

**Submission to the Standing Committee on Education,
Training and Youth Affairs**

***Inquiry into the Future Use of the Fitters' Workshop in
the Kingston Arts Precinct***

on behalf of

**Various Canberra choral societies, and other groups and
individuals who are particularly interested in music for the
voice**

19 December 2011

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Executive Summary

Our submission on behalf of various choral and vocal groups proposes that the Fitters' Workshop undergo minimal alterations to convert it into a multi-purpose performance and exhibition space for the use and enjoyment of music lovers and other arts practitioners of all kinds.

The arguments in support of this proposal are aesthetic, economic and functional. Our proposal fully accords with Heritage requirements in spirit and practice. It is in the interest of the greatest number of Canberra citizens who stand to benefit from what happens to the Fitters' Workshop.

Our proposal would maintain the building's superb acoustics, which – combined with its other heritage values (its elegant proportions, large volume and gorgeous light) – make it truly an architectural gem in Canberra. At the same time, it would provide Megalo Arts Workshop and the Canberra Glassworks with a splendid exhibition space. Our proposal envisages that the bulk of funds allocated to relocating Megalo to the Kingston Arts Precinct would be devoted to providing Megalo with a purpose-built facility.

We also provide substantive evidence for the claims regarding the building's rare acoustics, and that comparable venues for music-making in Canberra do not exist. We include suggestions regarding experts from whom the Inquiry may wish to seek assessments.

We demonstrate that our proposal accords with advice from within the government and commissioned by the government which has been ignored. All the evidence indicates that the current plans have not been assessed against these alternative proposals in any rigorous or transparent way. Instead, the legitimate and specific interests of music lovers and other arts practitioners in the future of the Fitters' Workshop have been excluded to favour one 'preferred tenant'. For the same reason, and in the same way, the possibility of recommendations regarding the Fitters' Workshop from government-commissioned investigations into the Kingston Arts Precinct have been ruled out of order, despite the fact that the Workshop is one of the two most significant features in the Precinct.

We therefore warmly welcome this Inquiry as the first opportunity to present to Canberra's law-makers a proposal, evidence and reasoned arguments about the future of Fitters' Workshop. We believe the superior merits of this proposal, and the evidence and arguments that we and many others have attempted to advance, will be recognised. We hope that this recognition will provide the grounds for acceptance by law-makers that the optimal future for the Fitters' Workshop is as a multi-purpose performance and exhibition space that is accessible to all who seek to utilise and enjoy its outstanding qualities as a prime cultural venue in Canberra.

1. Introduction: Submission Outline

This submission is made on behalf of various Canberra choral societies, and other groups and individuals who are particularly interested in music for the voice. The names of the individuals and groups supporting this submission are provided in Appendix A.

The submission relates primarily to the Inquiry's first two terms of reference:

in Section 2 –

(a) the best use of the Fitters' Workshop, taking into account the acoustic qualities, heritage value, its location, cost and community demand of the building

in Section 3 –

(b) options for alternative venues for use by a range of community music groups [in this submission, particularly those performing vocal music]

We include some comment **in Section 4** on:

(c) options for alternative purpose built accommodation for Megalo Print Studio.

In regard to reference (d), 'other relevant matters', we document:

in Section 1 –

- i. **evidence regarding the building's** rare acoustic and the reasons for maintaining it – documented in relation to Inquiry reference (a)

in Section 5 –

- ii. what we have discovered – mostly from documents obtained through Freedom of Information requests (henceforth FOI documents) – of the **processes surrounding the decision** to convert the Fitters' Workshop (henceforth the FW) into a print workshop and offices, including
- iii. **the failure to accept recommendations** contained in the government's own reports
- iv. **the lack of consultation** with interested groups and individuals, including ourselves, despite best efforts to engage with the ACT government.

Finally **in Section 6**, we suggest **the names of various experts** that we believe the Inquiry might profitably consult on this matter.

The focus of this submission is vocal music, because this relates most closely to our particular expertise and interests. However, we wish to emphasise that the arguments we advance apply equally well to many other different kinds of music, both in their own right and in complementing music for the voice.

Further, from the outset, we ask the Inquiry to note that we are not laying claim to exclusive access for musicians and music lovers to the FW and have never done so.

Our argument is that the FW should:

- 1. become a multi-purpose performance and exhibition space**
- 2. be subject to minimal modifications that incur minimal costs**
- 3. be open to the many different types arts practices that the building can so beautifully serve and enhance.**

2. The Best Use of the Fitters' Workshop

A Multi-Use Performance and Exhibition Space

On 2 June 2011, we and others wrote to the Minister for the Arts:

In its present state, the Fitters' Workshop has an extremely fine acoustic especially well-suited to a wide range of musical performances. The noted Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe recently publicly reiterated his view that there is no comparable acoustic anywhere in Australia. Other experts have said that there are probably few like it in the world. The ACT Government now has a unique, golden opportunity to create in Canberra an outstanding venue for musical performances and recordings with a distinct acoustic probably unequalled in Australia.

Our earnest request to you is that you intervene to ensure that the Fitters' Workshop:

- *retains its existing fine acoustic and*
- *is developed as a multi-purpose space for all types of arts groups, including a performance and recording space for diverse musical groups (e.g. classical, jazz, folk and world music).*

Our position on this matter has not changed. See Appendix B for the full letter, which includes the arguments we advanced at that time.

We respectfully ask Inquiry to note that this letter was on behalf of choral group **membership totalling over 700 choristers** who actively and regularly contribute to Canberra's cultural life.

In addition to its acoustic properties, the FW is an elegant but very simple space with the right ambiance and seating capacity for the mid-sized audiences that we and other performers attract – choral and chamber music, solo and ensemble performances (voice and instrumental), unamplified jazz, world and folk music. Maintaining the FW as a performance space would also overcome the historically difficult problem of bringing performing artists to Canberra (see Appendix C). Their agents point out the absence of anything that can seat an audience of 300-400 (see Section 3 and Appendix D below). The FW space is unbeatable for local and visiting artists such as the Song Company, Synergy Percussion (both of whom have performed there), Pocket Score, Simpson and Shortis, and the Spooky Men's Chorale (none of whom have). It would be a prime venue for individual concerts; in just three years it has become central to the Canberra International Music Festival; it would be a perfect outreach location for the National Folk Festival.

These events would create vital and dynamic synergies with the Bus Depot market and the planned visual arts concentration in the proposed Cultural Precinct.

As noted by the composer, writer and broadcaster Andrew Ford¹:

The Fitters' Workshop in Canberra requires no multi-million dollar refurbishment. It already has a world-class acoustic. In a city that has few even adequate concert spaces and which is regarded as something of a cultural joke by the rest of Australia, it would seem the sheerest act of mindless cultural vandalism to destroy a perfect acoustic that the national capital already has at no expense. (see Appendix C)

Along with many others (see Section 5 below), we propose that, with minimal interventions, the building is eminently suited to become a multi-purpose performance and exhibition space. The following program of different events at the FW would be entirely feasible, and would bring multiple repeat visitors to the building and the Kingston Arts Precinct, both day and night:

¹ Mr Ford has asked that it be made very clear that his opinions cannot, in any way, be taken to represent the views of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (for whom he presents the weekly Music Show), and are expressed in his capacity as a composer and writer.

CIMF 2 weeks
Canberra Choirs 9 - 12 dates (4 weeks)
Folk and world music groups, including the Folk Festival outreach (2-3 weeks)
Other instrumental groups 12+dates (4 weeks)
Glassworks and Megalo exhibitions (8 exhibitions x 2 weeks each x 16 weeks)

Performance events could be grouped together in the same week, so that the Precinct is not empty and dark at night.

These events total half a year (29 weeks), without including the extra potential use of the FW for dance, film and drama, and displays of fashion, sculpture, photography, printmaking, architecture and use by multi-discipline arts groups. Once discovered by all these groups, the space, light and acoustics of the FW would make it a highly desirable venue. Casual one-off hirers would be attracted, including when the building is already set for weekend concerts, and could fill in the empty days during concert weeks.

In other words, it is likely that a 50 week schedule would be oversubscribed.

Evidence that this is possible comes from the intense activity of the two weeks of the CIMF in the past three years. (It should be noted that it has been impossible for other music groups to access the building, although some have tried.) We understand that, **in 2011, over 3,600 tickets were sold to concerts in the FW**, while tickets sales to FW performances **for the two previous years totalled approximately 4,500**. Exemplifying the potential of the FW, performances in 2011 included (and mixed):

- approximately 28 professional musicians (including conductors and ensembles) from Canberra and other Australian cities
- the acclaimed Australian composers, Peter Sculthorpe, Ross Edwards and Graeme Koehne
- approximately 24 performers from overseas (notably the USA, Denmark and Finland)
- approximately 250 choristers from 7 Canberra choirs
- over 100 students from the ANU School of Music
- Australian premieres of over 40 works.

We are hugely excited by the proposal that was circulated earlier this year that the FW become an **'Artbox'** that builds on the introduction of high speed broadband. It was proposed that fixed high definition cameras be attached to the existing gantry frame to allow web streaming of exhibitions and concerts to local, national and international audiences. This simple step would allow live performances to be broadcast by the ABC and other digital broadcasters. It would expose Canberra performers and other arts practitioners to audiences around Australia, reversing Canberra's image 'a cultural joke' (as described above) and showcasing our city as a vibrant centre for arts practices.

Minimal resources are required to make the FW as a year-round multi-purpose performance and exhibition space: power, heating, adjustments to existing doors, adjacent toilet and green room facilities (which could be quite basic); and chairs, movable stage fixtures and display frames (stored in an adjacent storeroom). If further resources became available, through fund-raising, ticket sales or government grants, some further minor additions would extend access to more performance groups, for example, removable modules for a sprung dance floor.

We respectfully ask the Inquiry to note that, in contrast to the above, the Development Application for Megalo's occupancy of the FW envisages that the building will be closed at night. Megalo's operating hours in both buildings will be: 9am-5pm on Tuesdays, 10am-9:30pm on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and 10am-5pm on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. It has been frequently asserted that Megalo's occupancy of the FW will attract large numbers of visitors – in the Arts Minister's words, it will 'provide constant exhibitions and accessibility to the whole community' and be 'a strong foundation for what we expect to be a thriving, dynamic arts hub'

(Hansard, 27 October, 2011). However, the supposed high use of the building is contradicted in the Development Application, which shows only one unisex single stall toilet in the FW with a second one in the proposed annex. The number of people in both buildings on a regular basis each day is stated as 4 staff and 10 members. Evening classes will not be held in the FW but in the other building. The activity generated by Megalo's activities, despite being mainly during the day and on weekends, is not expected to generate significant additional traffic.

In other words, the most likely outcome of Megalo's sole occupancy and use of the FW space – as well as the nature of print making – is that future public access to the FW will be very small scale.

The 2011 Conroy report on the *Kingston Arts Precinct Strategy*, although prohibited from recommending on use of the FW, despite it being a defining attribute of the Precinct), clearly supports its use for performances, including music. Reporting on consultations with a range of stakeholders, Conroy et al. say:

There is concern that a cultural precinct of visual arts organisations with a focus on making and learning with some exhibition would not sufficiently activate (animate) the precinct. It was seen as vital that complementary arts and cultural activity be included. ...

The ... [Fitters' Workshop] central location in the precinct, also its open and flexible space mean it is seen as being well-suited to being a multi-dimensional facility for all future tenants and other arts and performative practice. There were suggestions the building should be used for showcase exhibitions for future tenants, for artistic events such as cross-art form and installation, small to medium scale acoustic activity and for entities such as the embassies, when they require quality venues for special cultural events and exhibitions. (p. 32)

The FW is virtually ready-made for these activities. It is the *only* space in the proposed Precinct that can accommodate the performing arts.

