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	A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OFFICE
SUBMISSION NUMBER	92
DATE AUTH'D FOR PUBLICATION	27/6/17



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**Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal
Inquiry Into Billboards
ACT Legislative Assembly**

Dear Standing Committee,

The Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Standing Committee's Inquiry into Billboards in the ACT.

The WCCC strongly opposes the introduction of billboards for outdoor advertising in the ACT. It is unclear why, after such a long history of being a billboard-free city, the ACT Government would want to move to introduce billboards other than for the purposes of raising revenue. A sufficient case to justify the introduction of billboards has not been made at this time.

Canberra is truly blessed with a unique bush setting and gorgeous natural landscapes. It would be a tragedy if billboard advertising were to be introduced, and WCCC rejects the notion that there are ways in which elements of billboard advertising could be regulated to limit their environmental and aesthetic impact. Billboards - regardless of their size, location, content and advertising periods - will ruin the distinctive character of Canberra's natural beauty and result in the visual pollution of our fair city

There are no merits in moving towards billboard advertising. Businesses and community organisations already have a multitude of advertising avenues available to them, and it is unclear what additional impact the provision of billboards would have on advertising reach that is not already available under more traditional advertising mechanisms. Billboards are an outdated and archaic form of advertising. The digital world that we live in has brought with it new and innovative approaches to advertising and information provision that are more effective and more targeted than traditional avenues like billboards.

Canberrans are already bombarded with advertising through internet, television, print and radio media from the moment they wake up every morning. Our beautiful bush landscape is a last refuge to escape this constant bombardment.

In addition, tourists who visit Canberra should be allowed to enjoy all of its beauty without being confronted by the ugly visual litter that billboards create.

Importantly, as well as being visually displeasing, billboards are also distracting features that can divert the attention of driver's away from the road. It is clear from recent campaigns that the ACT Government places a high value on road safety and warnings. In recent years these campaigns have centered heavily on the issue of distracted drivers. The provision of billboards that distract drivers would be inconsistent with those road safety messages.

In addition to these concerns, the WCCC notes that other forms of outdoor advertising, such as mobile billboards and corflute placards are already beginning to get out of control along our roadsides, and are beginning to become a blight on the city's landscape.

WCCC calls for further regulation of outdoor advertising - not less - to limit the use of these mobile billboards and corflute placards. The placards are dangerous and distracting to drivers - their small print in particular can cause drivers to lose focus on the road whilst they are trying to read them. In addition, some placards are left for months after the events that they advertise and cause pollution to our environment.

WCCC strongly urges the Standing Committee to wholly reject the introduction of billboards in the ACT. Billboards will not enliven urban areas, as the terms of reference for this Inquiry suggest, instead they will rob Canberra of the very thing that makes it beautiful and special.

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Weston Creek Community Council