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Sent: Wednesday, 21 June 2017 10:42 AM
To: Committees
Subject: Submission to the Inquiry into Billboards in the ACT

To the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal



I write as a concerned longterm resident of Canberra.

I would consider the introduction of billboards to Canberra as a crime against the residents of our city. We should ask *cui bono*? Who benefits from the imposition of additional advertising on our city? Why is it needed? Will it somehow boost our economy by making us spend more? More likely, it enables businesses with deeper pockets to compete for a greater share of existing spending. This benefits some business owners and disadvantages others. It doesn't benefit residents at all.

In terms of precedents, I see three things that might be held up as examples of why billboards won't be detrimental, or perhaps even beneficial. None hold water as examples of desirable practice in my view, all are bad and should themselves be reconsidered:

- **full wrap advertising on ACTION buses.** It's often ugly, it makes it harder to identify the ACTION brand, and I personally have experienced the reduced utility for passengers. When riding on full wrap busses at night, it is hard to see out of the bus well enough to identify which stop the bus is at, even on routes I travel often. This makes a mockery of the bus service.
- **the Convention Centre "TV screen".** I might be convinced if this screen was just used to advertise events at the convention centre, but I have seen advertising for completely unrelated commercial products or services on the screen. How was this approved? Is the screen being used in the approved way? Furthermore, it faces into a busy set of traffic lights - is it even appropriate to have this screen in this location from a public safety point of view.
- **mini-billboard/posters at "Adshel" bus stops.** I appreciate the city gained some bus stops that are maintained/serviced by a private company, but at what cost? Was maintenance of existing bus stops such a burden? Are they worth the trade-off of inserting random street-side advertising into an environment where there was none? In my view, the answer is no. It's all very well to say that iconic areas under the control of the NCA would be protected, but Northbourne Avenue is the major entrance to the city, and is polluted with Adshel bus stops.

Canberra is not other cities. We don't need to make the same mistakes that others have made. Advertising doesn't enliven urban areas, it diminishes them. I urge the committee to stand firm, and keep our streets free from unnecessary visual pollution caused by billboards and their ilk.

I am willing to appear as a witness at a public hearing.

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