Conroy et al. also warn that the currently proposed narrow focus on the visual arts is risky:

An aggregation of arts, cultural, design and other sectors has become a central part of regeneration projects implemented to generate new economic and employment growth. ... There are some suggestions that creative quarters with multiple stakeholders that are integrated with city plans tend to be more robust and viable. Strategies that promote creative industries that already contribute to a city's economic and employment profile are also thought to be less likely to fail. (p. 29)

Music performers and music lovers are significant stakeholders in the future of the FW. They are the only group actually to have demonstrated – in numbers totalling approximately 8,000 ticket sales and 500 performers in the six weeks when access has been permitted – their potential contribution to the hoped-for robustness and viability that the FW offers to the Kingston Arts Precinct.

Expert Evidence on the FW acoustics

Eric Pozza's review of a concert attended during the 2011 CIMF captures the response of many music lovers to the FW acoustics:

I noticed bells ringing with a vibrancy I've never heard before. The strings were enveloping and the basses were stunningly present. One of the performing bass players told me later that they'd reduced numbers for some performances because the sound was so intense. But the key issue was the intimacy and intensity of the experience. This was something to savour in a way that our recent Sydney Symphony in the cavernous Opera House was not. There were errors and questionable intonations and the rest, but I'd choose this anytime over a precise, professional but distant music experience. The atmosphere was aided by the lack of facilities, the rough seating, the earthy location, the cables on the ground and the poor lighting, the musicians' clutter at the back beside the trestle-table bar and the rest. But the musical effect was a stunner. I sometimes think back to mediaeval days when the greatest musical experience was the travelling troubadour every few months. We are now surrounded by excellence and excess but much of it is recorded or distant or disembodied. This was everything that is not. This was intimate and exhilarating and a musical treat in a space of accidental excellence.

Eric Pozza <http://canberrajazz.blogspot.com/2011/05/for-love-of-intimacy.html>

Arguably the most significant experts on the FW acoustics are the distinguished performers and composers who have performed in this space or heard their own compositions there – they are the actual and potential expert users of this space.

Contrary to claims that these views have just emerged, expert assessments of the building's acoustics have been in the public domain since their outstanding quality first became apparent in May 2009. Peter Sculthorpe, ('widely regarded as Australia's most prominent composer' Times 2, 12 May, 2009, p. 8) said:

Hearing a solo cello in the Fitters' Workshop is better than hearing it in the Melbourne Recital Centre. (Times 2, 12 May, p. 8.)

Chris Latham, Artistic Director of the Canberra International Music Festival (CIMF), said that 'the building had a seven second echo, which rivalled that of St Paul's Cathedral in London':

Very few spaces have that much reverberation. It's a by-product of perfect proportions and reflective surfaces. It's a very pleasing building, both visually and aurally. (Canberra Times, 5 May, 2009, p. 5)

The outstanding Finnish vocal ensemble, Rajaton, required amplification in the Canberra Playhouse in 2011 but none when they sang in the FW (CT, 26 May, 2009).

In 2011, a number of composers and performers gave their expert views in support of the Objections to the Development Application to sub-divide the FW into a print workshop and offices, lodged with the Land Development Authority by the principal author of this submission. These letters are presented in Appendix C, together with other letters and statements sent or copied to us.

For example, composer and former chair of the Australia Council Music Board, Graeme Koehne, says:

In my expert opinion as a composer and audience member, this building is an outstanding venue for many kinds of unamplified musical performances. Its particular qualities are: the clarity of the sound no matter where one is seated; the intimacy that is created between performer and audience; the unique aspect and sense of space; the light that floods the space during day-time performances and the perfect natural resonance and sonic warmth – characteristics that architects and acoustic consultants nowadays spend hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to emulate.

Louise Page, soprano and *Canberra Times* Artist of the Year, says:

For a musician it certainly feels as though one is being 'wrapped' in sound. This clarity and warmth is something so valuable and rare it shouldn't be destroyed.

She compares her experience performing the same repertoire as soloist in highly regarded Townsville Festival of Chamber Music:

The experience reinforced how wonderful the Fitters' Workshop is. At the AFCM I sang the same repertoire but found it a vastly different experience, with the sound having to be amplified and balanced for the audience's benefit and for live national broadcast.

Based on his experience as soloist, conductor and member of an ensemble in 2009 and 2010, Tobias Cole, principal soloist for Opera Australia, Victorian Opera and Pinchgut Opera, says:

the glorious resonance in the space is quite splendid, giving tremendous scope for delicate nuance in interpretation and allowing the performer to hear him/herself in a way that is not possible on many other stages.

Commenting on the rarity of such spaces, composer, writer and broadcaster, Andrew Ford says:

Some good acoustics have clarity, others bring a kind of bloom to the music performed, but the Fitters' Workshop appears to have both.

We respectfully suggest that the Inquiry might call on these composers and performers to give evidence (see Section 6 below).

Audiences should also be counted as practical (as distinct from technical) experts – after all, their enjoyment of performances is what will make (and has made) the FW a viable performance space. Copies of letters sent to us are presented in Appendix D.

Appendices C and D are an important archive of expert opinion that derives from *actual experience* in this building.

In contrast to these opinions, the building's outstanding acoustic qualities can only be viewed as problems by those seeking to convert it to offices and a print workshop.

For example, the 2011 Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the FW notes that 'One of the issues with the building is the highly reverberative acoustic of the interior, making it a very noisy space in which to try and work' (p. 60). The CMP further notes that 'the acoustic problems of the interior may require further treatment as part of adaption' (p. 71).

Strikingly, the extent of the need for this treatment is illustrated in notes from an 'initial discussion forum about the possible relocation of Megalo to the Fitters' Workshop' on Friday 12 March, 2010, which reported:

The meeting was held in the Workshop to give the design team and the potential end users a better understanding of the building. Reverberating sound from the concrete walls and floor was very disruptive and stressful for participants, leading to suggestions that the meeting should be held outside. The meeting agreed that an acoustics consultant should be added to the design team.

Alterations to mitigate the building's acoustic properties are totally objectionable in the face of the authoritative testimony about the rarity of such properties locally, nationally and internationally.

Other Heritage Qualities

An outstanding feature of the Fitter's Workshop is its large, elegant, light-filled space. Its long mullioned windows are beautiful. Its sight lines and simplicity are pleasing. Its ceiling is high and enhanced by regularly spaced buttresses. Visually, it is a 'light box'. It is a perfect palimpsest space.² A Canberra architect has spoken of:

the rare miracle of the FW acoustic ... [which] amplifies the inherent qualities of the architectural space - its industrial legacy, material patina, light filled volume and transparency as a 'light box', its resonance both spatially and acoustically.

In July 2006, the Heritage Impact Statement prepared by Colin Stewart Architects described the building as having 'a high quality of architectural design' with 'a consistent and high standard of detail, materials and composition'. It cites an earlier report (Rogers & Jefferis, Dec 2005) that the structural elements such as the window frames 'are meticulously and elegantly detailed'.

The **Heritage Places Register** specifically requires that:

Internal alterations or additions to the Power House and Fitters' Workshop will respect proportions of space and may only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that they will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place. (s54(1) Land Planning and Environment Act 1991)

The Development Application to convert the FW into a print workshop and offices shows:

- i. Approximately half of the ground floor space segmented as offices, meeting rooms etc.
- ii. Floor to ceiling walls for each of these offices etc.
- iii. Acoustic insulation in these walls.
- iv. A mezzanine floor along both the east and west side walls and across the centre of the space as a considerable proportion of the inserted building bulk.
- v. Aside from a corridor, which appears to be cut in half way down by doors, the sight lines in the building are gone.
- vi. A new opening cut in the eastern wall to create access between the FW and the proposed new building.

The *Heritage Comments on the Proposed Adaptive Re-Use of Fitters Workshop Kingston* to the ACT Government provided by architect Duncan Marshall on 24 June 2010 state that:

The insertion of rooms and mezzanine will have high impact on the interior space. (p. 3)

He states that the internal alterations are '**mostly inconsistent**' (p. 1) with the ACT Heritage Register citation for the Kingston precinct. His claim is grudging, viz. that 'to some extent the space will still be able to be appreciated' (p. 3) and is highly contestable.

This assessment has morphed to a focus simply on the interior walls, as seen, for example, in briefings given to Ministers, in this case the Minister for Land and Property Services (18 August, 2010):

The main issue of heritage concern is the installation of a mezzanine level through part of the building that impacts on the appreciation of the space and volume of the existing building. The adverse impacts are ameliorated by the fact that the mezzanine is free-standing and set away from side and end walls. This avoids non-reversible impacts on the existing fabric and also

² A palimpsest is parchment or other writing material from which the original writing has been partly erased but where it can still be seen below more recent writing.

maintains an appreciation of original building volume from many viewing points within the modified structure.

The mezzanine is necessary in order to:

- *contain noise from washing and coating operations; and*
- *create zones for more efficient and effective temperature control within the large volume space.*

In fact, the plans in the FW Development Application make clear that public access to and appreciation of the interior space will be highly restricted and substantively altered by the sub-division of its interior, the corridors and doors, and the mezzanine floor. It defies common sense as to how these insertions into the building's volume can allow 'an appreciation of the original building volume' except in the most technical and abstract ways.

In fact, the proposed alterations to the building are a clear example of what could be termed 'internal facadism':

'Facadism' is a growing practice of developers and architects to retain only the existing facade of historic buildings. ... The original architecture is reduced to its most superficial elements - the facade. (<http://www.an-architecture.com/2010/09/preservation-facadism.html>, viewed 16 Dec, 2011)

The splendid combination of light, sound, space and elegant proportions is what makes the Fitters' Workshop so special. It is absurd to argue that these unique values will be preserved when this space is sub-divided as offices and a print workshop, has a mezzanine floor inserted, and everything possible is done to deaden its vibrating sound. It is specious to propose that, because these alterations will not touch the existing walls, they are sympathetic and respectful of the building's heritage values. Such alterations will make the walls of the building a mere shell. They are entirely unsympathetic and disrespectful of the key qualities of the building's interior, and will destroy them.

Attached to this submission are photographs kindly provided by the Canberra Times and the CIMF (of some of our performances), which give some indication of the building's qualities and the pleasure these give to audiences.

3. Alternative Venues for Vocal Music Performances

Two of our group have attempted to survey venues used for vocal music in Canberra. The results of this survey are attached in Appendix E.

The critical considerations that affect musicians, not least choirs, in weighing up their choice of performance venue are:

1. **Costs:** these are often never straight-forward. In addition to base hire rates for venues (which can vary considerably depending on the connections individuals/groups have with venue owners), venues may/may not require payment of sizeable on-costs for security, technical support & front-of-house staffing, ticket sales, use & tuning of piano, sound, risers and other equipment. Owners may/may restrict what hirers can provide for themselves and/or whether program sales/gold coin donations are permitted. Some venues may appear cheap or offer community discounts but turn out to be very expensive when these on-costs are added. Thus, for example – leaving aside the difficulties in obtaining access to the FW and the expensive hire fees – the FW has not been used throughout the year for music except during the CIMF because of the costs of hiring in absolutely everything needed for a concert.

No matter what the future of the FW, the basics needed to stage concerts (toilets, power & heating) will have to be supplied. See above for other minimal requirements: if these were put in place, the cost of hiring the FW should become reasonable.

(It should be borne in mind that staging concerts also entail considerable costs in regard to publicity, printing programs, hire of music stands & lights if a small orchestra is used, and payment for accompanists/orchestra, soloists and sometimes a guest conductor.)

2. **Seating capacity:** this factor relates directly to costs, since seating capacity determines audience size, which determines potential income from ticket sales. The venue can be too large and expensive to fill for most repertoire (e.g. Llewellyn Hall) or too small for the total seating to permit ticket sales to cover costs (e.g. Belconnen Arts Centre). Most larger choirs look for audiences of approximately 300-400 unless they are staging very well-known and popular concerts (e.g. the Mozart Requiem, *Camina Burana*). This mid-sized seating capacity is notably absent from Canberra venues: most are either too big or too small (see Appendix E).

