ceremonial pulse of the nation, is Canberra's centrepiece — both for the resident and the tourist.

Visitors (about a million a year) see democracy at work from the public galleries of the Senate and the House of Representatives, their rich furnishings adopted from the British Parliament, which, in turn, adopted them from centuries before.

The Senate's red is reminiscent of the medieval ruling church and cardinals; the Representatives' green is borrowed from the greenwoods of ancient Britain, meeting place of the Druids. Visitors to the Australian Parliament can see historical relics — the Speaker's Chair in the House of Representatives, its royal coat-of-arms carved in 600-year-old oak from Westminster Hall, and the hinged flaps on the armrests carved in oak from Nelson's 'Victory'.

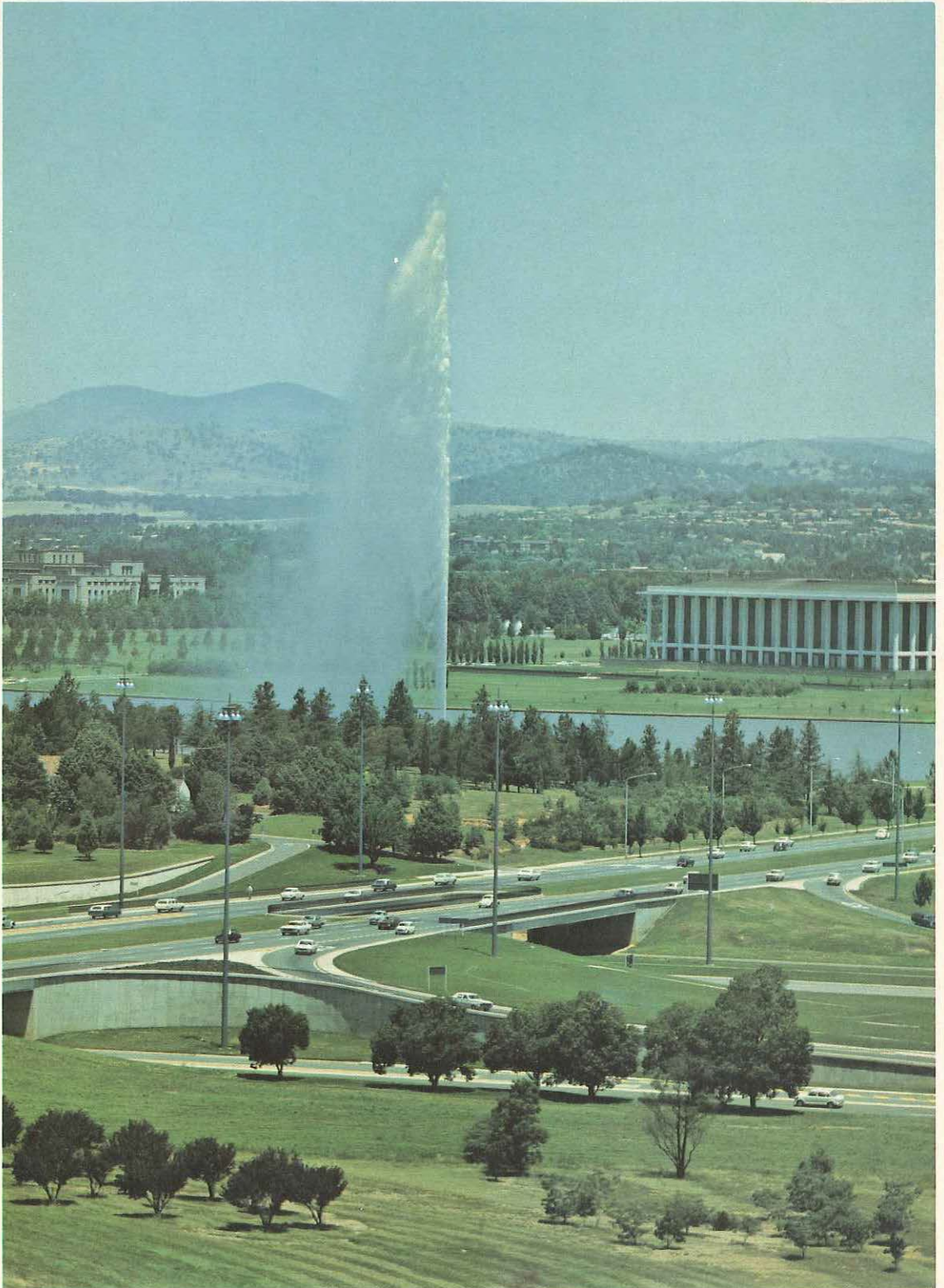
In King's Hall they can see one of the three surviving copies in the world of the Inspeximus issue of Magna Carta, published in 1297 (the other two are in the Public Records Office and The Guildhall in London).

There are 16 copies of various issues of Magna Carta in existence, but the Inspeximus issue represents Edward I's confirmation in 1297 of the Great Charter in the form in which it was entered in the Statute Roll and in which it is found printed in the Statutes of the Realm today.

Parkes Place, in front of Parliament House, is flanked by the Parliamentary Rose Gardens, 40 beds containing 2500 rose bushes of many varieties.

