



Australian Institute of Architects

9 August 2011

Ms Christine McDonald
Committee Secretary
Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms McDonald,

Inquiry re the Performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS)

The Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) is pleased to make this submission to the Senate inquiry into the performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS).

The Institute is an independent, national member organisation with approximately 11,000 members across Australia and overseas. The Institute exists to: advance the interests of its members, their professional standards and contemporary practice, and expand and advocate the value of architects and architecture to the sustainable growth of our community, economy and culture. The Institute actively works to maintain and improve the quality of our built environment by promoting better, responsible and environmental design.

Parliament House is a landmark building which has become an icon of the nation. The fundamental significance of the building lies within its concept of making a National place. It functions both as a working place for the Parliament and as a symbol and ceremonial place for events of National importance: a symbol of National unity and commitment to the democratic process of government. The building with its integrated works commissioned art, craft and specially designed furnishings, reflects the history, cultural diversity, development and aspirations of the nation. The building's design and siting on the land axis create a strong visual relationship and a linkage between the historic War Memorial and Provisional Parliament House. The building is pre-eminently sited on Capital Hill at the focus of Walter Burley Griffin's 1912 plan for Canberra and the Parliamentary Triangle. The building design re-states the original profile of the hill and its curved walls reach out to encompass the radial avenues established by the 1912 Griffin plan as the primary axes of the city. The building, particularly the curved walls and flagpole, is a strong symbolic and sculptural element in the landscape.

The Institute considers the Parliament House building and associated landscape to be of outstanding architectural merit and worthy of national and international recognition for its heritage values. The design excellence has been recognised by the Institute through a number of awards, particularly the National Sir Zelman Cowan Award in 1989 and the awarding of the Institute's Gold-Medal to Romaldo Giurgola in 1988. The Institute's citation and statement of significance for the place can be viewed on our website under Community/ Heritage Buildings.

.../2

The heritage values of Parliament House were recognised by Institute members in a national survey conducted in 2002. This led to the Institute's nomination of the place to the National Heritage List in 2004. This nomination has yet to be finalised, however a select list of other places nominated at the same time are on the National Heritage Register. The Institute requests the support of the Department of Parliamentary Services in the nomination of Parliament House on the National Heritage List. We also note that the International Union of Architects have included Parliament House on their International Heritage Register.

The Institute believes that the Department of Parliamentary Services' policies and practices for the management of the heritage values of Parliament House, its setting and contents, must be at the highest level with respect to the cultural significance of the place.

The Institute recommends that a comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the place be prepared and implemented. Ideally, the CMP should be concerned with activities related to the built form, the views to and from the place, the landscape, and the craft and artwork all associated with the original design of the place. The Institute offers its expertise in assisting in preparing the draft Heritage Strategy and Heritage Framework.

I would be happy to clarify any aspect of our submission if required.

Yours sincerely,

David Parken, LFRAIA
Chief Executive Officer