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7 April 2015

Lyn Beverley
Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Lyn,

RE: INQUIRY INTO THE PROPOSED PARLIAMENT HOUSE SECURITY UPGRADE WORKS

I applaud Senator Nick Xenophon's initiative to convene a senate inquiry into the proposed security fence around the Prime Ministers' entrance to Parliament House.

The proposal diminishes and compromises the Parliament House as a symbol of Australian democracy. The Parliament House is an Australian icon like the Sydney Opera House or the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Parallels can be drawn too, to the Taj Mahal in India, Hagia Sophia in Turkey, the White House in America, the Houses of Parliament or Buckingham Palace in London.

Yes, of course, the security of buildings of national significance is critical. Generally they are protected by a secure perimeter and not by an intervention which compromises the character function or aesthetic of the building. The White House, Buckingham Palace and the Taj Mahal provide readily recognisable examples of effective security which complement the aesthetics of the buildings they are protecting.

Imagine the Opera House with a fence across the front steps or Buckingham Palace with a fence protruding from its front facade.

A balanced view of this and other future proposals will be the key to retaining the integrity of the building. Consultation with the original architect, Romaldo Giurgola, together with his colleague, Hal Guida, would be appropriate.

In the future, an independent position of Architect to the Parliament would provide a means to discuss this and other matters in the context of an appreciation for the philosophy that informed the building design. The architect should be a person of very high professional standing and be selected by the Parliament together with Hal Guida and Pamille Berg and in consultation with the Australian Institute of Architects.

The current proposal to fence the entrance to the prime ministers wing of the parliament not only diminishes the Parliament House as a symbol of Australian democracy but clearly signals we are compromising our daily life due to the threat of terrorism.

There must be a smarter way to address the issue at hand.

Yours faithfully,

COX ARCHITECTURE

RODNEY MOSS

Fellow of Cox Architecture

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