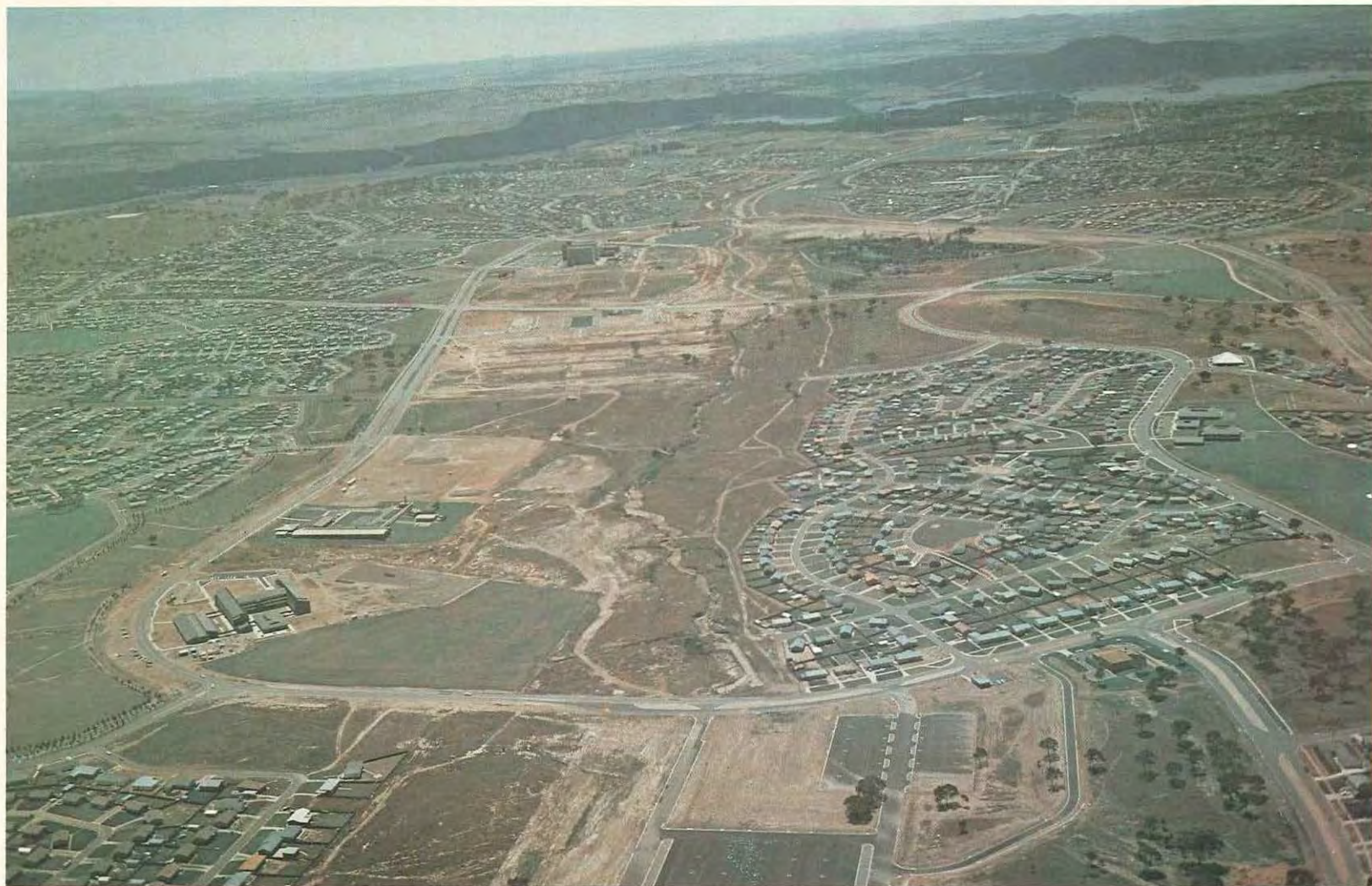


*The modern, bustling city that is the present Canberra*



*The Captain Cook memorial jet and the National Library . . . two of the National Capital's major tourist attractions*

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*The Woden Valley — the first of Canberra's new districts — which is now nearing completion and which will ultimately have a population of about 60,000*

Vying with Parliament House as Canberra's most visited attraction is the Australian War Memorial, opened to the public on Armistice Day, 1941.

Above the Pool of Reflection are the bronze panels of the Roll of Honour, listing names of more than 100,000 men and women who died in the Sudan campaign, the Boer War, two World Wars and in later wars.

Focal point is the Hall of Memory depicting symbolically — in statuary, stained glass windows, and murals containing six million mosaic tiles — the qualities said to have been outstanding in Australian fighting men.

The main galleries contain relics of the war, plan models, dioramas and portraiture.

The terra cotta sweep of Anzac Parade, commemorating the Australian landing at Gallipoli, is bordered by Australian blue gums and beds of New Zealand veronica.

The capital is building up a collection of art and sculpture works — Sir Henry Moore's 9ft bronze reclining figure near the National Library; Dame Barbara Hepworth's Two Figures; Frenchman Matthieu Mategot's brilliant Aubusson tapestries in the National Library.

Australian artists are represented in Tom Bass' Ethos — the spirit of the community — in Civic Square; Norma Redpath's sculptured Treasury fountain; Leonard French's contemporary stained glass windows in the National Library, and many more.

Two new features appeared on Lake Burley Griffin in the Cook Bicentenary Year — the Captain Cook Memorial and the Carillon.

The memorial jet, in Central Basin off Regatta Point, sends a curtain of sparkling water 450ft skyward when operating to maximum height in good weather.

The other part of this Memorial is a terrestrial globe, 9ft in diameter, located on the shoreline. The meridians and parallels form an open cage globe with the land masses in beaten bas-relief copper.

Captain Cook's three Pacific voyages are routed on the globe and described on the surrounding handrail.

The Carillon, a gift from the British Government, commemorates the 50th anniversary, in 1963, of Canberra's foundation. Built on Aspen Island, near King's Avenue Bridge, its 53 bells are housed in three elegant white triangular towers. The largest bell is 7ft across and weighs six tons.

Carillonists from Sydney and Canberra give regular recitals of carillon music, ranging from pop and folk songs to hymns and classical pieces.

At Canberra's foundation ceremony in 1913, the Prime Minister, Mr Andrew Fisher, expressed a hope that the capital would become a seat of learning as well as of politics.

That his hopes are being realised is evident in the scholars and scientists from many countries who visit Canberra.

Attractive working conditions and up-to-date research facilities ensure that many of them stay permanently.

The Australian National University has its School of General Studies in arts, economics, law, Oriental studies and science, and the Institute of Advanced Studies includes the John Curtin Medical School, and research schools of physical, social and biological sciences.

In 1970 the Canberra College of Advanced Education's first building, set in 290 acres of undulating country close to the future Belconnen Town Centre, accepted its first students, offering tertiary courses in such studies as accountancy, computing, biology, chemistry, modern languages, professional writing and secretarial subjects.

The six floors of the National Library, with one million books, maps, plans, photographs, historical prints and cine-films — and eventual space for 11 million more — offers inexhaustible facilities for students to study; it also houses tourist draws like Captain Cook's log books, the expedition diaries of Burke and Wills, and the papers of Australia's first Prime Minister.

In the Institute of Anatomy ethnological displays of Aboriginal life and culture supplement the anatomical exhibits.

Although not open to the public, the Australian Academy of Science, aimed at promoting scientific knowledge, is a Canberra landmark for its architecture; its copper-covered concrete dome, 150ft in diameter, rests on graceful curved arches set in a surrounding moat-like pool.

A few miles outside Canberra are the silver domes of the Mount Stromlo Observatory with its 74-inch star-gazing telescope, and the space tracking stations of Orroral, Tidbinbilla and Honeysuckle Creek.

No longer a 'bush capital', Canberra is cosmopolitan — restaurants and motels, museums and art galleries, a Theatre Centre,



St John the Baptist Church (pictured above) is Canberra's oldest building, dating back to 1841. Its construction was initiated by Robert Campbell, the original owner of Duntroon.

The original church was 56ft long and 45ft wide, with a square tower, and was constructed of local bluestone. The door and window buttresses are of Black Mountain sandstone, and the roof and fittings are mainly cedar.

The church got its own rector, the Rev G. E. Gregory, in 1850, but he was drowned a few months later while trying to swim the flooded Molonglo River.

