

From: nicci haynes

Sent: Friday, 9 December 2011 3:44 PM

To: Committees

Subject: inquiry into the future use of the Fitters' Workshop in the Kingston arts precinct

Submission to support the inquiry into the future use of the Fitters' Workshop in the Kingston arts precinct

I am not sure that it is possible to make a case for the 'best' use of the Fitters Workshop without elaboration of the term best. 'Best' in relation to the idea of an 'arts precinct' perhaps?

If ACT wishes to create a vibrant arts precinct at Kingston then Megalo would certainly enliven the atmosphere and add to that already created by the Canberra Glassworks and Kingston Markets.

I hardly need to write that Megalo has occupied prominent spot in Canberra's community for 30 years. A visual footprint documents its activity during that time: an archive of posters chart environmental campaigns, 2xx local radio, music, gigs, rallies, the food co-op, exhibitions, local school events... At Megalo in a single week there are classes; print clubs; work experience students; interns from ANU; a woman on a mentorship program; an excited school group screen printing in the fabric room; Kat from interstate printing lino for her exhibition at Wagga; someone printing T-shirts as Christmas gifts; someone printing tea towels for their market stall; a young women printing fabrics for a fashion house; scarves being printed for sale at the Kingston Markets; two Canadian visiting artists screenprint a stage set, costumes and props for their performance at the scout hall in O'Connor. Mike Parr is in the litho room with an angle grinder making noisy and expressive drawings on a large copper plate. A group from the NGA is watching. It is a stimulating and creatively rich environment. If this is the sort ambience that would make an arts precinct buzz then Megalo would put the Fitters workshop to 'good' use.

In outlining my own experience of Megalo I wish to reinforce the case for ACT government to support Megalo if ACT wishes to have contemporary visual art as part of community life in Canberra. After graduating from ANU art school as a printmaker four years ago my art practice has had as much encouragement that anyone wishing to pursue a career as a visual artist could wish for: awards, grants, residencies, prizes; yet it would be unthinkable for me to be able to pursue a career in Canberra as an artist without the existence of Megalo. For me and many others, printmaking would come to an abrupt halt after leaving art school.

Not only does Megalo provide the physical equipment to make new work, it is a hub for new ideas and techniques and where an artist can feel supported. At Megalo a wide range of people work alongside high profile established artists such as John Loane and Mike Parr, Mini Graff. International visiting artists add a further dimension to the experience.

In relation to the need for alternative venues for community music groups, perhaps the need is less pressing for choral groups and the greater need is for a venue for young people and bands: the sort of venue campaigned for by the Canberra Musicians Club when McGregor Hall was demolished, for instance.

I would also like it to be noted that the process of announcing that Megalo was to be given a permanent home at the Fitters workshop and then the subsequent retraction and inquiry has been extremely disruptive and time consuming.

Regards

Nicci Haynes