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Categories: PUR



Cover page

Planning and Urban Renewal Committee Inquiry into Billboards

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	A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OFFICE
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Submission

Dear Committee,

Re: Inquiry into Billboards

It is unfortunate that the Committee's page for this inquiry did not provide links to the current regulations that concern billboard advertising, as it has made it extremely difficult to directly address the terms of reference for this inquiry. Nevertheless, I provide the following submission as a long-term resident and rate payer of the ACT.

Canberra residents have long valued the city/state as the 'bush capital.' Growing up here in the 1970s, every suburb / region had a large number of public spaces that were freely accessible to all. The commons allowed individuals and groups to derive pleasure in areas that were for the most part free of the intrusion of political and commercial activities. A billboard-free environment was one of the many factors that made Canberra unique in its attractiveness and lifestyle.

Over time, Canberrans have suffered a significant loss of amenity in relation to its commons. One aspect of this is the ever diminishing ability to be free from the relentless intrusion of vested interests' 'messaging' everywhere we go. This appears to have occurred despite the rules that were (previously) generally understood to ban billboard advertising.

Large and small billboards, marketing on buses and trailers, large signage on buildings, temporary 'corflutes' and other means of outdoor advertising have already greatly eroded our capacity to be free to choose the advertisers that we engage with and our ability to spend time free from exposure to any advertising at all within our external (community) environment. This is a reflection of political masters' treatment of citizens as 'economic units' rather than human beings, with the latter needful of the ability to exist in relationship with one another and the natural environment.

Generally speaking, billboards and other outdoor advertising also provides visual - and in some cases litter - pollution. Ever increasing electronic billboards add to nighttime light pollution over the city. This is inconsistent with the intent and inherent value of maintaining a strong identity as the 'bush capital' for the sake of our citizens.

Roadside billboards - including those purporting to contain safety messages - are hazardous with regard to increasing potential driver distraction. Only those of a temporary nature advising changed conditions or hazards ahead can reasonably be supported.

With regard the term of reference of the (supposed) 'merits ... of establishing designated areas for billboard advertising, including ... potential to enliven urban areas', I see none: enlivening urban areas is dependent on their amenity for the people who use them. I propose that there are many strategies for enlivening our urban areas that do not include allowing them to be intruded upon by narrowly defined vested interests.

Whilst some signage may be acceptable in Civic and town centres in order to assist the public to locate particular businesses, widespread advertising on billboards seems to be an out-of-date approach to general advertising. Its benefits seem to be outweighed by the costs of the loss of general amenity and the principle of the commons.

Another exception might be small, temporary billboards that advertise community events (e.g. the Million Paws Walk, Clean-Up Australia Day, local school fetes, etc.)

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry.

Yours in good faith,

Jennifer Paradowski