The Rev P. Galliard Smith arrived in

1855 and remained as rector for the next 51 years.

A second generation of the Campbell family expanded the church between 1872 and 1874, an east window above the altar — one of Australia's first stained glass windows — being dedicated to Robert Campbell.

The present tower was built between 1865-70, and the spire added in 1878. Many pioneers of Canberra's early days rest in the churchyard. The earliest marked grave is that of the Guise family vault — 1844.

A former Governor-General, Lord Dunrossil, who died in office in 1961, is buried in the south-east corner.

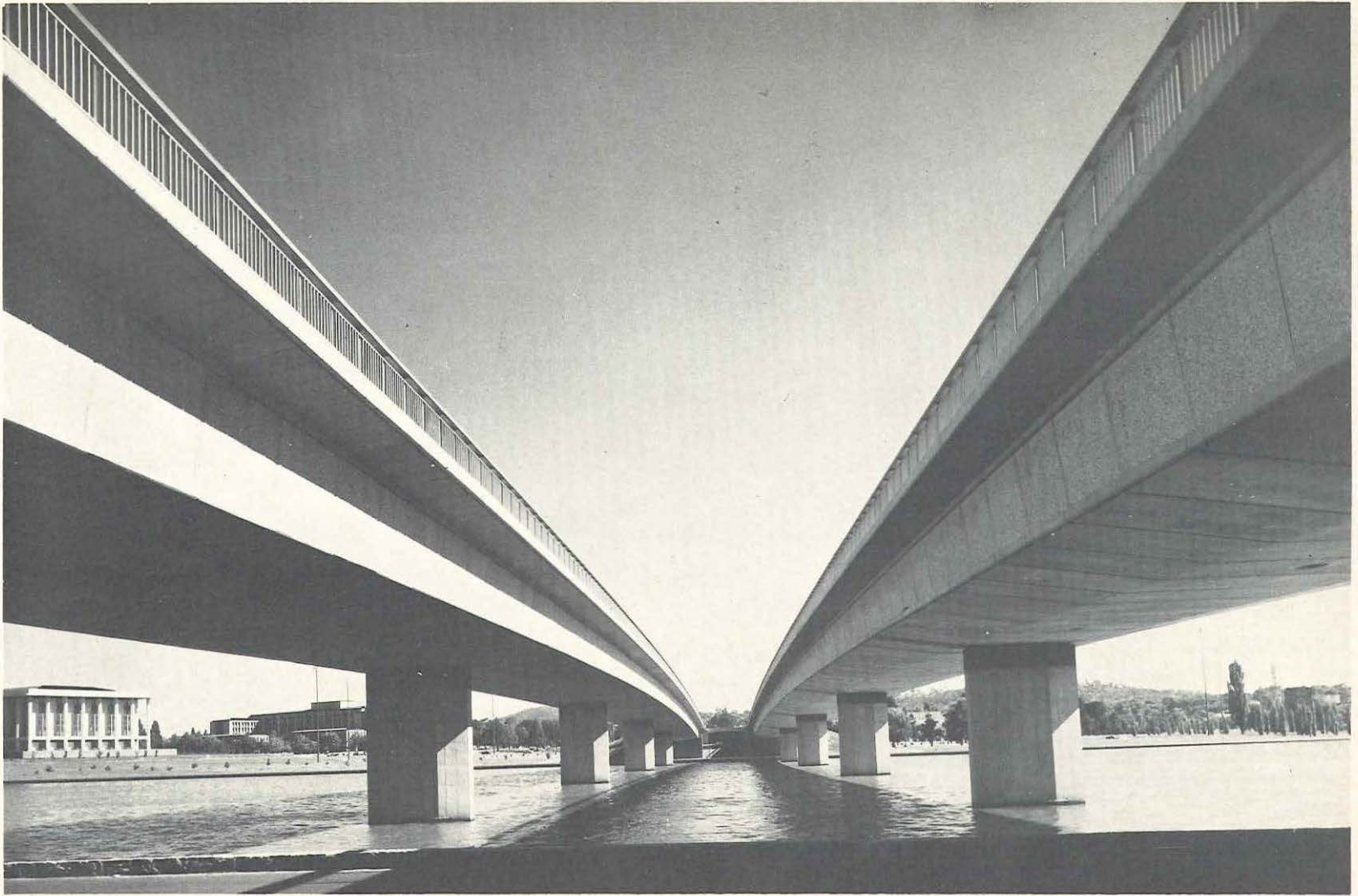
university students, politicians, a steady stream of visiting dignitaries, and diplomats of more than 40 foreign embassies and missions.

Nationalities and tongues seen and heard by the fountains at Civic Square are as varied as any in Sydney's King's Cross, London's Soho, or New York's Greenwich Village.

But the capital also has all the amenities which make life easier for the housewife, the worker

and the tourist — supermarkets and department stores, delicatessens, laundromats and drive-in cinemas with individual car heaters. Canberra has no neon lights, but its flood-lighting of important buildings is quietly dignified and beautiful.

Restaurants range through every type of cuisine, from Australian to Chinese, Indonesian to Continental.



*The magnificent sweep of Commonwealth Bridge, which is the major link between the north and south portions of Canberra across Lake Burley Griffin*

