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9 December 2011

Music is fitting for Fitters Workshop

Dear Mr Sneddon,

Please accept this submission to the Inquiry into the Fitters' Workshop.

 A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OFFICE	
SUBMISSION NUMBER	9
DATE AUTH'D FOR PUBLICATION	

There has been much emotive rhetoric bandied about regarding the future use of The Fitter's Workshop, Kingston, not least the unhelpful and uniformed article by Christine Wallace in last week-ends *Panorama* section of the Canberra Times (Dec 3) which sought it seems to me to further politicise this non-political issue. Jon Stanhope's vitriolic and bullying language and tone showed just how much of a personal stake he has in the issue and certainly does not lend a reasoned and proper evaluation to the questions at hand.

I hope you have been supplied with all the relevant and factual information required as the inquiry re-evaluates the use of The Fitter's Workshop. That this building had exceptional acoustic qualities came to light quite by chance when the *Canberra International Music Festival* organisers first used it as a venue for several concerts, this will no doubt be well known to you. I was in the audience for all of these concerts and heard musicians, composers and conductors from Australia and overseas exclaim spontaneously, sometimes from the stage, that the acoustic was extraordinary and one of the best they had performed in. Buried treasure came to light that year in May and hundreds of people heard it.

Music is as much art as fine arts, sculpture, printmaking etc and reaches far more people in every way. Indeed ADFAS (Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society), of which I am a member and former committee person, has awarded many music students prizes in recognition and encouragement of their art, so the argument that FW should be used for art, and which excludes music as art, is null.

It is my understanding that Megalo will use very little of the actual space that is FW for printmaking and will need a purpose built building as well, this seems like losing a treasure for music making – of all kinds – certainly not just choirs as has so often quoted. By saying just choirs I want to add that surely by now everyone is aware that choirs are growing fast in Australia supporting the well researched facts that a sense of community and belonging is engendered by people singing together. Good health, less spending by government on health issues. Megalo need not lose the position near the Glassworks, plenty of land lies behind/beside FW which will be used for Megalo anyway in the current plans, simply expand the modern building already planned. It will be cheaper too.

The idea, again Christine Wallace gives voice to this reasoning in her article of Dec 3, that the so called arts precinct could be visited by strolling from one institution to the next as they would be in some logical alignment after missing a piece is far-fetched, even fanciful. What art lover could take in all the institutions in one day? Looking at art takes time, these 'strollers' would hardly be looking at

the art – I am an art lover and also a guide at the National Gallery of Australia to explain the rationale for this comment. Further my husband and I are members of the NGA, NPG, NMA, NLA as well as music lovers.

I think some serious number crunching needs to be done. Please look at how many people, the public, will attend the FW if it is used for music, thousands will. The annually growing CIME, both in attendance numbers and reputation will guarantee that alone. The space can be used by choirs, theatre groups, concerts of every sort, graduation ceremonies and of course art shows. Using transportable chairs, stage, display stands this building can have a multi-purpose life without changing the wonderful acoustics which divine providence has shown us, I hope in the nick of time, before the building is irreparably altered. That the music community was not aware of the FW is hardly something that they/it can be blamed for; there was no chance to know it until it was used for music!

Good luck in your endeavour to take a clear-headed look at the issues at hand and let's hope that Canberra's heritage will include a largely unaltered multipurpose Fitter's Workshop.

Yours sincerely

Anna Prosser