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 To: Committees
 Cc:
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Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal Inquiry into Billboards

Dear Committee,

I strongly object to any billboards and outdoor advertising in Canberra. Let me explain why.

I have lived in Canberra for decades and visit other capital cities regularly. One of the good things about Canberra is the lack of visual pollution that afflicts other cities.

I can look at the city and see all of it.

When I see outdoor advertising, I must learn to not see it, otherwise my brain becomes too distracted.

It is like the way that we aren't aware of our clothes most of the time.

Just before you read this, could you feel your shoes? The way the press against your feet, maybe a little squeeze across the toes?

Billboards are similarly distracting, but worse. They are designed to grab your attention and we must fight that or continually be distracted.

Outdoor advertising can also be a hazard.

I have been trained to expect the large light boards beside the roads and highways to display important safety information, such as warnings about road closures or the times of roadworks.

Now that I have started seeing similar light boards being used for advertising, I pay less attention to the official road-side light boards, so their messages are being ignored.

This is detrimental to overall road safety if advertising camouflaged as safety messages continues to pollute the medium.

In my decades of living in Canberra I have heard many complaints about it, mainly about it being too dull.

However, in all that time, no-one has complained about the lack of billboards or outdoor advertising.

It is something that ordinary citizens do not want.

It benefit the few advertisers to the detriment of everyone else.

Addressing some of the Inquiry's Points:

3. Merits and challenges ...

a. Impact on business and community organisations.

Most community organisations I am familiar with struggle to afford advertising. Establishing a designated area for billboards would effectively give it over to businesses.

c. Potential to enliven urban area.

This sounds as preposterous as expecting open-air loud speakers to enliven an area. People go to, and enliven, urban areas to be with other people, to do things, to appreciate the art or music.

Advertising takes away from this. No-one ever goes someplace to appreciate the advertising.

I will finish with an example.

I have been skiing since before the downhill ski resorts of Perisher and Thredbo placed advertising on their lift pylons.

I remember how nice it was to have just steel columns interrupting the views as I rode up the chairlifts.

Now I have to ignore the advertising placards to enjoy the views.

This causes me to also ignore the safety warnings and skiers' codes on the pylons, something I'm sure is not good for anyone's overall enjoyment and use of the resort.

Yours sincerely,

K.A. Moylan