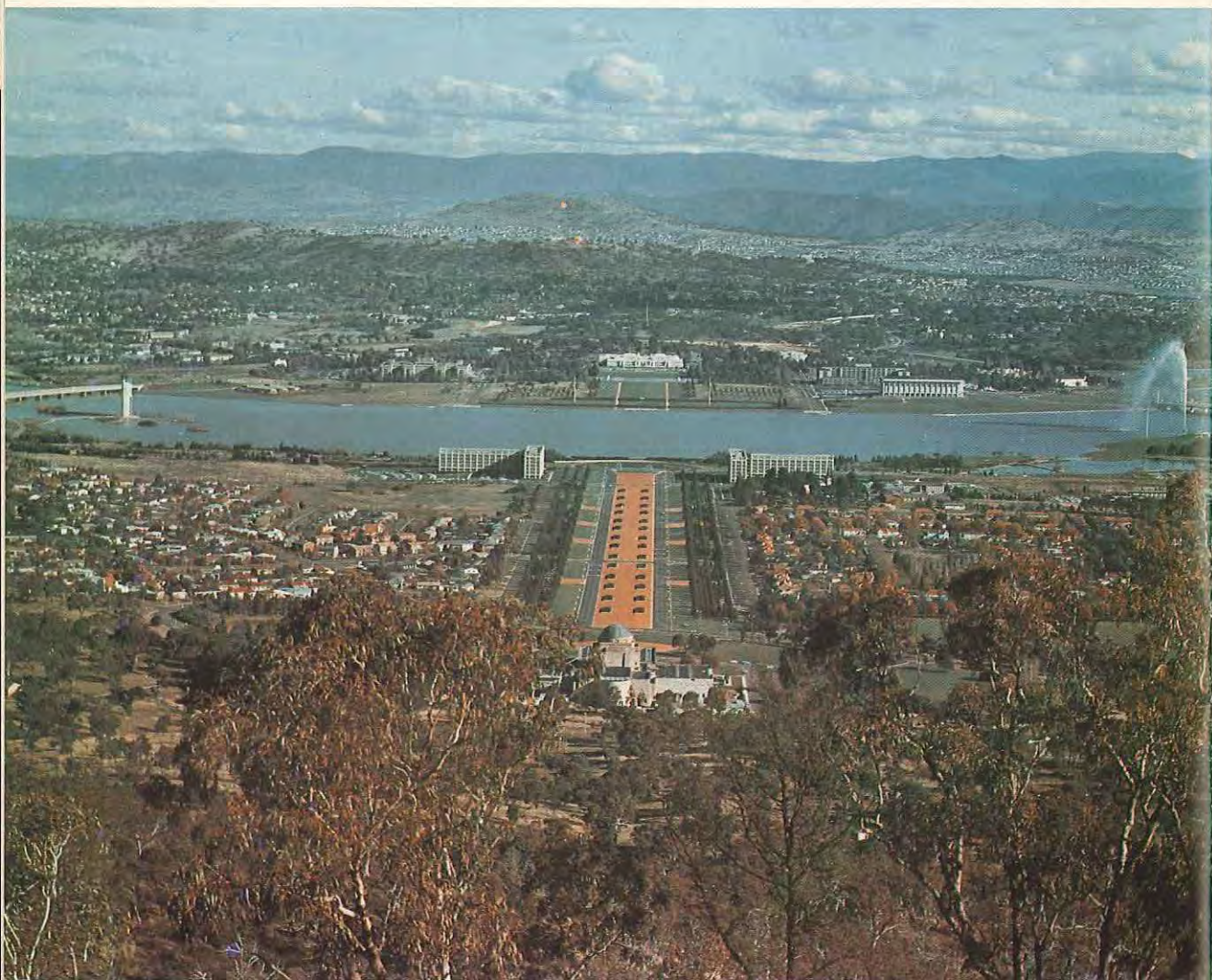
Sidewalk cafe tables are beginning to mushroom in Garema Place; an elegant restaurant among the rose gardens across from Parliament House provides a discreet vantage point for watching the comings and goings of politicians, and at night the lights of the city can be viewed from the circular restaurant atop Red Hill lookout.

Most of the diplomatic missions accredited to the Commonwealth Government are in Canberra — in Forrest, Deakin, Yarralumla and Red Hill, adding distinction and variety to the architecture of these areas.

The Japanese Embassy combines modern Japanese architecture with 10th and 13th century styles; on a hill in Yarralumla is the

Virginian Colonial style of the American Embassy, and nearby the Cape Dutch architecture of the South African official residence. Round the corner is the pagoda-roofed new Thai Embassy, and close to it the elegant and simple lines of the Embassy of Italy. Thousands of tourists drive around the embassy area just to admire the variety of buildings.

Feathery fronds of golden wattle, showers of pink, magenta and white fruit blossoms, red and russet leaves of English oak and ash, yellow foliage of Lombardy poplars mingling with the grey-green of Australian gums — Canberra's variety of trees is incomparable, thanks to the foresight and artistry of early landscape architects who systematically planted



*A view from behind the War Memorial, along Anzac Parade and across Lake Burley Griffin to Parliament House*



17 *A view of Belconnen, Canberra's second new town, looking across to Black Mountain and Canberra city*



*The photographs on this page illustrate the modern, decorative style of architecture which characterises buildings in the National Capital*

millions of trees and shrubs in Canberra's first 20 years.

The city now has well over three million trees, and millions of deciduous, flowering and ever-green shrubs. Viewed from a height Canberra is sheltered by a verdant canopy of green.

Ten thousand acres of parkland in and around the city include the Botanic Gardens on Black Mountain, and Commonwealth and Weston parks, maintained by the Parks and Gardens Branch.

At its Yarralumla Nursery 300,000 trees and shrubs and 250,000 seedlings are planted out every year to supply the city's horticultural needs.

Residents in the newer suburbs get a free issue of trees and shrubs — 78,000 distributed annually — which they plant strategically to present a parklike appearance around homes without fences.





*Illustrated here are further examples of the imaginative architectural design incorporated in Canberra buildings. Below, left, is the National Library. In its foreground is one of the many pieces of sculpture found in the capital*



# THE FUTURE

Although the Government is adhering broadly to Burley Griffin's design in its future planning, construction must be adapted in the light of experience and necessity.

Plans for the national area provide for the building of the new permanent Parliament House.

The present Parliament House was opened in 1927 as an interim building. In 1969 the site for the new Parliament House was nominated by the Government as Camp Hill, an elevated site at the rear of the present House.

When constructed it will be the dominant structure of the central area of Canberra. A commanding position within the Triangle as proposed will doubtless underline its importance to the nation.

Detailed planning of the new House has not yet begun, but the size and extent of the new and permanent Parliament House will certainly be considerably greater than the present interim building.

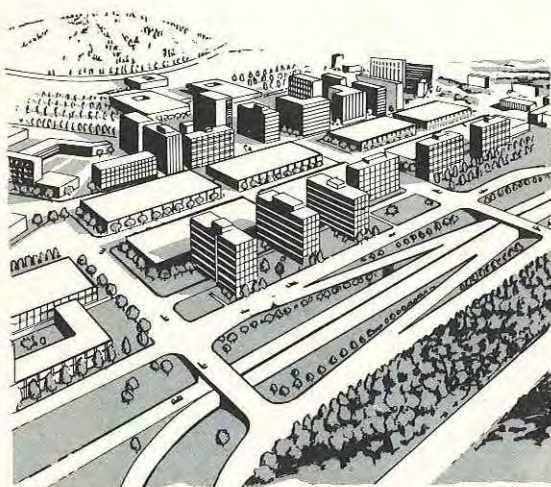
Already pressure on space for Ministers, Members and their staffs is acute; one result is that the present building, although provisional, is being enlarged to cope with immediate space needs.