The seating capacity of the FW is ideal for most Canberra choirs and other vocal music performances, and hard to find elsewhere in Canberra.

3. **Acoustics:** the better venues for choral music are generally churches, although almost all Canberra churches are quirky (i.e. the sound can be excellent in one place and poor in another, for example, in St Andrews and St Paul's). Some venues are good for the spoken word but not unamplified music, for example, Canberra's various theatres. The amplification necessary in some venues is very expensive (rarely less than \$1000) and is, in any case, unsuitable for choral music.

A crucial feature of the FW is that the sound is very immediate and consistent throughout the space. This acoustic is not found anywhere else in Canberra.

4. **Ambience:** a church atmosphere is very suitable for some types of music but not others, similarly (but differently) the Albert Hall and (differently again) Llewellyn Hall. Schools and church halls do not generally attract audiences because their ambience is so particular. If groups cannot sell tickets to their concerts, they cannot survive (financially and psychologically).

The volume, proportions and light (both day and night) in the FW create an extremely elegant but 'neutral' ambience that enhances all types of choral, small ensemble and solo performances of classical, religious, secular, folk, world and jazz music. It has already proved itself capable of attracting capacity audiences.

5. **Location:** audiences also resist most outer suburban locations. Family and loyal friends can be persuaded to attend concerts in the outer suburbs but others won't. As already stated, ticket sales are crucial to the vitality of most Canberra choirs.

The FW is ideally located and will be even more so in the planned Cultural Precinct. Music concerts of all kinds will themselves animate the Precinct.

4. Options for Alternative Purpose-Built Accommodation for Megalo Print Studio

We propose that the funds currently allocated to relocating Megalo Print Studio to the Kingston Arts Precinct be almost entirely devoted to providing the Studio with a purpose-built facility within the Precinct. From the draft Master Plan on display at the latest public consultation, it was clear that creating this facility is entirely feasible.

We further propose that the FW should be the prime exhibition space for both Megalo and Glassworks. We note that the building demonstrated its suitability as an exhibition space in October 2010 when Megalo Arts successfully celebrated their 30th anniversary with a major exhibition there.

Conversely, the Development Application to install offices and a print workshop within the FW is *prima facie* evidence that the FW is not an appropriate space for the functions currently envisaged for it.

Additional and conclusive evidence is provided by the doubling of various plant and exhaust provisions in the second building proposed in the FW Development Application. Maximal efficiencies and cost savings would be possible if all this introduced technical provision went into a purpose-built space, a conclusion also reached in the government's own 2009 Scoping Study for relocating Megalo to the FW (see Section 5 *Recommendations to Government* below).

The bulk of the funds allocated to relocating Megalo Arts Studio to the Kingston Arts Precinct should be devoted to providing them with purpose-built accommodation. The FW should become the prime exhibition space for both Megalo Arts and the Glassworks. A small amount should be retained for minimal interventions to the FW to open it up as a multi-purpose performance and exhibition space for all Canberra arts practitioners.

5. Decision-Making Processes Regarding the Fitters' Workshop

The material below is derived from documents obtained mainly through FOI requests and press releases.

Chronology

A briefing paper to the Minister for Economic Development (23 May 2011) states that:

In May 2008 the ACT Minister for the Arts announced a scoping study to identify cultural uses for the Fitters' Workshop. Investigations considered options to retain the building as a venue for multiple uses such as exhibitions and concerts, and to adapt it to the specific requirements of Megalo.

However, in the FOI documents to hand, there is no record of this announcement, study or consultation. It may be that the author is referring to the 2009 Scoping Study (see *Recommendations to Government* below) which was directed solely to specifying how the FW could be adapted for Megalo's requirements.

In fact, it seems that Megalo's entry into discussions about the future of the FW began formally with two letters (22 July and 22 August 2008) from, respectively, Megalo Arts Chair (Eleanor Gates-Stuart) and Artist Director/CEO (Alison Alder) to the then Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope. On the grounds that Megalo's lease at their current premises was ending and because a rent

increase seemed likely, the letters requested Mr Stanhope to 'agree to Megalo relocating to the building known as the Fitters' Workshop' (22 August, 2008). The second letter (of one-and-a-half pages) contains three paragraphs of supportive argument and concludes with the claim that 'while others may advance claims to the Fitters' Workshop, we believe the case for Megalo's occupancy is compelling'.

Across the top of this letter is the handwritten note: 'This is a persuasive and very tempting proposition. Advice and response please. 28/8'. This advice and Mr Stanhope's reply to Megalo is not included in the FOI documents. However, a later briefing note (29 October 2010) for Chief Minister Stanhope records the following:

In the 2007-08 ACT budget, \$30,000 was allocated for a feasibility study into the future re-use of the Fitters' Workshop. This funding was carried over to 2008-09 when architects May & Russell were engaged by artsACT to under some scoping work. Discussions were held with local arts organisation Megalo Print Studio, which you have identified as your preferred future tenant of the Fitters' Workshop. The Creative Director of the Centenary of Canberra and the Canberra Glassworks also provided input into the discussion on the future use of the Fitters' Workshop.

In January 2009, five months after the above letters, a '**Summary consultant statement of requirement for preparation of a feasibility study to determine and scope an appropriate arts use for the historic Fitters' Workshop at the Kingston Foreshore**' was approved (27/01/2009). This document clearly restricts the ambit of 'an appropriate arts use' when it states that:

It is envisaged that the Fitters' Workshop, like the Glassworks, would provide opportunities to see 'making' in progress as well as to view completed works. (p. 1)

Print making is given as an example. It would seem that, by this point, the Chief Minister's preferred tenant for the FW was clearly the prime concern. Nevertheless, the document also notes that:

- the building 'has been used by several group in recent times including as a setting for the filming of an advertisement'
- 'an application has also been lodged with the LDA to use the building for the Canberra International Music Festival in May 2009'
- 'interest in the use of the facility has been expressed verbally by several key arts organisations and a written proposal has been received by [sic] local group Paperworks'. (p. 2)

A handwritten amendment to this document includes among the consultant's requirements that he/she '*massage an Expression of Interest process seeking interest from arts organisations for use of the facility*'. No documentation of any such process has been provided in the FOI documents to hand.

In fact, the media has been the only forum in which alternative stakeholder claims to the FW have been given space.

As already noted, music interests in the FW were first entered the public domain in May 2009, when Canberra International Music Festival performances first occurred in the FW. The views of Peter Sculthorpe and Chris Latham were documented in the *Canberra Times* (5/5/2009, p. 5; 12/5/2009, p. 8). *Capital Life* reported the FW as 'a resounding success' as a concert venue but that the ACT Government 'was silent' on this issue (23/5/2009, p. 21). According to the Festival Chairman, Professor Don Aitkin, AO:

I wrote to the Minister after the 2009 Festival acquainting him not only with the success of the Festival but also with what I called 'the amazing musical space' that we had unearthed in the Fitters Workshop. I discovered soon afterwards that the Government was not as pleased as the Festival patrons, because it was already committed to its future as a print shop. (Aitkin,

‘Remarks about the Fitters Workshop’ made on Sunday 8 May 2011 at the opening of the 2011 Canberra International Music Festival)

A month after the Festival, the Chief Minister announced that a Scoping Study for ‘work on the re-use of the Fitters’ Workshop for a visual arts organisation’ had commenced (June, 2009). Emails (name erased 5 July; Alison Alder 20 July) congratulated Mr Stanhope on ‘the decision to give the Megalo Public Access Print Workshop a permanent home in the refurbished Fitters’ Workshop in Kingston’.

In July, the *Canberra Times* headlined that a ‘fight looms over future of Kingston workshop’ (4/7/2009). The *Riot ACT* website reported (with some scorn) that Liberal MLA Vicki Dunne was calling for ‘a process of public consultation’ on the future of the FW (14/7/2009).

The Government officially dates its decision to rehouse Megalo Arts in the FW from 2009 – in the form letter that many of us have received in response to requests to review this decision (see below), Arts Minister Burch says: ‘The Government made a decision in 2009 that the Fitters’ Workshop would be the new home for Megalo Print Studio and Gallery’.

From documents made available under FOI, no evidence exists to contradict the claim that, since mid 2008, the government has considered Megalo Arts to be the only stakeholder in the future of the FW.

Likewise, no evidence exists of anyone other than the then Chief Minister and Megalo Arts proposing that Megalo be given exclusive tenancy of the building.

Further, no evidence has been produced of any consultation with community groups other than Megalo prior to the 2009 decision to make the FW Megalo’s ‘new home’.

Recommendations within Government

Documents obtained through FOI reveal that advice has been received from the government’s own internal and commissioned advisors that seeks to refine the decision regarding the FW in such a way that would allow it to be retained as a multi-purpose performance and exhibition space for diverse Canberra art practitioners.

The advice in the October 2009 Scoping Study is particularly significant, since its sole purpose was to describe how to implement the decision to house Megalo in the FW. The Study put forward two options. Option 1 explored the possibility of locating Megalo entirely within the FW but concluded this would not meet Megalo’s needs (section 2.04). The second option included the following:

A new larger annexe [to the FW] could contain all the studio and work areas thereby allowing the existing building to be retained as a large flexible open space that can be used by Megalo and other arts or community groups for exhibitions, functions, concerts and the like.

The report continued:

This option is therefore a more flexible option; it could better preserve the existing character and internal space of the historic building, and it could result in less potentially disruptive work to the existing structure. It also has the potential to provide a venue for a wider range of arts and community groups that could make use of the space within this arts precinct. (Accommodation Study, para. 3.03)

The study costed Option 1 at approximately \$2.5m and Option 2 at \$4m.

We respectfully ask the Inquiry to note that the preferred option in the 2009 government-commissioned Scoping Study mirrors the proposal we and many others have made, and that its costings approximate the budget now allocated to rehousing Megalo at Kingston.

On 27 November 2009, the Chief Minister received a briefing that suggested the possibility of 'some thinking around more flexible use of this space'. These points include the following:

While Print might appear to be an excellent fit with glass, ... there's a danger that the space will become audience passive ... While the glass workshop itself is an exciting making-place, it is still a spectator activity and a print-making workshop is even less dynamic. ...

It would not disadvantage the Print Workshop if a purpose built Workshop were constructed nearby and they used the Fitters' Workshop as a rotating exhibition space. ... Leaving the Fitters' Workshop open and flexible would be more in keeping with its original shape and continue to offer more insights into its heritage.

In regard to the need for performance spaces, the briefing states:

As it happens, the Fitters' Workshop, as it stands, is the only building of its kind which can accommodate certain performances in the region.

The briefing describes the scope and limitations of the Albert Hall for music, proposes the need for 'flexible spaces' for the 2013 Canberra centenary celebrations, notes that the FW is 'one of the very few which makes sense in terms of size of audience,' and concludes:

It should be possible to effect a rotation schedule which allows for a few obvious dense spots of performance activity in rotation with exhibitions of glass and prints. This programming flexibility ensures a much higher local public usage of this beautiful building, since with one single art form focus it will drop off the visiting list of those who are not interested in prints and print making.

As recently as 21 June 2011, "dot points" to assist responses to a Greens press release concluded with the following:

The Fitters' Workshop could be retained as a curated arts and cultural space within the Kingston Cultural precinct. The unique nature of the space, both from an external and internal perspective, along with heritage importance would provide a building and program to complement the ambience of the semi industrial nature of early Kingston. The venue would need to have a curator, creative director to engage with varied use throughout the year. Given that there are 12 months in a year, the venue could have a program of say 8 events each approx. a month long. These could include music, gallery display for Canberra Glassworks, Craft ACT, Megalo, Canberra Contemporary Arts Space either as solo activities, or shared exhibition space. Contemporary dance could be programmed. Screen events and museum displays or even public arts workers could hire for making large works. 'Festival Events' could see the Fitters' as a unique venue. Operational funding could be directed from the ACT Arts Fund however a hire charge regime will need to be determined. Such a space would have limited fixed services, probably only power (with limited lighting rig suspended from the ceiling) and users/hirers would be required to supply their specific needs. There would need to be minor work to address emergency exits etc. Public amenities would need to be provided within the precinct, probably within the Former Transport Building.

