

From: Sasha Grishin
Sent: Sunday, 4 December 2011 4:16 PM
To: Committees
Subject: Submission to the enquiry for the FUTURE USE OF THE FITTERS WORKSHOP, KINGSTON VISUAL ARTS PRECINCT

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Ms Amanda Bresnan, Chair, Standing Committee on Education, Training & Youth Affairs, ACT Legislative Assembly

I have been a Canberra resident for over 35 years during which time I have been actively involved in the local art scene as an art critic for The Canberra Times and as the professor of Art History at the ANU. Over the past 30 years, Megalo, drawing on its origins as a community screenprinting collective and Studio One a community access printmaking workshop, has become an institution of national significance. It has become a cultural hub in Canberra and has played a difficult balancing act between servicing the local community and as an art organisation bringing national acclaim to Canberra through recognition by the National Gallery and other organisations, including the Canberra Museum and Gallery. Megalo is one of the cultural treasures of Canberra.

Its location in Watson is clearly not ideal and there was a national sigh of relief when the ACT Labor government announced that it would be moving to the Fitter's Workshop in Kingston. For people familiar with the arts, there is a realisation of a natural synergy between studio glass and fine art printmaking (see the charter of the Wagga Wagga Regional Art Gallery which is devoted to the collecting and display of studio glass and prints). The space at the Fitter's workshop is ideal for Megalo, as shown in the recent Big Prints exhibition held there, with space and facility for the presses and other equipment and an exhibition space.

Its collocation with The Canberra Glassworks would make this into a vital Kingston visual arts precinct with local and national implications for cultural tourism. As much as I admire choral musicians, they are hardly a visual arts group, their proximity to The Canberra Glassworks makes little sense, and the use of this location as a practice hall would be a silly waste of space.

Megalo has given dozens of now nationally significant artists a start, it has played a historically significant role in the training of Australian Indigenous printmakers, and it has made a major contribution to Canberra's standing as a nationally significant cultural centre. I humbly urge this committee to reindorse the Fitters Workshop as Megalo's permanent home.

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