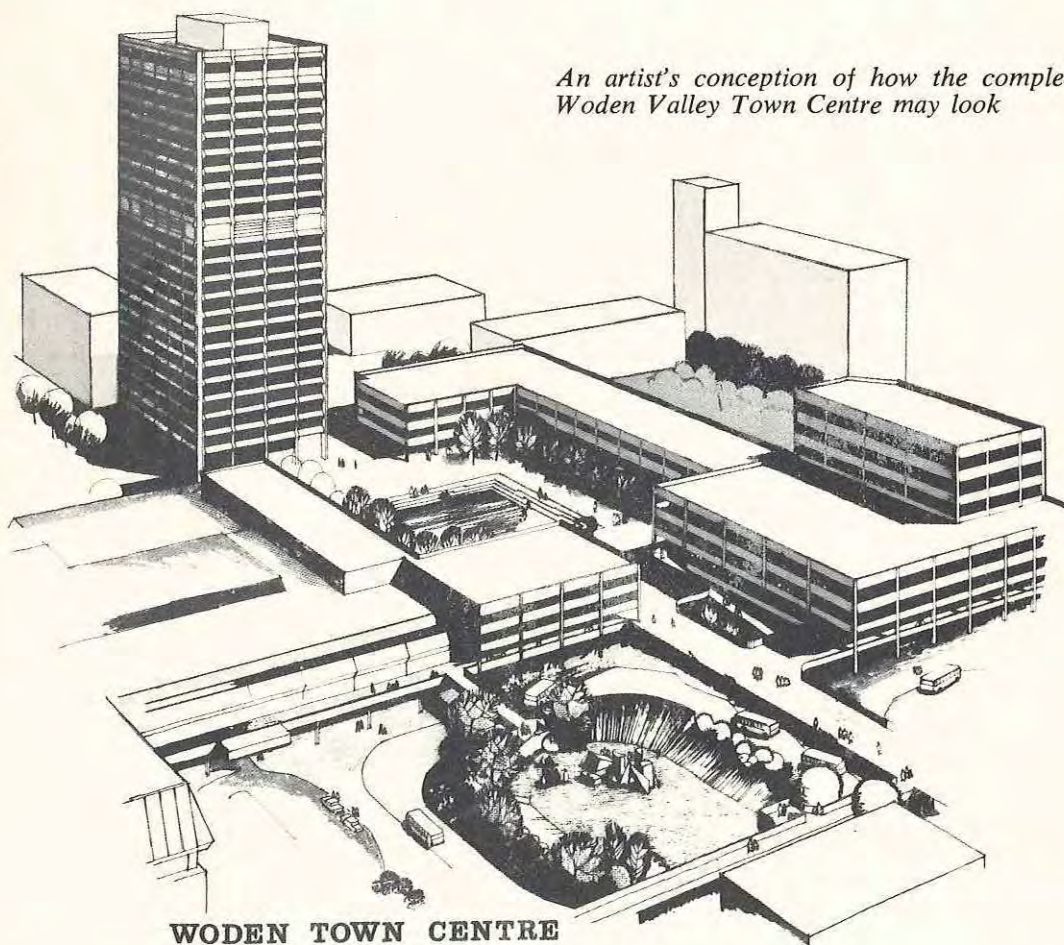
The Australian National Gallery has been sited and is being designed to stand in the north-eastern sector of the Parliamentary Triangle. Provision is also made for the High Court of Australia to be built within the area.

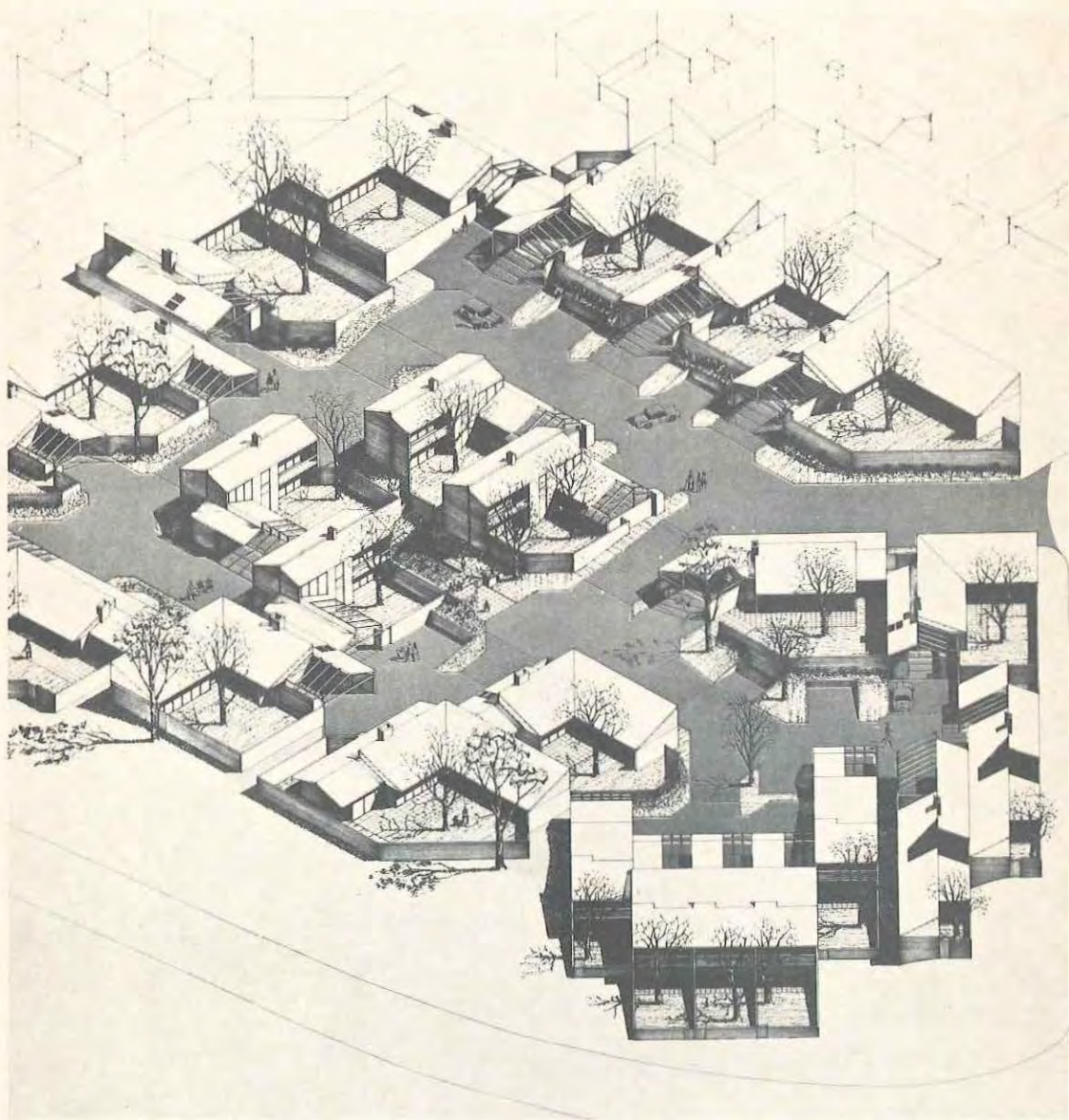
Capital Hill, behind Camp Hill, is planned to provide commemorative gardens to stress the garden-city character of Canberra and as a pleasing setting for the Parliament. Already earmarked in this national area are sites for Anglican and Roman Catholic cathedrals.