Documents obtained through FOI provide clear evidence that advice has been provided from within the government's own agencies that accords with our own recommendations.

However, *absolutely no indication whatsoever* exists to show that this advice was considered or evaluated against the plans for the FW.

Failure to Acknowledge Music Lovers as Significant Stakeholders in the Future of the FW

We respectfully ask the Inquiry to note that the music sector is by far the largest group of arts practitioners in Canberra. At least 1000 musicians of various kinds perform regularly in public in any one year in Canberra, ranging from the Canberra Symphony Orchestra to the smallest band, from large choirs to small ensembles such as Pocket Score and Simpson & Shortis, from high profile performers of the classical repertoire to musicians and singers in clubs, bars, church halls and community venues. These performers both constitute and attract untold numbers of attendees at music events and performances of all kinds. From at least May 2009 onwards, music performers and music lovers have expressed a clear interest in the future of FW. It seems extraordinary that they should be completely excluded from consultations regarding this future.

The most recent evidence of music lovers' substantive interest in the FW is that:

- i. as already indicated, the leaders of 17 Canberra choral groups wrote on behalf of their approximately 700 members to the Minister for the Arts requesting consultation in regard to the future of the Fitters' Workshop (see Appendix B)
- ii. 1,487 Canberra music lovers, performers and residents (together with 134 visitors to Canberra and 32 outstanding performing artists from overseas) signed a petition to the Speaker of the ACT Legislative Assembly requesting that 'the ACT Government find another location for the print shop and gallery, and reserve the Fitters' Workshop in perpetuity as a multi-purpose arts space that retains its splendid acoustics'
- iii. more than 60 Canberra choristers on each of two occasions in June held two 'protest sings' against retrofitting the FW with offices, a workshop and mezzanine floor and proposed single occupancy by one arts group
- iv. letters to Ministers in 2011 (provided through FOI) consist of 21 letters of support for Megalo (including 3 approving the general move to the Kingston Arts Precinct as distinct from occupancy of the FW) and 46 requesting preservation of the FW's acoustics, many of which also expressed support for Megalo's move to the Kingston.

Most significantly, the **Conservation Management Plan (CMP)** for the FW dismisses and radically understates music lovers' interests in the FW. The table below shows the assessment criteria required by the ACT Heritage Register and ACT Heritage Criteria 2004, the CMP assessments, and problems with these assessments.

<u>Criterion</u> (as specified in the ACT Heritage Register and ACT Heritage Criteria 2004)	<u>CMP Assessment</u>	<u>Problems</u>
It exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group	‘While the Fitters’ Workshop displays significant design and aesthetic qualities, as noted under other criteria, there is currently no evidence these are valued by a community or cultural group. More detailed research may substantiate such value’ (p. 45) Earlier (p. 43), the CMP states: ‘It is a prominent building in a precinct which includes the Canberra Glassworks and Old Bus Depot Markets. While these other buildings have or appear to have social value through strong and special associations with the Canberra community (see for example ACT Heritage Council 2010), the Fitters’ Workshop as an individual element does not. In part this may be explained by the use of the building through the latter part of the twentieth century for storage, rather than functions which involved many people or the wider community. The Workshop is also a much less prominent building than the Canberra Glassworks. In recent years this situation has not changed greatly and the Workshop is largely unused. However, the more recent occasional use for public functions or displays has raised public awareness of the building and with more time, such uses would be likely to result in social value.’ Having dismissed the value to a community group criterion, the CMP does not consider it in subsequent discussion or recommendations.	This assessment is contradicted by aesthetic qualities valued by music lovers as demonstrated by: • their purchase of over 8000 tickets to concerts in the FW (2009-2011) • the number of musicians (approx. 400) who have performed there • numerous letters to the Canberra Times criticising its conversion to a print workshop & offices • the statements by music experts regarding its outstanding acoustic properties • the number of signatures (1,653) on a petition requesting retention of the building’s acoustic properties • ‘protest sings’ by 60 choristers on 2 separate occasions • at least 46 letters to government ministers, including one signed by leaders of 17 choral groups representing approx. 700 choristers, requesting that the building’s acoustics be retained.
It is important as evidence of a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function that is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost or is of exceptional interest	‘The Workshop is also evidence of a distinctive function which is no longer practiced and is of exceptional interest – the centralised government provision of workshop/ industrial/ engineering services for the city of Canberra, as part of an overall planned approach to city development.’ (p. 45)	No reference is made to the building’s values in relation to the distinctive ‘tastes’ of Canberra music lovers or the discovery of its function as a music venue.
It is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations	‘there is currently little evidence of social value being attached to the Fitters’ Workshop as an individual place although this is an aspect that has not been subject to detailed research. The Workshop may also share social value attached to the Canberra Glassworks and the broader historic precinct, including the Old Bus Depot Markets, but again this has not been researched.’ (p. 45)	See above: the FW is clearly highly valued by at least two ‘cultural groups’ (music lovers and Megalo members) for strong and special cultural, social and educational reasons. Its future has been the subject of bitter debate since 2009.

It is a rare or unique example of its kind, or is rare or unique in its comparative intactness	‘The Fitters’ Workshop might be considered an example of: • an early twentieth century industrial/engineering building; and • Inter-War Stripped Classical architecture. ... the Workshop does not appear significant because it displays rarity in its comparative intactness.’ (p. 46)	The CMP appears to have completely ignored the spatial qualities of the building’s interior. See above and Appendices C & D for evidence of the rare combination of acoustic, light and spatial qualities in the FW. These are totally dependent on keeping the space intact.
It has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history	‘The Fitters’ Workshop has the following associations of potential significance: • with it’s [sic] designer, John Smith Murdoch; • with the first phase of the development of Canberra as the national capital; • with the provision of industrial/engineering services for the capital; and • with industrial/engineering workers in Canberra’ (p. 46).	Although the associations with music groups began only in 2009, the reaction to the proposed interior refurbishment demonstrates that these associations are both intense and special.

These inaccuracies in the CMP are highly consequential. The LDA has dismissed Objections to the FW Development Application that were based on aesthetic values, including acoustic quality, on the grounds that these values are not specified in the CMP and are therefore irrelevant.

The CMP is also misleading in describing the stakeholders in the future of the FW, firstly, in confining musical interests to Pro Musica, when widely based community interest is clearly evident (see above), and secondly in the statement that ‘in 2010 Pro Musica used the Fitters’ Workshop as a venue for a series of live music performances’ (p. 59). This statement falsely implies that 2010 was a one-off use of the building. As already made clear, the FW has been used for CIMF concerts increasingly intensively since its acoustic properties and ambience for music were discovered in 2009.

We note (from FOI documents) that the person undertaking research for the CMP on these aspects of the FW (Brendan O’Keefe, historian) proposed that this research would take 7 days, and, in regard to community interests, proposed that anyone with particular memories of working in the building would simply be ‘asked, preferably by telephone, to provide whatever relevant information they had’. He described his understanding of building’s recent use as being ‘used for storage and other low grade uses’. Clearly, he had either no knowledge or no interest in the controversy about the building since 2009. Equally clearly, those briefing him did not alert him to these matters, at least in writing.

Music also has the greatest potential for community engagement of any arts genre in Canberra. Nevertheless, this group has been completely denied a voice regarding the future of a building that has proven significance to their concerns.

6. Experts whom we recommend should be consulted regarding ‘the acoustic qualities, heritage value, its location, cost and community demand of the building’³

1. *The following outstanding and internationally recognised Australian musicians could testify regarding the acoustic value of the FW on the basis of their experience as performers there:*

Tobias Cole: counter tenor, principal soloist Opera Australia, Victorian Opera and Pinchgut Opera; Musical Director of the Canberra Choral Society

Louise Page: soprano (incl. in the Vienna State Opera, in Belgium and Germany), ANU Lecturer in Voice, Canberra Times Artist of the Year

Roland Peelman: Artistic Director of the Song Company, conductor of a large number of CIMF orchestral and choral events (2009-2011)

Timothy Constable, Artistic Director, Synergy Percussion

Ian Cleworth, Artistic Director, TaikOz.

2. *The following outstanding Australian composers could testify regarding the acoustic values of the FW on the basis of having heard/performed their music there:*

Ross Edwards: composer of symphonies, concertos, chamber and vocal music, children’s music, film scores, opera and music for dance; won Best Australian Orchestral Work of the Year (2005), Best Instrumental Work of the Year (2007), Best Vocal or Choral Work of the Year (2008)

Elena Kats-Chernin: one of Australia’s leading composers; diverse and prolific output includes operas, orchestral works, chamber and solo pieces, plus music for dance, film, and theatre; described by the Sydney Morning Herald as ‘unchallenged’ in ‘her status as one of this country’s most prolific and consistently innovative composers’.

Graeme Koehne: 2011 CIMF Composer-in-Residence; chair Australia Council Music Board (2002 – 2009); South Australia’s Composer-in-Residence (1998-1999); recipient of the Sir Bernard Heinze Award (2004)

Peter Sculthorpe: composer of a vast array of orchestral and chamber music, including 17 string quartets, works for piano, and two operas; an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO); made one of Australia’s 45 Icons in 1999 and an Australian Living Treasure; holder of four honorary doctorates.

3. *The following experts could testify on the rarity and difficulty of creating and/or finding outstanding acoustics for music venues in Australia and world-wide:*

Andrew Ford: composer, writer and broadcaster; has won awards in all three capacities, including the 2004 Paul Lowin Prize for his song cycle *Learning to Howl* and in 2010 a Green Room Award for his opera *Rembrandt’s Wife*. His music has been played throughout Australia and in more than 40 countries around the world. He was composer-in-residence with the Australian Chamber Orchestra (1992–94) and has held the Peggy Glanville-Hicks Fellowship (1998–2000) and a two-year fellowship from the Music Board of the Australia Council (2005–06). A former academic, Ford has written widely on all manner of music and published six books, most recently *The Sound of*

³ Please note that, due to time constraints, we have not been in contact with the people named here to ascertain their willingness to give evidence to the Inquiry. We suggest them only on the basis of their known expertise. It remains for the Inquiry to establish their willingness/availability to testify. As will be evident from Appendices C & D, some individuals have previously indicated their support for the proposals advanced here. In other cases, we do not know their views.

Pictures: listening to the movies from Hitchcock to High Fidelity (2010). He has written, presented and co-produced four radio series, including *Illegal Harmonies* and *Dots on the Landscape*, and since 1995 he has presented *The Music Show* each Saturday morning on ABC Radio National. <http://www.andrewford.net.au/>

Elizabeth Farrelly: Sydney-based columnist for the *Sydney Morning Herald*; author; holds a PhD in architecture and several international writing awards. A former editor and Sydney City Councilor, she is also Adjunct Associate-Professor of Architecture at the University of Sydney. Her books include 'Glenn Murcutt: Three Houses' and 'Blubberland; the dangers of happiness'. <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/by/elizabeth-farrelly> ; see also: <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/society-and-culture/a-hole-in-the-heart-20110617-1g759.html>

4. *The following Canberra music festival director and performer can testify on all aspects of the FW based on having the most extensive practical experience of using the FW:*

Chris Latham: Director, Pro Musica, Artistic Director, Canberra International Music Festival.

5. *The following have no experience of the venue but could testify regarding Canberra's needs for mid-sized music venues:*

Robyn Archer, Centenary of Canberra Creative Director.

Stephen Taberner, Artistic Director, The Spooky Men's Chorale.

6. *The following architects have specialist knowledge in regard to heritage buildings and the design and construction of venues for cultural purposes:*

Colin Stewart: responsible for the July 2006 Heritage Impact Statement on the Fitters' Workshop; Colin Stewart Architects, Wetlands House, Dairy Road, Fyshwick, ACT 2603

Graham Humphries: Cox Architecture, 22 Jardine Street, Kingston ACT 2604.

