

To: The Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal

Elmar Tilo Fobes



Regarding the Inquiry into Billboards

Dear Members of the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal,

I thank the committee for the opportunity to make a submission regarding the introduction of Advertising Billboards in the ACT.

I only learned about the ban on advertisement in the ACT, when I heard about the proposed changes. It never occurred to me that there are no advertisement billboards. The lack of them has never stopped my appreciation of Canberra. In contrast, it only increased my desire to live here.

While it was not an official poll on the measure, I think it is no coincidence that the residents of the ACT chose "the bush capital" as the newest slogan to be put on number plates. Billboards run contrary to the idea of a bush capital, and what it means to the people that love living here so much they want to put it on their number plates.

Regarding assumed benefits of introducing Billboards, I only see increased financial revenue for the territory. I understand that new funding sources are always welcome, but feel that they are outweighed by the cost. Apart from the well-documented psychological damage intense advertisement has, it also can have negative communal impact. Examples include the negative impact gambling ads have; so far that even Football Clubs in the AFL are trying to sever their connections to it; and portrayal of negative Gender stereotypes in many fashion advertisements that are harmful to women and men growing up. Private businesses may claim benefits from advertisement, but it can harm small Canberra businesses that could not compete with large chains and ads won't make people spend more, it just shifts it, potentially away from ACT-owned small businesses.

The territory should instead aim to use public spaces to display art and support an amazing artistic community in the ACT. The recent new mural at the Skate Park in Civic is a great example of making this city more beautiful, and actually enliven urban areas in a positive way.

In closing, it is also always interesting to consider the original plans for Canberra by Walter and Marion Burley-Griffin and its adaption to the Garden City concept. This plan excluded advertisement and focused on open public spaces. It is interesting to note that a city that is so preoccupied with its appearance that it still bans front fences on private property even contemplates billboards in public spaces.

Thank you for considering this submission, I am willing to appear in a public hearing for this submission.

Regards,

Elmar Tilo Fobes

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