Additional government offices, a tourist and conference centre south-west of the Lake, a cultural and entertainment site near University Avenue, a sports and recreation area adjoining Commonwealth Gardens are probabilities for the peripheral areas of the Parliamentary Triangle. A new Prime Minister's Lodge also figures in long-range plans.

In its proposals for the future development of Canberra's business and commercial centre the National Capital Development Commission has







*Medium-density housing is to be a feature of residential development in Canberra. This is an artist's impression of the first such, the Swinger Hill, Phillip, development, the first section of which is now nearing completion.*

declared its aim to 'build a dense, compact and vital centre which functions efficiently, segregates routes for pedestrians and vehicles, encourages increasing use of public transport, and expresses an attractive sequence of spaces rather than a collection of individual buildings'.

The most important landscape area in the commercial centre will be City Hill, where visitors now enjoy panoramic views of the city and Lake. Other landscaped areas could be created on the roofs of parking stations around the Hill.

Canberra's major retail, office and entertainment core is already growing up around Civic Square and the Monaro Mall, and in the future is likely to remain Canberra's largest centre with a wider choice of goods, specialised shops and variety of entertainment than the town centres in Woden and Belconnen will offer.

Proposals under consideration include a compact shopping area probably with a large, enclosed, air-conditioned retail complex providing a multi-level pedestrian system.

A pedestrian concourse under Northbourne Avenue would link a new general post office, a transport and tourist centre and an urban busway stop.

Landscaped decks and parking structures would have pedestrian connections and underpasses to City Hill.

At each end of the shopping complex would be office and business concentrations, and some high-density residential development, as well as hotels, clubs and entertainments, designed to cater for the considerable pedestrian flow. A proposed city square, to complement Civic Square, would have a city hall.

The shopper or tourist who wants to walk will do so in comfort and safety when vehicular traffic is separated out from pedestrian malls in about 1980.

Population and employment centres like Woden, Weston Creek, Belconnen and Tuggeranong will be in a Y-shaped development of new towns separated from inner Canberra by hills, ridges and open country, but each one linked with the original Canberra City and also with other new towns by a public transport arterial road spine supplemented by peripheral freeways.

Comprehensive employment, shopping and amenities in the new towns will allow each centre to be partly self-contained.

Suburbs in Woden and Belconnen each have a population of about 5000 centred on a pre-school, a primary school, a mothercraft centre and a small local shopping centre.

Larger group centres, with a wider range of goods and services, a high school and community facilities cater for groups of five suburbs.

Woden and Weston Creek, six miles southwest of the city, will eventually have 20 neighbourhoods between them catering for a combined population of about 90,000.

The Town Centre at Woden, begun in 1967, will be progressively completed, probably by 1975. Over ten thousand people will work in its offices, department stores, hotels, cinema and restaurants, 6000 of them in the Commonwealth office complex, already well under way.

In Woden one of the largest medium-density housing projects in Australia has already been started. This is Swinger Hill, on a 63-acre site, which will eventually accommodate about 700 courtyard, town, patio and terrace houses for almost 2500 people.

Belconnen will have 27 neighbourhoods housing 120,000 people. It, too, has a town centre which will eventually employ 23,000 people — 10,000 of them in Commonwealth and private enterprise offices.

Two Government office complexes will be linked by a pedestrian mall to the retail and commercial area, segregating walkers from traffic.

The Canberra College of Advanced Education, on the edge of the Town Centre, took its first students in 1970, and by the year 2000 it is estimated that 10,000 students will attend the College.

A major Belconnen attraction will be the artificial lake, V-shaped, with a surface area of 260 acres — about one-sixth of the size of Lake Burley Griffin — to be formed by the roadway dam crossing Ginninderra Creek. Two parks, one for active recreation and the other for more passive family enjoyment, will adjoin the lake.

Tuggeranong, south of the Woden Valley and 11 miles from Canberra City, is designed for 175,000 people, and will be the southernmost area in the planned Y-shape.

New planning concepts are being discussed for this latest town and the first area to be

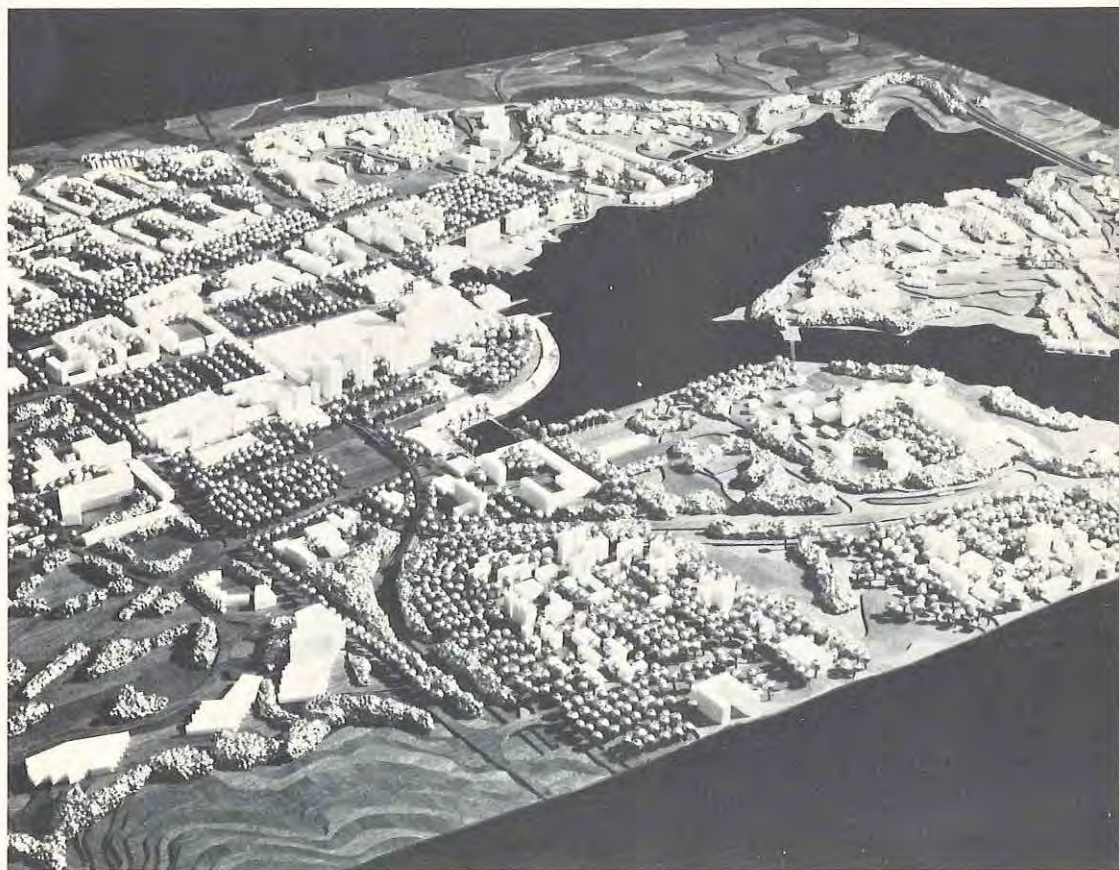
developed, Village Creek, may incorporate some of them.