Anne Cleary: registered Architect and Lecturer in Architecture (part-time) at the University of Canberra; also has a studio practice a r k u : architecture and urban design; experience in architectural and urban design work encompasses almost twenty-five years on scale architectural projects and small scale residential and urban infill projects, including and institutional projects, performing arts, waterfront, industrial and campus programs, urban infrastructure, streetscape and ephemeral art installations; research interests are focused on the public realm, the interstitial and the revitalisation of the urban fabric; extensive experience working with artists and craftspeople on public art collaborations and commissions. www.canberra.edu.au/faculties/arts-design/staff/.../ann-cleary

7. *The following could testify on the basis of their extensive experience with community music groups in Canberra:*

Judith Clingan AM, Founding director of Canberra Children's Choir, Young Music Society, Canberra Recorder and Early Music Society, Gaudeamus, Lady's Mantle, Voicebox Youth Opera, Wayfarers Australia, The Variables, Imagine Music Theatre, Past conductor of Canberra Choral Society, Oriana Chorale, ANU Choral Society, The Cyrenes, Gay and Lesbian Choir, A Chorus of Women, ANU Creative Arts Fellow, Australia Council Composition Fellow, Churchill Fellow, artsACT Creative Artists Fellow, inaugural Canberra Times Artist of the Year, recipient of Sounds Australian award, Canberra Composer in Residence.

Liz McKenzie, President, Oriana Chorale; Board member, Canberra Youth Music; and Administrative Director, Tallis Scholars Summer Schools, Australia.

Brenda Gill, President, Canberra Choral Society.

8. *From a visual arts, and particularly the Glassworks perspective, it would seem essential that the Inquiry hear at least from:*

Andrew Sayers, Director, National Museum of Australia; Chair of the Canberra Glassworks Board; former head of the National Portrait Gallery.

9. *The following could provide relevant perspectives from a newly formed and highly active local community group:*

Kevin Gill, Chair, Inner South Canberra Community Council.

Sue Ross, Secretary, Inner South Canberra Community Council

10. *The following planning experts have been closely involved with advising government on the Kingston Arts Precinct, including the FW, although the future of the FW has – in some if not all cases – been exempted from their recommendations. We believe that it is essential that they be asked to give their views to the Inquiry on the best use of the FW.*

May & Russell, Architects: authors of the 2009 Scoping Study (see above).

Susan Conroy, Cultural Planner: principal author of the 2011 *Kingston Arts Precinct Strategy*

Eric Martin: co-author of the 2011 Kingston Arts Precinct Strategy; President, National Trust of Australia (ACT)

David Whitney: Director, artACT.

Chris Purdon, Purdon & Associates: Consultants on the Master Plan for the Kingston Arts Precinct.

We respectfully ask the Inquiry to note that, in course of seeking support for this and previous submissions on the FW, we have found that individuals who are dependent on the ACT government for grants and/or their livelihood feel intimidated in regard to making their views known in the public domain. We know of some who have been overtly threatened by those in government. The former Chief Minister's intemperance in regard to the setting up of this Inquiry gives some indication of the extent of government sensitivities on this issue.

We therefore respectfully suggest that the Inquiry:

- **offer the possibility of in-camera testimony with strictest confidence guaranteed**
- **routinely establish from individuals appearing before it their own or their group's dependence on the ACT government for income**
- **explicitly ask those appearing before it whether their grants and/or livelihood have been threatened either directly or indirectly in regard to any potential alternative they might offer to the conversion of the FW into a print workshop and offices for Megalo Arts, or whether they feel intimidated in regard to any alternative they might offer.**

7. Conclusion

We are profoundly grateful to this Inquiry for the opportunity – for the first time – to have our perspectives on the future of the FW considered.

The Inquiry has allowed us to propose a future that could satisfy our particular objectives – retaining the splendid and rare acoustics, light and space in the Fitters' Workshop – while also providing Megalo Arts Studio and the Glassworks with a beautiful and spacious exhibition space. It would be a win-win outcome for both music lovers and the print makers.

Beyond these particular interests, we believe our proposal would benefit a wide spectrum of Canberra arts practitioners and arts lovers. It could become the dynamic and animating hub of the Kingston Cultural Precinct. With imaginative but relatively straightforward utilisation of the forthcoming National Broadband network, the FW could showcase Canberra music and other arts practices to the nation and beyond.

The alternative proposal – to convert the building into a print workshop and offices – entails greater expenditure, which, nevertheless, will not entirely overcome the problems created by its occupant's particular needs (viz. deadening sound and installing other infrastructure). Single-use occupancy, especially with activities that will attract only small numbers of visitors, and then only on a one-off or infrequent basis, will leave the second-most important feature in the Kingston Arts Precinct as a mildly beating heart at best.

A decision either way will create considerable bitterness among those whose claims on the FW are currently in competition. However, if the building became Megalo's gorgeous, light-filled exhibition space and their operations were housed in a state-of-the-art purpose-built facility, we suspect that the bitterness on Megalo's side would quickly dissipate. We also believe that music lovers support this use of the funding currently allocated to rehouse Megalo in Kingston. They would be willing to tolerate quite minimal expenditure on upgrading the FW as long as its highly regarded qualities were not damaged. In contrast, they will long remember a decision to proceed as currently planned as the tragic, wilful and unnecessary destruction of something they greatly value and love.

We look to the Inquiry to lay the ground for the Legislative Assembly to ensure the best possible use of the Fitters' Workshop for the people of Canberra and beyond. We would be delighted to provide the Inquiry with any further assistance deemed relevant and useful.

APPENDIX A

List of Individuals Making This Submission

This submission was principally authored by Helen Moore, Immediate Past President of the ANU Choral Society (SCUNA). The following people have been consulted and have explicitly requested that their names be included as making this submission. *In (roughly) alpha order:*

Liese BAKER, President, ANU Choral Society SCUNA), approximately 120 members.
<http://www.scuna.aicsa.org.au/>

Lynne BENTLEY, President, Selma TEH, Immediate Past President, **The Llewellyn Choir**, 80 members, <http://www.llewellynchoir.org.au>

Judith CLINGAN, AM, Founding Director of Canberra Children's Choir, Young Music Society, Canberra Recorder and Early Music Society, Gaudeamus, Lady's Mantle, Voicebox Youth Opera, Wayfarers Australia, The Variables, Imagine Music Theatre, Past conductor of the Canberra Choral Society, the Oriana Chorale, the ANU Choral Society, the Cyrenes, the Gay and Lesbian Choir, A Chorus of Women, ANU Creative Arts Fellow, Australia Council Composition Fellow, Churchill Fellow, artsACT Creative Artists Fellow, inaugural *Canberra Times* Artist of the Year, recipient of Sounds Australian award, Canberra Composer in Residence.

Tobias COLE, Artistic Director, and Dr Brenda GILL, President, **Canberra Choral Society**, 90 members, <http://canberrachoralsociety.org/>

Cicilia KEMEZYS, Jazz Latin Flautist and Assistant Music Director, **Alma Latina, Voices and Rhythms** <http://www.skyflute.com>

Liz MCKENZIE, President, **The Oriana Chorale**, 45 members, <http://www.orianachorale.com/>; also Board member, Canberra Youth Music; and Administrative Director, Tallis Scholars Summer Schools, Australia.

Louise PAGE (B Mus, B Mus Ed), Soprano soloist (incl. in the Vienna State Opera, in Belgium and Germany), ANU Lecturer in Voice, *Canberra Times* Artist of the Year, louisepagesoprano.com.au

Roland PEELMAN, Artistic Director, **The Song Company**,
<http://www.songcompany.com.au/about/artists/roland-peelman/>

Dr Oliver J. RAYMOND, OAM, Music Director, **Capital Voices** (18 members), President, **Art Song Canberra** www.artsongcanberra.org and former President of The Oriana Chorale.

Helen A. SWAN (BA Mus., Dip.Ed., Dip. Mus. Ed. Hungary), Music Director, **The Resonants** (25 members), <http://www.resonants.org.au/>

Stephen TABERNER, Artistic Director, **The Spooky Men's Chorale**,
<http://www.spookymen.com.au/home.php>

Mary TATCHELL, Committee member **Oriana Chorale**; frequent Concert Master of several Canberra choirs; and Dr Michael TATCHELL, Oriana Chorale member.

In addition, we respectfully ask the Inquiry to note the names of those who signed the letter to the Arts Minister in Appendix B, which contains essentially the same recommendation regarding the future of the Fitters' Workshop as in this submission. However, time constraints have prevented explicit consultation with them.

APPENDIX B

Choirs' Letter to Arts Minister Regarding the Fitters' Workshop (2 June 2011)

2 June 2011

Ms Joy Burch MLA
Minister for the Arts
ACT Government

For information:

Ms Katy Gallagher MLA
Chief Minister
ACT Government

Dear Minister,

THE FITTERS' WORKSHOP – KINGSTON CULTURAL PRECINCT

Choral music is an important, thriving part of Canberra's diverse cultural activity. As the Music Directors, Presidents and Convenors of some of the numerous choirs in Canberra, we write regarding the currently proposed modifications to the Fitters' Workshop at Kingston, such that it would no longer be useful as a musical venue.

Our combined membership totals over 700 choristers (see breakdown below). Unquestionably, our choirs make an invaluable contribution to Canberra's cultural life. We therefore believe that our opinions on how this life should be fostered merit your consideration.

In its present state, the Fitters' Workshop has an extremely fine acoustic especially well suited to a wide range of musical performances. The noted Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe recently publicly reiterated his view that there is no comparable acoustic anywhere in Australia. Other experts have said that there are probably few like it in the world. The ACT Government now has a unique, golden opportunity to create in Canberra an outstanding venue for musical performances and recordings with a distinct acoustic probably unequalled in Australia.

Our earnest request to you is that you intervene to ensure that the Fitters' Workshop:

- retains its existing fine acoustic, and
- is developed as a multi-purpose space for *all types of arts groups*, including a performance and recording space for diverse musical groups (e.g. classical, jazz, folk and world music).

The Canberra International Music Festival (CIMF) has done Canberra and its choirs a wonderful service this year by bringing several of us together (Oriana Chorale, Canberra Choral Society, The Resonants and the ANU Choral Society) in outstanding performances in the Fitters' Workshop. It is difficult to describe just how exciting members have found singing in this space and what moving feedback we have received from those in our audiences. Those who participated hope very much that other groups will have the opportunity to enjoy similar experiences in this venue.

For the Canberra International Music Festivals of 2009, 2010 and 2011, *ad hoc* arrangements were made by the Festival organisers to enable use of the Fitters' Workshop for many concerts. It has otherwise been impractical to use it as a musical venue because, in its present state, it lacks basic utilities (water and electrical power), toilets, green room facilities, seating and heating. We understand that the proposed upgrade of the Fitters' Workshop will include these. With its appropriate development, and provided that the acoustic is retained, we are confident not only that our choirs could make good use of the Fitters' Workshop but also that many other musical groups would soon discover what a marvellous performance space it is and do likewise. As a multi-purpose arts space with its acoustic preserved, the Workshop could be well utilised all year round, including by Megalo.

As we are sure you are very aware, the future of the Fitters' Workshop has recently been debated at length in the public and private domains. It has been claimed in the media that there are plenty of suitable music venues available including the Albert Hall, now being refurbished. However, it is most unlikely that the multiple problems for music in that particular venue can be overcome. In reality, it is often difficult for Canberra choirs to find suitable performance venues. Problems relate to cost, size (often either too large or too small for ourselves and our audiences), availability, variety and, most of all, the suitability of the acoustic for choral performances. Potentially, the Fitters' Workshop offers an opportunity to solve these problems in a wide range of instances. Importantly, *no* Canberra venue has or will have an acoustic comparable with that of the Fitters' Workshop. It would be a tragedy if this quality was destroyed, as will be the case with current proposals.

