

34

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Chair, Standing Committee on Education,
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ACT Legislative Assembly
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Dear Ms Bresnan,

Future use of the Fitters' Workshop, Kingston Arts Precinct

Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre is pleased to make a submission to the Legislative Assembly's Inquiry into the Future Use of the Fitters' Workshop in the proposed Kingston Arts Precinct.

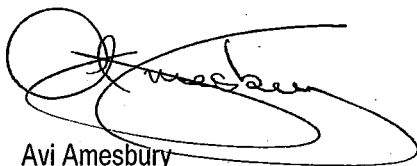
Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre is the peak craft and design organisation in Canberra. We have a 40 year history as a cultural institution and have gained a nationally recognised reputation for our outstanding artistic program, and an international recognition in showcasing high quality innovative Australian craft and design. The Centre's reputation extends to its professional members, who are iconic and influential in their fields. They have international reputations for excellence and innovation and are represented in significant public collections throughout the world.

We receive support from the ACT Government as a Key Arts Organisation and encourage engagement with contemporary craft and design through our retail outlet, an exhibition program, a membership program and a diverse range of education programs and one-off projects.

Our interest in the future of the Fitters Workshop lies in the vision for the visual arts in Canberra and the vital bi-partisan support required to fully realise and exploit Canberra's unique position as the nation's capital.

The Centre believes housing Megalo Print Studio and Gallery in the Fitters' Workshop is critical to the success of the proposed Kingston Arts Precinct. Our submission to the Standing Committee is attached.

Yours sincerely,



Avi Amesbury
Executive Director

Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre

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Member of the network of Australia Craft Design Centres (ACDC)

Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre is supported by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian Government and all state and territory governments.

Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre is supported by the ACT Government and the Australia Council for the Arts, the federal government's arts funding and advisory body.

Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre

Submission on Future Use of the Fitters' Workshop, Kingston Arts Precinct

Kingston Art Precinct

The ACT government's decision to develop the Kingston Arts Precinct, with a focus on the visual arts, is well known in Canberra. In 2003 the ACT government announced that Kingston would be developed as a precinct for the visual arts, and has subsequently seen the Canberra Glassworks move into the Powerhouse at Kingston, a scoping study has been undertaken, Preliminary Sketch Plans have been developed, and in April this year ACT government announced funding for the adaptive re-use of the Fitters Workshop as a permanent home for Megalo Print Studio + Gallery.

The Kingston Arts Precinct was further supported by the ACT government in 2011 in its response to the report on the Review of the Arts in Canberra (the Loxton Report).

To ensure the success of the proposed Kingston visual arts precinct it is critical it continues to be developed with vision and clarity.

Creation of a visual arts hub

Creating a visual arts hub that co-locates major visual art organisations, with significant local, national and international reputations will:

- Recognise the ACT as a high profile destination for the arts. Canberra is home to many internationally renowned artists who have been recognised in the collections of our national institutions and in major collections globally.
- Encourage visitors to look beyond the national cultural institutions and extend their stay in Canberra.
- Develop new audiences and community engagement that enhances the social, cultural and economic wealth of Canberra.

A number of key visual arts organisations are exploring their potential involvement in the visual arts precinct at Kingston, and in creating an outstanding world-class cultural precinct.

Factors that will be critical to the ongoing success of a visual arts precinct at Kingston are:

- Adequate space for all organisations' activities to flourish and to fully realise their potential
- Significant visibility for all the organisations within the precinct
- The right mix of organisations that bring well established reputations and audiences
- Its ability to build its reputation as a cultural destination, alongside the national cultural institutions

Land Development Agency Section 49 proposal

In a meeting with 5 of the key visual arts organisations – Canberra Glassworks, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Megalo Print Studio, Photo Access and Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre – on 9 November 2011 Christine Purdon outlined the Land Development Agency's general approach to establishing the arts precinct in Kingston. We understand that the draft plan presented at this meeting will form part of the Land Development Agency's submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly.

A number of concerns were raised:

- There may be insufficient space to meet the needs of the visual arts organisations currently interested in relocating to the precinct. This would be further exasperated by:
 - Changes to the plans for Megalo Print Studio to move into the Fitters Workshop
 - The increased requirement of space from other art forms.
- The vision for and shape of the arts precinct becoming lost within the land development process
- The needs of the key arts organisations, and the many other interests, to be made at an early stage of development. That is, the visual arts precinct component of the overall Section 49 development is at the forefront of planning considerations.

Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre supports the Section 49 development to reflect the more detailed work undertaken by artsACT, and the recommended next stage of a feasibility study to ensure a viable and sustainable visual arts precinct.

Megalo Print Studio and Gallery and the Fitters Workshop

Megalo Print Studio has a 30 year history in Canberra and over this time has developed a national reputation for excellence. The organisation draws attention to Canberra through access to its professional print studios, residency program and education programs. Their facilities are vital in retaining emerging and professional artists in Canberra, and are a significant player in contributing to Canberra's creative industry.

Megalo Print Studio provides open access 7 days ensuring the facilities are in maximum use. This in turn attracts and encourages community engagement with the facilities, through both making and looking at art.

The synergies between housing the Canberra Glassworks and Megalo Print Studio in adaptive re-use buildings will provide a further focus of activity for the broader local community, visitors to Canberra and professional artists.

Housing Megalo Print Studio in the Fitters Workshop is in sympathy with its industrial heritage as a workshop. These synergies will further attract audiences to the precinct.

Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre believes that accommodating Megalo Print Studio in the Fitters workshop is critical to the success of the Kingston Arts Precinct.

Shared use of the Fitters Workshop

For the Fitters Workshop to be a shared use facility, such as hosting music events, exhibitions or theatre performances some intervention to the existing building would be required. It seems unlikely that work required to the Fitters Workshop to operate as a shared facility can be done without compromising the acoustic qualities of the building.

The management of a shared use facility can, at worst, leave the facility under-utilised.

Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre believes that unless the Fitters Workshop is in use at all times it will affect the success and viability of the precinct.