The planners visualise a 'territorial unit' which, instead of grouping neighbourhoods around the local primary schools as in Woden and Belconnen, would group the schools and facilities together in 'activity spines' with houses on the outer edges.

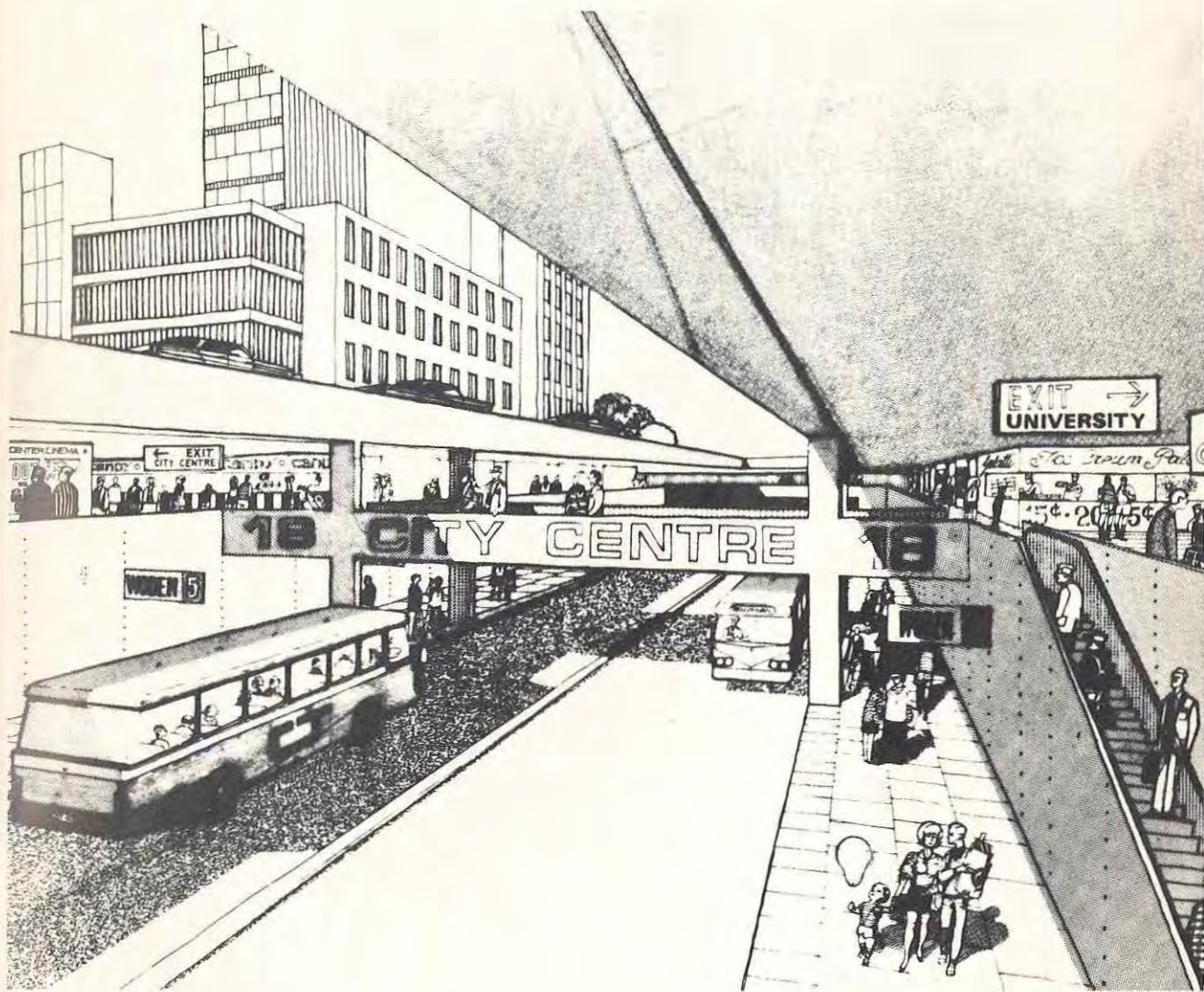
The planners are keeping faith with Burley Griffin's vision of spacious greenery, and will maintain a 'greenbelt' around the city and suburbs.

A metropolitan park network will connect Lake Burley Griffin to recreation areas and plantations to be created along the Murrumbidgee River, and linked with the mountain and forest reserves.

