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Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2017 4:08 PM
To: Committees
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Submission to the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal - Inquiry into Billboards

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SUBMISSION NUMBER	85
DATE AUTH'D FOR PUBLICATION	27/6/17



To the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal,

I thank the Committee for allowing the people of Canberra to have their say by making submissions into the inquiry into Billboards in Canberra.

I and many of my friends and peers adamantly oppose further moves to open up more public space in Canberra to billboard advertising.

Despite opportunities like this being made available to the public, the vast majority of people remain unaware of the agenda to increase billboard advertising in Canberra. People with vested interests in the process are able to organise and put time and resources towards pushing their agenda. As stated every day members of the public remain largely unaware of the proposed changes, and based on my discussions within the community, I have found that many people feel there has been insufficient genuine consultation or information made available. Further once they are aware of the agenda they are in the vast majority of instances, against having more billboards in Canberra. In short there is not anywhere near a clearly demonstrated community support for increasing Billboard Advertising.

It is not clear that the benefits outweigh the costs when it comes to increased Billboard Advertising. I do not believe the costs have been taken into account adequately, these include making Canberra a less aesthetically pleasing and desirable place to live, public safety concerns surrounding driver distraction. Beyond these costs are also the intrusion of private profit seekers intruding into the cultural and psychological lives of Canberra residents and turning public space into private commoditised spaces. It is well documented the detrimental effect that intrusive advertising can have on the mental wellbeing of people.

The current landscape of Canberra is why I am many people choose to live here. Canberra provides access to green and clean public spaces. This means less pollution than bigger cities and this includes visual pollution such as an over predominance of unsightly and intrusive advertising. This lack of advertising is a valuable point of difference for Canberra and I believe if lost to the city, you would soon hear from people as they realise what they have lost.

Most of all, any expansion of billboard advertising needs to have costs and benefits weighed up against each other. As outlined above this should include not only a \$ assessment but also distributional analysis (the benefits go to a few wealthy advertisers and the costs are placed upon all residents). Even within a pure cost benefit analysis, you need to have a transparent and robust debate around the costs and benefits of a proposal, which to the extent possible, must be based on factual data and evidence. You have not released any figures about the expected benefits of expanding billboard advertising and thus any move to do so runs the risk of being taken as a sign of a secretive deliberation process designed to benefit the few over the many losers.

Thanks for considering this submission,

Ben Brocchi