

The Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal
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Re: Inquiry into Billboards

We are concerned to hear that the ACT government is considering relaxing the restrictions on billboards in Canberra.

In our view, the absence of billboards and restrictions on outdoor advertising contributes in a positive way to our outdoor areas and landscapes. When we consider that Canberra, from early days until present, has been planned with the objective of providing for views and vistas, both of the surrounding landscape (hills, ridges, lakes), the architecture of the built environment, and urban green-scapes; allowing the imposition of advertising hoarding to distract from, clash with, or obstruct this environment would be a step backwards. Already exceptions to the rule such as the IKEA sign and the nearby airport signs stand out and blot the landscape.

We note in the terms of reference the suggestion that billboards may have the 'potential to enliven urban areas'. Surely we should not sacrifice one of the positive elements of Canberra, that gives us an element of uniqueness, in order to adopt a revenue raising device? In this digital age, we are bombarded with advertising both in social online media and traditional broadcast and print media, be it for profit making, or for raising awareness of social causes that our Chief Minister alluded to earlier in the year. Isn't this enough 'enlivening' in our day to day lives?

Those who wish to be 'enlivened' by billboards need only go so far as the border with NSW to get their hearts racing. Or perhaps a visit to Sydney or Melbourne for a heady rush of garish facades. For ourselves, we would prefer to be enlivened by views of our natural and planned landscapes, and well-designed buildings, by trees changing to the seasons, and people moving through our city without being yelled down at by billboard messages.

Our view of the 'placement and construction of billboards' in the ACT is: please don't, not at all, anywhere, in any shape.

Regards

David Boughey and Thao Tran

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