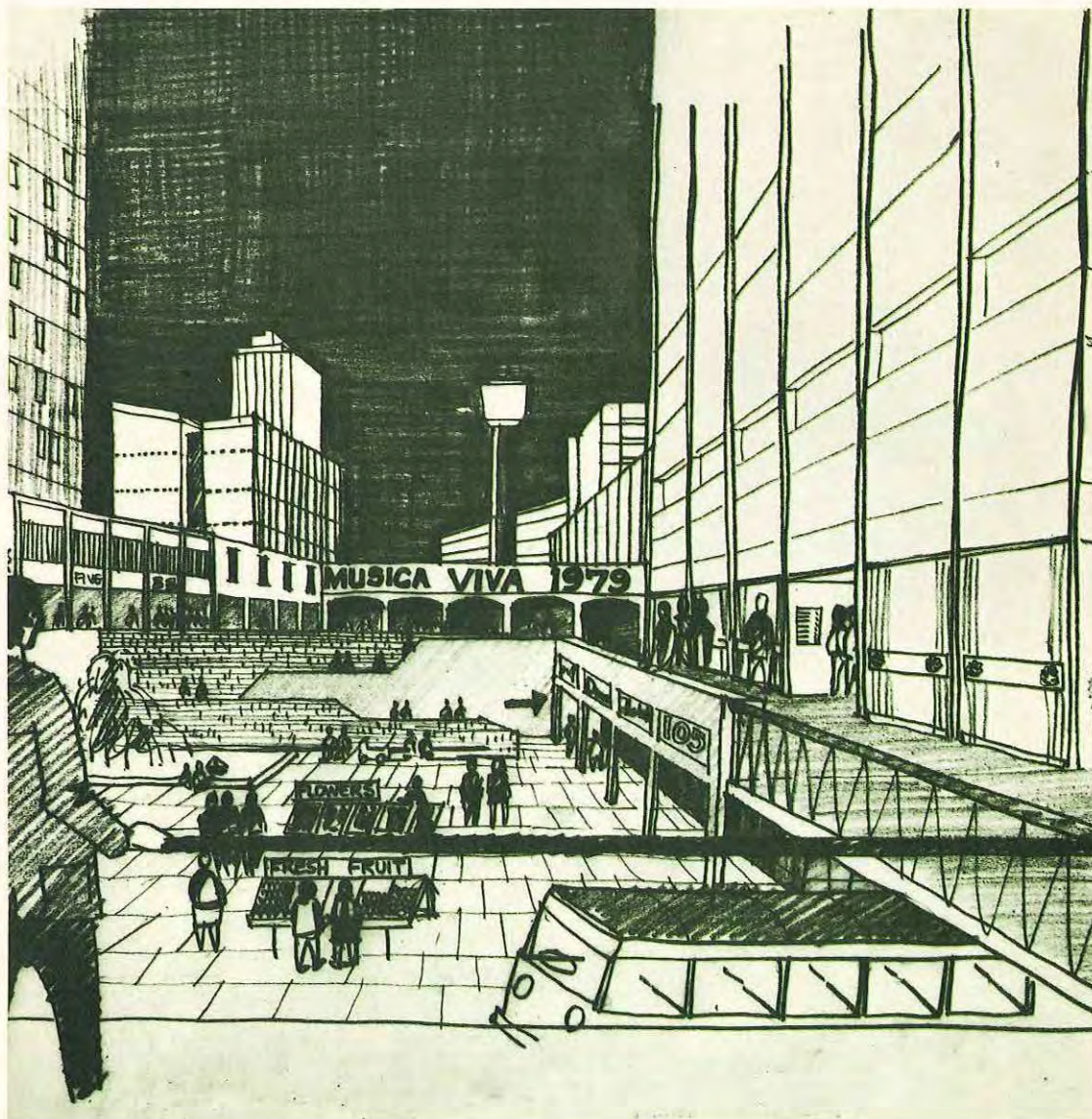
The future of Mulligan's Flat and Gungahlin, east of Belconnen, is tied up with considerations for the provision of a new airport for Canberra.



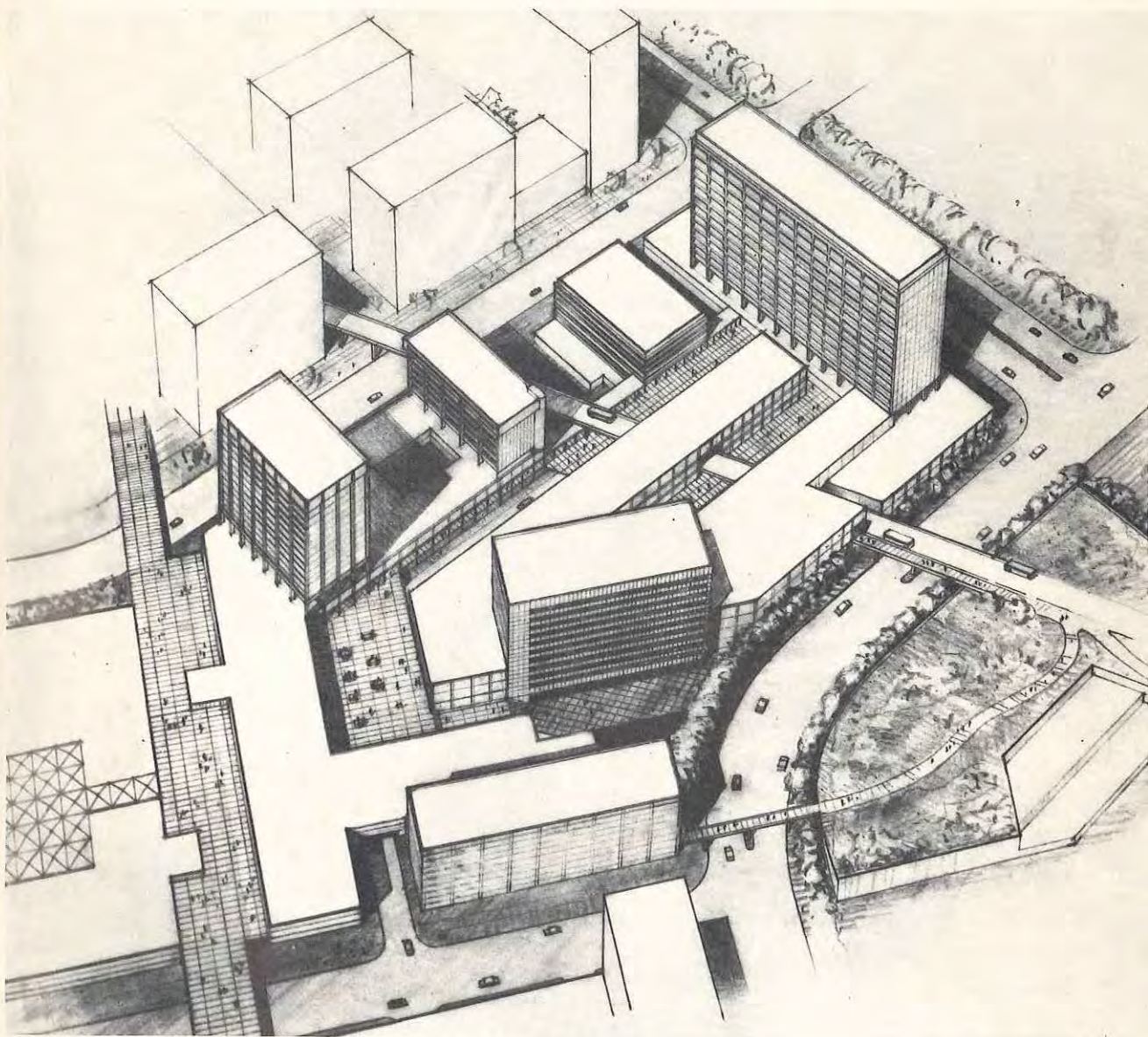
*A feasibility study model of the Belconnen Town Centre and environs. A small lake will be the central feature*



*A perspective of an urban busway station proposed for the heart of City Centre, providing direct access to shops and offices. Implementation of the 1970/80 development plan for the City Centre is progressing.*



*An artist's impression of how the centre of the Canberra of the future may look, featuring pedestrian only plazas free of the hustle of motor traffic*



*Shown here is the possible development after 1980 of the area around Electricity House in the south-east area of City Centre. The design shown is indicative. Its exact form will be determined during development*

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