

**ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into the future use of the Fitters' Workshop
in the Kingston Arts Precinct**

Submission

David Broker, Director Canberra Contemporary Art Space

Gorman House Arts Centre

**a. the best use of the Fitters workshop, taking into account the acoustic
qualities, heritage value, its location, cost and community demand of
the building;**

I support the Government's plan to locate Megalo Print Studio in The Fitters Workshop. Megalo is an important component of the planned Kingston Arts Precinct and its move is a significant step on the way to achieving a facility that will ensure that the ACT is finally taken seriously as a producer of contemporary arts and crafts. ACT artists and crafts people deserve this recognition.

Essentially, community musicians (such as choral singers) have tenuous claim in an arts precinct focused on the visual arts and further, they tend not to be professional artists. It is of great importance that KAP is seen as a precinct devoted to excellence and creative Industries rather than a leisure centre.

Most importantly, however, Megalo needs a permanent home while those with interests in the workshop are looking at occasional use. At this stage there is no clear plan for participation.

Although I appreciate Ms Dunne's and Ms Le Couteur's concerns for consultation and correct process in regard to the usage of the Fitters Workshop I think there are a number of pertinent issues that might be considered in respect of the Inquiry. As director of an ACT Key Arts Organisation I believe these issues are of importance to artists, arts organisations and to the wider community.

- i. I do not expect the government to test the acoustics of every empty shed in the ACT just in case it would be suitable for use by community musicians?

- ii. Even if there is a “miraculous acoustic” does this necessarily preclude a visual arts organisation having use of the space. Any empty building with good acoustics is not sole property of a vague group of musicians.
- iii. I am unconvinced by the contribution the petitioning group has made to the development of excellence in cultural activity in the ACT and doubt their suitability for the planned Kingston Arts Precinct.
- iv. In the event that community musicians are successful in securing this space it should also be made available to other musicians such as rock bands who would be far more appropriate for the precinct – It is hard to imagine, however, that this idea will receive any support from the current residents of the area.
- v. The costs of refurbishing this building for any general use will be significant and will impact on the acoustics of the current empty shell. The more adaptable the building is for general use, the further it moves away from its current state.

b. options for alternative venues for use by a range of community music groups;

- i. This is solely a matter for the music community and government to consider in accordance with an assessment of current needs. The acoustics in the Fitter’s Workshop are controversial at best and I am not aware of the broad requirements of these community music groups which I assume would be diverse. I was under the impression that Albert Hall and Llewellyn Hall are already spaces dedicated to music events.

c. options for alternative purpose built accommodation for Megalo Print Studio;

I believe there is only one issue here, an appropriate home for Megalo in the context of other sympathetic arts organisations at the Kinston Arts Precinct. In other words, I am recommending the creation of an arts hub that represents the currently undervalued vibrancy of visual arts activity in the ACT, as recommended by the government commissioned Loxton Report. As movement on the arts precinct is a matter of urgency the Fitter’s Workshop, which has been vacant for some time, would appear to be the best option for Megalo’s relocation.

d.any other relevant matter

I have no in principal objection to the Fitters Workshop becoming a site for general use, notwithstanding the concerns I have outlined in this submission. In the event that the inquiry recommends this space for community musicians I feel strongly that the construction of a purpose built space for Megalo in KAP should be a priority. In the current financial climate this would undoubtedly slow the development of the Kingston Arts Precinct and it seems highly unlikely that musicians or anyone else would see anything happening in this area for many years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Cohen'.

9 December 2012