As you will know, one of the signatories below initiated a petition to preserve the Fitters' Workshop, with its fine acoustic, as a musical venue. By the end of the Festival, over 1,100 people had signed and more signatures are coming in. Almost everyone who performed in the Workshop during the Festival added their names, including renowned Canberra musicians and singers and visiting top performers from around Australia and overseas. You may wish to note that Roland Peelman, the Artistic Director of the outstanding *a cappella* group, the Song Company, which often performs in Canberra, has personally endorsed this letter to you, and Song Company members have signed the petition. Similarly, Louise Page, a highly regarded soprano soloist who is resident in Canberra, has signed the petition and personally endorsed this letter. Tobias Cole, the Music Director of the Canberra Choral Society and who last year played the leading role of Oberon in the acclaimed Australian Opera production of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, has also added his name to this letter. Mr Peelman, the Song Company, Ms Page and Mr Cole have performed extensively at the Fitters' Workshop in CIMF concerts. For the ACT government to disregard the opinions of top international and Australian musicians, a very sizeable portion of Canberra choristers, and over 1000 Canberra music lovers would seem unthinkable.

We respectfully suggest that the overwhelming and very willing support for this plea to you is evidence that further consultation is required before steps are taken to alter the Fitters' Workshop irreversibly.

We hope very much that you will not ignore our request. We ask you and your Government to find a way forward that will satisfy the legitimate concerns and interests of members of the Canberra arts community – *both* musical and non-musical – regarding the Kingston Cultural Precinct. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and discuss constructive proposals that, to date, do not appear to have been considered.

Above all, we hope that your government will not permit any steps that will preclude the present unique opportunity for the ACT and indeed the country to create an outstanding venue with a rare and fine acoustic for musical performances and recordings – in short, to put a jewel in Canberra's musical crown.

Yours sincerely (*in alpha order of choir name*),

Dr Jonathan Powles, Music Director, Dr Helen Moore, President, **ANU Choral Society (SCUNA)**, 140 members, <http://www.scuna.aicsa.org.au/>

Mr Tobias Cole, Music Director, Dr Brenda Gill, President, **Canberra Choral Society**, 90 members, <http://canberrachoralsociety.org/>

Ms Helen Johnstone, President, **Canberra Singers for Pleasure Inc**, 18 members.

Dr Oliver J. Raymond OAM, Music Director, **Capital Voices** (18 members), President, **Art Song Canberra** www.artsongcanberra.org and former President of Oriana Chorale.

Dr Brian J. Stone, President, **Capital Voices**, 18 members.

Mr Matthew Stuckings, Director of Music, **Igitur Nos Chamber Choir**, 28 members, <http://igiturnos.wordpress.com/> and also of the choir of **All Saints' Anglican Church Ainslie**, 25 members; also Assistant Conductor, ANU Choral Society.

David Yardley, Music Director, **Kompactus**, 13 members, <http://te-in.facebook.com/pages/Kompactus-Canberras-Compact-Chorus/122212377806606?v=info>

Ms Selma Teh, a/g President, **The Llewellyn Choir**, 80 members, <http://www.llewellynchoir.org.au>

Mr David Mackay, Music Director, **The Oriana Chorale**, 45 members, <http://orianachorale.com/>

Ms Liz McKenzie, President, **The Oriana Chorale**; also Board member, **Canberra Youth Music**; and Administrative Director, **Tallis Scholars Summer Schools**, Australia.

Ian Blake, Paul Eldon, David Mackay, David Yardley *comprising* **The Pocket Score Company**, <http://thepocketscorecompany.com/>

Ms Helen A. Swan BA (Mus.), Dip.Ed., Dip. Mus. Ed. (Hungary), Music Director, and Miss Laura Lloyd Jones, President, **The Resonants**, 25 members, <http://www.resonants.org.au/>

Mr Daniel Brinsmead B Mus (Hons), Music Director, **Strange Weather Gospel Choir**, 87 members, <http://www.strangeweather.org/> **DFAT Choir**, 24 members, **TaxInvoice**, 13 members.

Ms Karen Neill, Convenor, **Strangeweather Gospel Choir**.

Ms Moya Simpson, Music Director, producer, writer and performer, **Worldly Goods Community Choir**, 70 members, <http://www.naturalvoice.net/choirgroups.asp?key=123> and **Shortis and Simpson**, <http://www.shortisandsimpson.com/>

Ms Judith Clingan AM, Music Director, **Wayfarers Australia** Chamber Choir: 20 members in Canberra, 20 members interstate. <http://wayfarersaustralia.org/>

Endorsed by:

Roland Peelman, Artistic Director, **The Song Company**, <http://www.songcompany.com.au/about/artists/roland-peelman/>

Louise Page, soprano soloist for several of the above choirs and the CIMF, louisepagesoprano.com.au

Ms Marisol Pacheco, Director, **Alma Latina**, Voices and Rhythms, 20 member choir Canberra, andez1@optusnet.com.au

Ms Cicilia Kemezys, Jazz Latin Flautist, Assistant Music Director, **Alma Latina, Voices and Rhythms**, <http://www.skyflute.com>

APPENDIX C

Expert Opinions Regarding the Acoustic Qualities of the Fitters' Workshop

The opinions on the following pages were written to support the Development Application to retrofit the Fitters' Workshop

From Tobias Cole

TOBIAS COLE
Principal soloist for OPERA AUSTRALIA
Musical Director of CANBERRA CHORAL SOCIETY

11 August 2011

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Reference: **Development Application 201120317 for Section 14, Block Number 13, The Fitters' Workshop**

During the Canberra International Music Festivals in May 2009 and 2010, I was a major vocal soloist and chorus master for many performances in the Fitters' Workshop.

Performing in this venue is an outstanding experience and a privilege. The open space, the high ceiling, the sunshine streaming through the windows in daytime performances and the reflections on windows at night are very special. The audience capacity (300-400) and their closeness to performers makes for an intimate and very personal experience for the performer. Most of all, the glorious resonance in the space is quite splendid, giving tremendous scope for delicate nuance in interpretation and allowing the performer to hear him/herself in a way that is not possible on many other stages. Altogether, these qualities create very rare performance opportunities and give rise to attentiveness and appreciation in the audience that is wholly satisfying.

I have performed as an opera and concert soloist in a wide variety of venues locally, nationally and overseas. The acoustic qualities of the Fitters Workshop are unique and stand up to the best halls and theatres I know. For Canberra to have discovered such a space for musical performances more or less by accident is a remarkable piece of good fortune. Building these spaces from scratch is expensive and frequently fails, as the experiences of the Sydney Opera House, Hamer Hall in Melbourne and Llewellyn Hall here in Canberra and numerous other concert halls around Australia illustrate.

From a national perspective, Canberra is mostly neglected as a place for music by performers, their agents and audiences. As an international performer, I'm frequently asked why I choose to live in Canberra when it is such a musical outpost. The Canberra International Music Festival (CIMF) is helping to change this perception of classical music in Canberra. CIMF performances in the Fitters' Workshop over the past three years have been major attractions.

This venue is also perfectly suited to be an outstanding outreach venue for the Folk Festival.

I have seen the plans in the Development Application for the Fitters' Workshop. I believe that segmenting the building and installing walls and a mezzanine floor constitute a major violation of this beautiful heritage building. From the perspective of music lovers in Canberra and Australia, this development will destroy a newly discovered cultural asset that is capable of greatly enhancing Canberra's cultural life. It would be a tragedy.

Kind regards,

Tobias Cole

Tobias Cole, *countertenor*

BMus Hons, ARCM (Voice and Early Music)

Recent roles: Studz in *How to Kill your Husband* (Victorian Opera 2011), Title in *Xerxes* (New Zealand Opera 2011, Victorian Opera, 2009 – Green Room Award), Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Opera Australia 2010, Chicago Opera Theater 2005), Ptolemy in *Giulio Cesare* (VO, 2010); Medoro in *Orlando* (OA 2008, West Australian Opera 2000), Sorceress in *Dido and Aeneas* (Sydney Philharmonia Choirs 2007) – in concert, Title in *Giulio Cesare* (OA 2006), Apollo in *Death in Venice* (Chicago Opera Theater 2004), Ottone in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (COT 2004).

From Louise Page

Reference:

**Development Application 201120317 for Section 14, Block Number 13,
The Fitters' Workshop**

To whom it may concern:

I wish to support the objections the proposed development of the Fitters' Workshop.

As a performer of national standing and international experience, I have performed on five occasions at the Fitters Workshop, during the 2010 and 2011 Canberra International Music Festivals. I have also attended concerts there as an audience member. Each time it was a unique and wondrous experience.

The acoustic properties of the building are extraordinary, enabling unamplified sound to be heard perfectly throughout. After one of my performances last year a member of the audience told me they had never felt so much a part of the sound of a concert as they had at that performance. As a musician it certainly feels as though one is being "wrapped" in sound. This clarity and warmth is something so valuable and rare it shouldn't be destroyed.

Earlier this month I performed in one of Australia's premier classical music events *The Australian Festival of Chamber Music* in Townsville. The experience reinforced how wonderful the Fitters' Workshop is. At the *AFCM* I sang the same repertoire but found it a vastly different experience, with the sound having to be amplified and balanced for the audience's benefit and for live national broadcast.

Many of the nation's most distinguished musicians reside in Canberra. We need a performance space of the acoustical quality and size of the Fitters' Workshop. Developing it as a centre for music as part of an arts precinct would attract many patrons from inside and outside of Canberra. At present there is nowhere else here to compare with it. The Canberra International Music Festival is gaining in profile and size each year, with many visiting national and international artists, and there are many other local music groups in desperate need of a venue such as this.

I urge you to uphold the objections to this Development Application and to ensure that the proposal for redevelopment of the site is given proper consideration, in consultation with *all* interested parties, and using *all* available advice from the many and varied experts who are concerned by what is currently proposed for the Fitters' Workshop.

Louise Page (B Mus/ B Mus Ed)
Soprano (incl.in the Vienna State Opera, in Belgium and Germany)
ANU Lecturer in Voice
Canberra Times Artist of the year

From Graeme Koehne
Elder Conservatorium
The University of Adelaide
SA 5005

August 11, 2011

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Reference:
Development Application 201120317 for Section 14, Block Number 13,
The Fitters' Workshop

In May 2011, I had the privilege of being Composer-in-Residence at the Canberra International Music Festival. My own compositions were performed in the Fitters' Workshop on several occasions. I also attended a number of other concerts performed there.

In my expert opinion as a composer and audience member, this building is an outstanding venue for many kinds of unamplified musical performances. Its particular qualities are: the clarity of the sound no matter where one is seated; the intimacy that is created between performer and audience; the unique aspect and sense of space; the light that floods the space during day-time performances and the perfect natural resonance and sonic warmth - characteristics that architects and acoustic consultants nowadays spend hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to emulate.

These kinds of spaces for music are extremely rare. They are difficult and expensive to create. They are occasionally discovered, as in this case. They should be treasured wherever they exist in the world.

Canberra is not currently a well-regarded destination for music performers or music lovers, with the emerging exception of the Canberra International Music Festival. The discovery of the Fitters' Workshop as a music venue in 2009 has contributed considerably to the Festival's growing numbers. It is becoming an attraction to the Festival in its own right. In my opinion, development of the Fitters' Workshop as a space for music (maybe in conjunction with other cultural uses) would attract national and international performers on the Australian circuit who currently avoid Canberra, as well as local, interstate and overseas visitors. Aside from its fine acoustics, the building is an excellent size for chamber music, small orchestras, folk and world music, unamplified vocal music and instrumental solos of all kinds. Canberra currently lacks such venues.

