

The Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal  
GPO Box 1020, Canberra City ACT 260

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## Inquiry into Billboards

Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal

An Inquiry into Billboards? Why? I can find no articulated proponent nor rationale for holding this inquiry. Hansard would suggest that maybe the renaming of Manuka Oval is the catalyst for the inquiry. However, naming rights is a commercial matter and the display of such business naming is invariably covered by current legislation.

If a business wishes to enter a commercial arrangement to name a place/building etc, that surely is part of normal business activity and judgement. The fact that the ACT Government can be so stupid as to agree to rename Manuka Oval is but a reflection on the poor judgement of the decision makers; poor decision making could be an instructive inquiry. If the signage read "ACT Government proudly supporting climate initiatives" with logos etc, the signage would invariably attract praise. So, the issue appears to be one of content, not principle.

Some comments based around the Terms of Reference:

- **Definition:**
  - a billboard is generally defined as a large board on which advertising is displayed.
  - Within Canberra, the only known example is at the Canberra Centre and the approval for that sign has apparently attracted some controversy.
  - It is assumed the Inquiry will examine not only such large advertising, but also smaller scale advertising.
  - As a generalisation, Canberra accepts the absence of large scale billboards and have articulate no desire nor practicality for a change.
- **Effectiveness of current regulations:** Canberrans are accepting of the current requirements for billboards and have voiced no fundamental displeasure with the status quo and the effectiveness of the current regulatory environment. The Canberra Centre signage been the exception. Small billboards/signage regulations seem adequate with, again, no expressed desire within the community for change.
- **Community views on placement:**
  - Roadside corflutes fail all rational explanation. Business cannot display roadside corflutes but aspiring politicians can! If a business cannot display such advertising why should the Assembly make an exception for the self-interests of its members and their political interests. Such advertising is banned for business because they create hazards, are unsightly and offend

the sensibilities of residents and the same would surely hold for political advertising.

- Advertising should not require removal of trees or have other environmental impacts.
- Advertising should not have any impact on nearby property values.
- **Use of new billboard technology:**
  - Residents have survived since the Territory was founded without the need for advertising at bus shelters and invariably can continue to survive into the future – same applies to trams;
  - New technologies should have no more of a visual impact than the existing signage. Issues of the brightness of an electronic sign are important, especially at night. The night time intensity should be limited so as not to be intrusive and have limitations about how far that sign can be seen.
  - Light pollution needs to be sensitive to residents, the environment and passer-by's. It should not be distracting to road users.
  - New technology should be energy efficient.
  - Canberrans have not expressed any desire to look like Times Square, Tokyo or other similar cities;
  - World community trends are now pursuing reducing and more regulated environments for billboards and advertising. It would be inexplicable for the ACT to reverse that trend.
- **Ways to regulate:**
  - Signs should be limited to a small percentage of a building façade, or in the case of shop fronts, a percentage of the window area;
  - Billboards and advertising should not offend

**Summary:** As there is no proposition to make a change, then it appears that the status quo remains until a case is made for change. At that point community comment can be sought and an Inquiry maybe required on the specific change proposition.

Lance Williamson



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