

TOSA

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THEATRE ORGAN SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (ACT DIVISION) INCORPORATED
PO Box 5133 Braddon ACT 2612



The Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services
Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

For Information:

Mr Mick Gentleman, MLA
Minister for Planning
ACT Government

	A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OFFICE
SUBMISSION NUMBER	1
DATE AUTH'D FOR PUBLICATION	15/10/14

Re: **Inquiry into the Albert Hall Plan of Management**

I write to you as President, Theatre Organ Society Australia, ACT Division Inc. (TOSA ACT), who own, maintain and operate the COMPTON Theatre Pipe Organ installed at the rear of the stage in the Albert Hall. The organ itself, built in 1933, offers a unique appeal consistent with the heritage status of the hall. Since its inauguration in 1986, the COMPTON organ has featured prominently in providing musical entertainment for many community and cultural activities held in the Albert Hall. The Society has also staged outstanding and popular public organ concerts over that time.

Whilst in agreement and supportive of most of the proposed Objectives and detailed Plan of Management for the on-going management and improvements to the Albert Hall, I would like to address specific items with regard to the use and location of the organ in the hope of providing a better overall understanding. These matters are outlined as part of 1.6 Actions Objective 3 (page 13) and in the Summaries of Opportunities and Constraints (pages 24, 25 and 32) of the draft Plan of Management:

1. With regard to *resolving issues related to the location of the organ* (page 13) and *Theatre organ reducing available space on the stage* (page 32):

- The organ chambers are tidily confined between the original piano storage compartment and other storage devices on the other side of the stage, that, in themselves limit access to the back area of the stage.
- The organ pipe-chambers per se, are fixtures and cannot easily be relocated without upsetting the heritage fabric of the area and at significant cost.

- A community consultation was undertaken prior to approval for installation of the organ (circa 1976) when more community cultural groups were then actively using the hall than as at present. There were no objections.

2. *Frequency of use of the organ* (page 13):

- At the time of the consultative workshop and release of the Consultation Summary on the Draft Plan of Management in April 2012, the pipe organ had been undergoing a substantial maintenance refit and as such, had not been featured in events and performances. Since then, however, and particularly in 2013 as part of Centenary Year Celebrations, the organ was featured extensively in Albert Hall dance activities, Open Day activities, the Canberra International Music Festival program (with ABC live broadcast from the Albert Hall) and other events, including the Society's own very well attended public theatre organ concert in December – all with high acclaim.

Whilst the Society is happy to assist in helping to resolving any particular issues, the Society is of the view that any deliberations should take into account the overall contribution of the organ as a cultural asset to the Canberra community as a whole.

The installation of the COMPTON pipe organ in the Albert Hall, I believe, ensures a unique community service and musical asset available to the people of Canberra, and provides a facility comparable to other State capital cities, all of which have heritage pipe organs in local town halls for public performance.

The Society looks forward to continuing its relationship and involvement of the COMPTON Theatre pipe organ in the Albert Hall, Canberra, as an active participant to the life of the Albert Hall over the next 10 years. Naturally, any mutual arrangement would normally involve a guaranteed period of tenure with defined benefits for both parties. The previous 5 year Licence Agreement between Planning and Land Authority, ACT Government and TOSA (ACT Division) Incorporated terminated on 30 April 2014.

Should you wish to discuss further or inspect and hear the organ, then I would be happy to facilitate.

With kind appreciation and thanks,

Sincerely,

Kingsley Herbert
President, TOSA (ACT Division) Inc.
Phone: 62512753
Alternate contact: 6286 5774

10 October 2014