I believe I am well qualified to make this assessment of this venue for music. My compositions are regularly performed on the international stage and are now in the established repertoire of Australian music. I have previously served as a councillor on the Australia Council and chaired the Music Board from 2002 to 2009. I have served in various advisory capacities for the South Australian Government and in 1998 and 1999 I was South Australia's Composer-in-Residence. I have a Doctorate of Music from the University of Adelaide and in 2004 I received the Sir Bernard Heinze Award for services to music from the University of Melbourne.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Graeme Koehne". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Professor Graeme Koehne D.Mus.(Adelaide) Elder
Conservatorium, The University of Adelaide, SA 5005

From Andrew Ford

Andrew Ford

To whom it may concern:

Re: DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION 201120317 for SECTION 14, BLOCK NUMBER 13, The Fitters' Workshop

For the past couple of years, I have heard from various sources about the remarkable Canberra venue known as the Fitters' Workshop. In particular, musicians have told me about its stunning acoustic. Having now listened to a CD of performances recorded there, I can attest to this rare quality. Some good acoustics have clarity, others bring a kind of bloom to the music performed, but the Fitters' Workshop appears to have both. It also seems to be versatile, suiting equally well the voices of Rajaton, the woodwinds of Mozart's *Gran Partita* and the mixed ensemble of Ross Edwards's *Tyalgum Mantras*.

I have attended concerts in many parts of the world – in Europe and North America, as well as Australia. I have been in splendid acoustics such as Symphony Hall in Boston, the new Sibelius Hall in Lahti, Finland, Adelaide Town Hall and the tin shed at the Huntington Estate Winery in Mudgee. I have also been in dozens of compromised or downright bad acoustics such as the Concert Hall of the Sydney Opera House or the Royal Festival Hall in London prior to its multi-million dollar refurbishment.

The Fitters' Workshop in Canberra requires no multi-million dollar refurbishment. It already has a world-class acoustic. In a city that has few even adequate concert spaces and which is regarded as something of a cultural joke by the rest of Australia, it would seem the sheerest act of mindless cultural vandalism to destroy a perfect acoustic that the national capital already has at no expense.

But of course it will surprise no one if you do just this.

I will be happy to speak to you on this topic if you wish to contact me on one of the above numbers.

Yours faithfully,

Andrew Ford, composer

From Elizabeth Farrelly

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

**Reference: Development Application 201120317 for Section 14, Block
Number 13, The Fitters' Workshop**

Although I have never attended a concert in the Fitters' Workshop, and therefore cannot attest personally to its qualities, I am very aware of the respected musical authorities who regard them as outstanding.

If even half of the acoustic accolades piled on the Fitters' Workshop are only partially accurate, given how extraordinarily rare good music spaces are, it would be barbarous to compromise or destroy its acoustic properties. In Canberra, which is not known as a destination for music, this would be an unspeakable shame.

Dr Elizabeth Farrelly

Opinion Columnist

Sydney Morning Herald

The following assessments have been added for the purpose of this submission

From Judith Clingan

Founding director of Canberra Children's Choir, Young Music Society, Canberra Recorder and Early Music Society, Gaudeamus, Lady's Mantle, Voicebox Youth Opera, Wayfarers Australia, The Variables, Imagine Music Theatre, Past conductor of Canberra Choral Society, Oriana Chorale, ANU Choral Society, The Cyrenes, Gay and Lesbian Choir, A Chorus of Women, ANU Creative Arts Fellow, Australia Council Composition Fellow, Churchill Fellow, artsACT Creative Artists Fellow, inaugural Canberra Times Artist of the Year, recipient of Sounds Australian award, Canberra Composer in Residence.

I have spent my life conducting and composing the sort of music which blooms in a certain rare acoustic. Wells Cathedral is so far the closest place to perfection in which I have performed.

Australia is in the odd position of having received a cultural legacy from our European forbears which needs the ambience and sound qualities usually only found in mediaeval cathedrals – but of having few cathedrals, and none which come even close to that perfection of sound.

Choral conductors and ardent choristers, as well as chamber musicians, are always on the lookout for acoustically sumptuous performance venues. Major venues like the Sydney Opera House strive to attain it, and fail. None of Canberra's established performance venues have a particularly beautiful acoustic – I know, because I have tested them all. In 2002, when I was the artsACT Creative Artists Fellow, I composed *Resonances* – four works for choir and small instrumental forces, which I wrote intentionally to be performed in extraordinary acoustics. I searched high and low, and all I could find was the Hall of Remembrance at the Australian War Memorial (too resonant for most music to succeed), one of the Mt Stromlo domes (since destroyed in the 2003 fires), the then-new Great Hall of the new Parliament House, and the space beneath the carillon on Aspen Island.

In 1991, two classical musicians discovered by accident that this rare acoustic we all seek was to be found in the Literary Institute of a tiny village in northern NSW, and so the Tyalgum Festival of Classical Music was born – an extraordinary annual celebration of the beauty of sound in a most unlikely venue. Numerous virtuoso musicians from all over the world have now performed there, and rank the 1908 hall alongside some of the best concert venues in the world.

And now it has come to light that Canberra has a building which can be ranked alongside the Tyalgum Hall and Wells Cathedral as possessing the perfect coming together of spatial proportions and materials to create extraordinary beauty of sound. I think of this quality as aural milk and honey. In the three years that the International Chamber Music Festival has used the Fitters' Workshop as a major venue, both performers and audiences have been ravished. I have not performed in the Fitters' Workshop, but I have been lucky enough to be an audience member there.

When I heard that it was looking likely that the acoustic would be destroyed in the process of refurbishment, I felt as sick as I had when a vandal with a hammer smashed the face of Michelangelo's *Pieta*. Beautiful things, whether visual or aural, should be cherished. To go ahead with previous plans, mooted before the extraordinary acoustic was discovered, is madness.

Judith Clingan, AM

19 December, 2011

From Stephen Taberner

The Spooky Men's Chorale, who have a very large following in Canberra and visit there at least once a year to perform, would like to express a very strong interest in the survival of the Fitter's Workshop as a possible performance venue.

Due to the difficulties involved, we have never been able to perform there, but in terms of size, ambience, acoustic qualities and capacity, it would seem to be one of those very rare venues (somewhat like the Gunpowder Gallery at Newington in Sydney) which is perfectly designed for a spooky visitation. Indeed, should the venue become available more easily, I would think that it would facilitate much more frequent visits of the Spooky Men to Canberra, the perfect venue (apart from this one) not having presented itself yet.

We very much hope that its continued use for music is the outcome of the current process.

Stephen Taberner

Artistic Director

The Spooky Men's Chorale

18 December 2011

APPENDIX D

Copies of Letters to Various Government Ministers

These letters have the permission of their authors to be made public

Dear Ministers, Members of the Assembly, and Dr Moore,

As one of the 1400-odd signers of the petition recently presented to the Assembly by Ms Le Couteur and originated by Dr Moore, I write to endorse the media release from Ms Le Couteur ("Kingston Arts Precinct Consultation - after the fact") about exclusion of the much-debated Fitters' Workshop from forthcoming "consultation" on the Kingston planning.

My own main interest is as president of a local choir and an instrumentalist in a local orchestra and concert band. It is safe to say that all Canberra musicians appreciate the efforts so far of Ms Le Couteur and Ms Dunne, to have a fair democratic hearing given to the Fitters' Workshop issue.

I also have the related interest of having joined in the recent campaign to avoid the intended non-consultation of residents of Hawker and adjacent areas, over the premature and ill-informed planning by the Land Development Authority to sell two-thirds of the essential Hawker shopping centre parking areas for medium-density housing. It will be remembered that the Hawker matter dragged on for almost two years before it eventually achieved a fairer consultation through the personal intervention of Mr Jon Stanhope.

The ignoring of the consultant's report by Ms Susan Conroy, and now the brief for another "public consultation" to bypass the central issue, the Fitters' Workshop, at Kingston, are incredibly similar to the earlier stages of the Hawker affair. I would urge Ms Gallagher as Chief Minister to take notice of the current equally vexed question early, rather than late.

An excellent starting point is the objection lodged by Dr Moore to the Kingston Development Application (the latter is camouflaged under the title "COMMERCIAL-CANBERRA GLASS WORKS-ADDITIONS").

On the aspect of artistic and cultural values, as distinct from those of inadequate and misleading information, I should like to add two realistic questions of my own. They can be summed up as "Will the Megalo plan be a flop?"

(1) Granted, the Megalo Print Workshop is an admirable enterprise. However, what is there to excite the interest of members of the public, in viewing slow processes such as engraving, etching, inking of plates, and hand operation of printing presses? These merit a purpose-built facility - at Kingston - rather than exposure to viewing.

(At least the Glassworks activity display, though far below crowd-pleaser scale, has the appeal of the danger to the glassblowers and their skill, for the few viewers that can watch at once. Obviously it is the art prints, like the finished glass works, that are worth viewing, hung properly in a gallery space. The proposals from the music community have uniformly urged that there be shared, timetabled usage of the Fitters' Workshop by all appropriate arts. This would include gallery periods for Megalo).

(2) How can it be pretended that the thousands (many of them visitors) who were thrilled by how well they could hear music, un-amplified, in the Canberra International Music Festival concerts for 2009, 2010, and 2011 at the Fitters' Workshop, and the several hundred musical performers, and the numerous world figures in music who supported Dr Moore's objection to the Development Application, are a "minority interest" as Ms Burch has frequently asserted?

Please remember that other musical groups have not had the Festival's resources even to apply, let alone bring in infrastructure. Please remember too, that despite work done on Albert Hall and Rehearsal Room 1 in Llewellyn Hall, both of which I have experienced as performer and audience member, they are far from the unique-in-Canberra quality of the Fitters' Workshop.

Yours sincerely
Brian Stone.

To: Mr Andrew Barr, Deputy Chief Minister, MLA & Ms Joy Burch, Minister for the Arts, MLA. ACT Legislative Assembly. London Circuit, Canberra City, ACT 2601.

Cc: Chief Minister, Ms Katy Gallagher MLA

Fitters Workshop Kingston

Dear Andrew & Joy

At its most recent meeting the Inner South Canberra Community Council (ISCCC) considered the vexing matter of the future use of the former Fitters Workshop at Kingston foreshores.

At the outset you should know the ISCCC generally supports ACT Government plans for this area and looks forward to having a vibrant arts and community marketing centre proudly using this former industrial area.

I for one would welcome Kingston Foreshores also being a place which is both a monument and a memorial to those hardy souls who initially lived in tents at the Causeway while building this great city; now largely a centre of 'white collar' activity, 'Canberra', rarely recognises the skilled hard work of our 'blue collar' predecessors.

The depth of manual occupations once carried on the banks of the river, before it became a lake, is generally not well known. Among the Government printer, and the many mechanical workshops and rows of bus garages, I recall a wide manner of worker activity. At the Telopea Park end this included a very busy sawmill and the community tip (which was managed by my father, Joe Gill and is now under water) all 'governed' by the power station whistle punctuating the atmosphere on week days indicating start and knock-off times, as well as morning and arvo 'smokos'. At the Railway end were an ice cream factory, a 'second-hand' business and a beer bottle recycling yard (the latter behind the Causeway Mess, a single men's hostel also once managed by my father).

I do not intend going over the arguments from either side of the fitters workshop 'argument' as I am sure you are both more than familiar with these. Suffice it to say that the ISCCC is mystified why the so called 'win-win' solution cannot be adopted. That is to leave the fitters workshop as is, more or less, and use the allocated funds to construct a similar building, replicating the existing workshop and perhaps connecting the two buildings. This would allow Megalo Print Studio to:

- manage the two buildings giving it an income stream
- leave the existing workshop for musical presentations as well as a range of other artistic displays, and
- have a purpose built studio better suited to print related activities.

Notwithstanding the lengthy processes which have been undertaken on this issue, I am sure any Government decision reflecting the above would be welcomed by the entire community.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Gill

Chair ISCCC 22 August 2011

8 June 2011

Ms Katy Gallagher
Chief Minister
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020
Canberra ACT 2601

For information:

Ms Joy Burch
Minister for the Arts
Legislative Assembly for the ACT

Dear Chief Minister

THE FITTERS' WORKSHOP – KINGSTON CULTURAL PRECINCT

I have a special interest in the visual arts and I am writing to you to request that the Fitters' Workshop continue to be available for multipurpose uses such as music festivals and other Canberra community events.

