

21 November 2011

Ms Amanda Bresnan  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs  
Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Re: FUTURE USE OF THE FITTERS WORKSHOP,  
KINGSTON ARTS PRECINCT

From  
Damian Kelly, General Manager  
Print Council of Australia  
5/5 Blackwood Street  
North Melbourne  
VIC 3051

Ph 03 3928 8991 email: [adminpca@netspace.net.au](mailto:adminpca@netspace.net.au)

On behalf of the Print Council of Australia I would like to formally register the support of this organisation and our membership for Megalo Print Studio in its application to tenant the Fitter's Workshop at Kingston.

We as an organisation are very surprised that the process of application and approval for Megalo has apparently "stepped backwards" from the due process conducted during 2010 -11. A process which included a determination based on government policy, a scoping study and development of preliminary sketch plans resulting in the subsequent awarding of tenancy to Megalo. This step backwards would, on the surface appear to be a negligent waste of valuable tax payer and arts funding (specifically that of Megalo) in undue waste of time, effort and energy by Megalo in completing, in good faith, previous submissions, planning, budgets and architectural drawings, to adhere to the recognised "due process".

ABN 52 199 195 151  
Office 5, 5 Blackwood Street  
North Melbourne Vic 3051 Australia

telephone +61 3 9328 8991

facsimile +61 3 9328 8993

email [adminpca@netspace.net.au](mailto:adminpca@netspace.net.au)

IMPRINT [printcouncil@netspace.net.au](mailto:printcouncil@netspace.net.au)

website [www.printcouncil.org.au](http://www.printcouncil.org.au)

As the peak body for printmakers in Australia with a national membership of 1500, we find the rescindment of approvals totally unique !!! Similar member organisations in Brisbane, Perth, Ballarat and Wodonga have been through similar submission processes at significant HR and planning costs, so it is bewildering that a similar process in Canberra can in fact go backwards against clearly documented decisions.

We reiterate our support for Megalo as a uniquely Canberra organisation, with a dynamic and far-reaching program of exhibitions, workshops, community access and community presence. We recently launched an edition of prints at Megalo and I was staggered by the obvious volume of community access and participation occurring in the studios and gallery. During my one day (a Thursday) and evening there. I saw:

- 40 people attend an artists' lecture;
- 3 different groups of artists participating in workshop activities including screenprinting
- Three volunteers working on various projects from auditing archives, organising the opening events and maintaining a database;
- One interstate artist working as artist-in-residence
- an additional 20 participate in a forum;
- 100 people attend an evening opening of three exhibitions;
- 40 people attend an after event informal dinner.

In total this contributes significantly to the cultural and economic wealth of the ACT. As a previous visitor to Megalo I had seen this level of activity and was heartened to see that after 30 years of sustained operations, they are able to maintain such a level of artistic activity, to an enthusiastic membership, as well as non-member and visitor public, especially given the geographic isolation of the studio in Watson.

From a structural perspective the Fitters Workshop location is ideal for the set up and maintenance of an operation using heavy equipment. Once set up and in place the need for movement is low in a building with a significant weight bearing capacity. Not to mention the generous provision of parking and a light which is imperative to artistic operations and will create a minimal carbon stamp. Megalo, in the Fitters Workshop will give Canberra's print activity the high profile and recognition it deserves, ensuring that it is on a par with other studios around the world.

Finally the activity level that I have mentioned will be a significant adjunct to that currently provided by the Canberra Glassworks in the Kingston precinct. Megalo will by its proven nature bring a steady stream of daytime and weekend life to the Kingston precinct. The direct connection between a print specialist venue and a glass specialist venue is perfect and will continue to enliven this foreshore area. As a frequent visitor to Canberra I have often visited the Canberra Glassworks and see it as a key Canberra tourist venue of quality experience and fantastic product. I believe that the Megalo proposal echoes the creative arts experience and product yet will be uniquely different to that currently provided by Canberra Glassworks.

I have been privileged to see the plans and more recently the design marquette for the re-fit and was impressed by the level of creativity and clever use of space to maximise space and function potential within the venue. The proposed re-fit and function of the workshop clearly and economically compliments the heritage nature of the building, most significantly directly complimenting its genesis as a workshop!!

I have included a copy of a note I received from the organisation's Immediate Past President who wrote to me on hearing of the events that had transpired in Canberra.

In concluding I (on behalf of our members) saw the re-development of the Fitters Workshop as an open and operating print studio as a great vision. To be operated by the well established and capable members and management of Megalo, continued that vision and reinforced the success of a Canberra based organisation of national standing. We commended the ACT government and recognised the clear synergies that were in keeping with the precedent set by the Canberra Glassworks. I recommend on behalf of our colleagues at Megalo and our national membership that the decision to house Megalo at this venue be re-instated and supported into the future as it offers clear economic, social and cultural value to both the Kingston Foreshore and the ACT as a whole.

I am happy to be contacted to support these statements.

With thanks for the opportunity to comment

Yours sincerely

Damian Kelly  
General Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Damian Kelly', with a stylized flourish at the end.

22 November 2011

Dear Damian

I was aghast to learn of the sudden and inexplicable impediment to the move of Megalo to the Fitter's Workshop on the Kingston Foreshore. It makes so much logical and artistic sense to have a Visual Arts precinct in that location as there are so many synergies between the activities of the Glass Works and Megalo. Both encourage visitation and participation which is central to the vibrancy of the area and can never be attained by an enclosed rehearsal facility from a very different art form. The performing arts diverge significantly from the visual arts in terms of practices and outcomes.

Both cultural tourism and resident satisfaction would be greatly enhanced by the creation of an expanded visual arts presence in the area close to other important cultural institutions as well as the highly successful craft based Bus Depot Markets. I cannot state more clearly my view that to renege on the move of Megalo would be a highly retrograde one.

Yours sincerely

Professor Diana Davis  
Adjunct Senior Professorial Fellow  
ANU Centre for European Studies  
Research School of Humanities and the Arts

Immediate Past President  
Print Council of Australia

Macintosh HD:Damian:Letters of support:Letter of support for Megalo.doc