Over the past three or four years Canberra has been having a music renaissance thanks in no small part to the Canberra International Music Festival (CIMF). The CIMF continues to forge important and creative connections to the rest of the Canberra community such as the ANU School of Music and many choral groups and musicians.

The Fitters' Workshop, which your government has made available to CIMF over the past three years, has been the site for many inspiring and inspired performances from musicians who clearly love to perform in the space. Over these years, and to the great delight of audiences, I have witnessed this particular venue bring out the best in the music that has been performed there: whether it is the music of Steve Reich, Peter Sculthorpe, Bach, Schubert, Mahler or many others.

The Fitters' Workshop has the quality of connecting audience and musician quite intimately and joyfully in a musical experience; an act of participation quite rare amongst Australian venues. Musicians such as the Kuusisto Brothers, Synergy Percussion, the Song Company, DRUMatix, the Canberra Festival Camerata and numerous choirs, to name just a few, have clearly thrived in the intimacy of this venue.

Not only is the space beautiful musically, but visually it recalls a Christopher Wren church in the simplicity of its design. The fine large windows and their special light enable the physical beauty of Canberra and its skies to become part of the music. There are very few spaces in Canberra or anywhere that feel like this. This suggests that the Fitters' Workshop would make a superb venue for other cultural events as well; for instance for art shows and for dance.

Many dreams of the Burley-Griffins have not been realised in Canberra. It is extremely sad that an unusual building is to be reconfigured and enclosed for single purpose use as a workshop when, as a multi-use centre, it could add so much to the cultural vitality intended by the Burley-Griffins for this city. Think of the varied opportunities the Fitters' Workshop would provide during Canberra's Centenary, if not closed off to most events.

Kingston Markets are buzzing with life on Sundays and, for two Sundays in both 2010 and 2011 when the music festival was in the adjoining building, everyone could sense the exhilaration of having a thriving arts space in Canberra.

I believe the Kingston markets and their future are being considered by the ACT Government. Why not think of developing part of the current market space itself for use for the Megalo Print Studio or, alternatively, take the opportunity to be really creative about the whole area? This is just not the time for closing off the option for a superb music venue in Kingston. That would be too short sighted.

Please consider making a different purpose-built space for the Megalo studio near or in the markets and simply improving the facilities, such as toilets, of the Fitters' Workshop so it can be used throughout the year by Canberra's musicians and their audiences and for the many and varied events of the Canberra Community.

I have sent a copy of this letter to Meredith Hunter, ACT Greens Parliamentary Convener, and Zed Seselja, Leader of the Opposition.

Yours sincerely

Name withheld for the purpose of this submission

APPENDIX E

Survey of Canberra Music Venues

Information is compiled from reports by various Canberra choir organisers based on their bookings and venue use over past 2-3 years.

<u>Venue</u> <i>(in order of capacity)</i>	<u>Seating capacity</u> <i>(includes gallery where available)</i>	<u>Venue hire cost</u>	<u>Extra costs entailed in hiring venue</u> <i>(staffing, equipment, risers, sound, lighting, piano etc)</i>	<u>Type(s) of musical performance that suit this venue</u>	<u>Type(s) of music that don't suit this venue</u>	<u>Green room facilities?</u>	<u>Facilities for patrons in the interval</u>	<u>Good points about this venue incl acoustic comments</u>	<u>Bad points about this venue incl acoustic comment</u>
ANU SoM Llewellyn Hall	1500	Appears to vary: reports range from \$9000 down; documented from 1 group (21/12/09) is just over \$5,500 with 20% discount to non-profit bodies for perf and rehearsal	\$2500: staff hire \$600: ticketing costs Have to use their catering, ticketing, sales people. Audio, lighting and staffing are all extra, and you can't provide your own.	Very large events combining choir with orchestra that can more or less fill the auditorium, e.g. Mozart, Verdi or Brahms Requiems, <i>Carmina Burana</i> .	Single choirs; chamber music; community groups	Yes. No showers.	Bar, foyer etc	Fair penetration of source sound from the stage to middle seating (if auditorium is fairly full).	Costs are beyond range of most groups. Can only attract sufficient audience to cover costs with popular large-scale works and expensive publicity. Acoustic is quite variable depending on seat location. Ambience very depressing if auditorium half empty..

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Canberra Girls Grammar theatre	1000	\$240 per hour for negotiated use involving CGG students	Not sure	Large events	Smaller choirs; chamber music	Yes	Nothing; audience must stand outside; toilets problematic; freezing in winter.	Balanced acoustic if full house. Good parking.	Often not available. No foyer area or space for ticket sales or patron gathering other than outside - difficult at night or in cold weather.
St Christopher's Cathedral, Manuka	700; access to choir loft not permitted for performers or audience.	\$2000 rehearsal and performance	All equipment (piano/orchestra; sound; music stands, instruments etc).	Medium ensemble	Small or large ensemble	Yes (crypt)	Nothing; toilets very limited & hard to access (impossible for elderly. disabled).	Good atmosphere for sacred music and audience of 400 +	Acoustic is very variable depending on seat location. Low availability for booking. Authorities difficult to deal with. Seating notoriously uncomfortable. Cold in winter.
Playhouse (Canberra Theatre Centre)	681	\$1848 or 10% of ticket sales	Extensive full production staff costs on booking	Small – Medium ensemble	Large ensemble	Yes	No	Comfortable environment. Good acoustic for amplified sound (only).	Cost of hire well beyond means of small budget groups. Amplification essential.
Kings Hall, Old Parliament House	500	\$1300	Staff and set up \$1400 weekday \$2000 weekend	Small – Medium ensemble	Large ensemble	Yes	Cafe during bus. hours	Beautiful natural acoustic for choral music.	Costs beyond means of small budget groups Heritage training required.

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Albert Hall	480 including rear gallery but sightlines there are badly disrupted.	Complex -see website 4 hr min 4x \$88 to 4x \$145 depending on day of week, say \$900-580	Bond \$517 Piano av. \$176 200 extra chairs light and sound costs Floor staging/risers for medium to large ensemble.	Small ensemble on stage Medium ensemble on floor	Ambience does not suit less formal audience/event.	Yes	Kitchen facilities, not for cooking	Grandeur of the site. Parking good.	Must be amplified for full audience. Sound is 'swallowed up by the stage design'. Very small stage. Sightlines are disrupted. Can be bumped at the last minute if more lucrative hirers emerge.
St Pauls Anglican Cathedral Manuka	350	\$100 per hour recent use totalled \$1335	\$50 staff cost \$30 per hour for hall	Small – Medium ensemble	Large ensemble	Church hall	Kitchen in hall	Negotiated hire cost suits small budgets. Good atmosphere for sacred music. Front rows good balanced sound. Parking good for small audience but not capacity audience.	Acoustic is quite variable depending on seat location.

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Baptist Church, Hughes	300-350	\$400?	Audio, lighting and staffing are all extra, and you can't provide your own equipment or people.	Small-medium ensemble	Vocal and non-amplified music	Some. Very cramped for larger groups.	Foyer. Can have adjacent hall for serving refreshments. Toilets outside.	Good parking – built for the spoken and sung voice.	Religious ambience. No alcohol on premises, which restricts some events. Suburban setting does not attract audiences.
ANU Arts Centre	330	\$800 under review	Under review	Soloists; small to medium sized ensemble (but see notes on acoustic)	Designed for voice rather than music, Stage too small for large group.	Good	Good	Small auditorium, good sightlines to stage.	Designed for theatre. Very difficult to hire for community groups. Sound designed for spoken word.
Various school halls	usually approx. 300	Variable; often around \$300	Must supply everything	Vocal music and some amplified musical instruments	Unamplified music	Not usually	Foyer only	Cheap. Parking usually good.	Hard to attract an audience; venue designed for school children; inappropriate ambience; not a proper concert venue.
St Andrew's Cathedral	250-300	\$875 for church only (in 2009)	Must supply all equipment piano/orchestra; sound; music stands, instruments etc).	Vocal music	Small-medium ensemble	Cramped and not adjacent	Large church hall.	Acoustics are good for choirs although very uneven. Beautiful setting.	Authorities are very protective & selective in whom they hire to. No alcohol. Not suitable/available for most non-religious music.

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Erindale Theatre	250-300	Community rate (about \$400?)	Risers & equipment.	Small – medium ensemble.		Good green room.	Foyer and sales point for drinks, etc	Reasonable rates; good parking	Hard to attract audience, especially from the north side.
Street Theatre	245	??	Various staff costs; risers and all music equipment.	Small to large ensemble	Most choral music	Yes	Café in foyer	Good location, although parking can be a problem.	Needs amplification; not available for short runs, particularly on weekends and not available mid-week for rehearsals. Designed for spoken word performances.
Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture Chapel	250	By negotiation	Cleaning fees	Small – medium ensemble	Large ensemble	Yes	Small foyer & outside,	Lovely acoustic; good ambience.	Costs are up front, and often beyond means of small budget groups
Cook Community Hall (old primary school)	250	\$150 per day on weekend	Hire of extra seating (200 available)	Small – medium ensemble		No	Kitchen facilities	Nice acoustic for a community gathering	Has the look and feel of a school hall

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National Library of Australia Foyer	200-250	See website, On-costs make it very expensive even if hire charges are reduced.	Security and AV provisions	Small – medium ensemble	Large ensemble	Possible	Cafe during bus. hours	Beautiful natural acoustic	Cost of hire well beyond means of small-medium budget groups
Belconnen Arts Centre Foyer	200	c \$800 (includes publicity)	Staffing \$140 p hour \$4.50 booking fee per ticket	Acoustic music, small to medium ensembles.	Large ensembles	Yes	Coffee and wine bar with nibbles for sale	Nice natural acoustics with reverb. Classy, nice views of lake by day.	Limited parking. Costs are to be paid up front which are expensive.
All Saints' Ainslie	200	By negotiation – including shared profit agreements	By negotiation	Small – medium ensemble that are sympathetic to a sacred venue.	Large ensemble	No	Church hall	Negotiated hire cost suits small budgets. Acoustics excellent. Good atmosphere for sacred music	Availability subject to church events. Parking issue for capacity audiences.
ANU Great Hall, University House	180	\$600 day \$800 event \$1050 rehearsal and performance	Risers, piano/orchestra etc	Small – medium ensemble	Large ensemble	Yes but very small.	Foyer space	Beautiful environment Pleasant acoustic.	Poor sight lines 7 very uncomfortable chairs.

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Wesley Music Centre	140	\$100 per hour	Various: information available on their website.	Small – medium ensemble	Large ensemble	Yes.	Kitchen facilities	Purpose-built with good acoustic.	Up-front costs beyond most group's means. Agreement on access not always easy to obtain.
ANU SoM Rehearsal Room 3	120	\$1122	\$560 for 8 hr shift for two staff	Small–medium ensemble		No	Foyer.	Well balanced, short decay acoustic	Seating capacity too small to be viable financially.
Majura Centre Hall	120	\$120 per 4 hours	Nil	Small – medium ensemble	Large ensemble	No	Kitchen facilities	Community feel. Clean, clear acoustic.	Hard to attract an audience.
Yarralumla Uniting Church Hall	80	\$ 200	Need to hire everything	Small – medium ensemble	Large ensemble	No	Kitchen facilities		

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Corroboree Park Scout Hall	60	\$80 per 4 hours	Need to hire everything	Small – Medium ensemble	Large ensemble	No	Kitchen facilities	Community feel. Surprisingly beautiful acoustic for pure toned work.	Rustic basic would be overlooked by performers wanting formal context.
Yarralumla Uniting Church	2 halls, foyer area ??	By negotiation	By negotiation. Pianos provided	Small – medium ensemble that are sympathetic to a sacred venue.	Large ensemble	Yes	Kitchen facilities	Good natural acoustics, especially in church. Affordable for groups with small budgets.	