

**Submission – Canberra Carillonists
Inquiry into the role of the National Capital Authority**

Executive Summary

The National Carillon is a world-renowned concert musical instrument and a significant Government asset. The Carillon (installed 1970) was a gift to the people of Australia from the British Government in observance of the 50th Anniversary of the founding of Canberra. As a visual and artistic centrepiece of the National Capital for the past thirty-eight years, the National Carillon is listed on both the Register of National Estate and the Commonwealth Heritage List, signifying its importance both locally and federally. Through its long history of high-quality musical performance, the National Carillon has consistently attracted attention to the Capital and is held in high regard internationally.

As a national asset, the Federal Government has a responsibility to care for the National Carillon. The asset is currently managed by the National Capital Authority [NCA]. The NCA's management role includes the appointment of the Carillon Director and carillonists and funding of recitals, maintenance and promotional activities. In the Terms of Reference for the Parliamentary Inquiry into the role of the NCA, the Carillon falls under scope at point 5. This submission is lodged in this specific context.

Over the past seven years, under leadership of the current Director, Timothy Hurd QSM CLJ and with the support of the NCA, the National Carillon has enjoyed its longest period of operational stability. This stability has allowed the instrument to flourish, becoming:

- a world class 55-bell instrument with a comprehensive musical daily performance program and a team of professional carillonists who are committed to fostering an active appreciation for the National Carillon as a concert musical instrument;
- recognised internationally as a significant instrument with a high quality, ambitious artistic and outreach program (including an interactive website);
- a significant attraction for a regular group of dedicated followers;
- an impressive, iconic musical draw-card for the National Capital; and
- a distinctive, identifiable symbol of the National Capital for Australian and international visitors to Canberra

Feedback from international carillonists suggests that, by the end of 2007, the National Carillon had the most active and comprehensive performance and outreach program in the world.

However, the funding which has made this possible has always depended upon the NCA giving the National Carillon a sufficiently high priority. The NCA response to the recent cuts in its Budget was to reduce the funding available to the National Carillon by around 90%. This has led to such a curtailment of activities that it fundamentally threatens the enormous achievements of recent years. In particular, it will not be possible to maintain the performance standards, international profile or accessibility of the National Carillon under the current funding basis.

Allowing a Carillon of such international and national significance to decline in this way will have long-lasting repercussions that will not be easily redressed in future. We note that it took over 30 years to establish the instrument's current profile and that the costs of repeating this process are likely to be substantial. We believe that it is critical that the operational and funding basis of the carillon be established on a footing that ensures it maintains its pre-eminent position as one of the great carillons of the world.

We therefore ask that the Committee consider the following recommendations in respect of the National Carillon, Aspen Island, Canberra:

1. that Commonwealth Legislation covering the National Carillon, recognising its national significance, be drafted; and
2. that Commonwealth funding for the National Carillon be guaranteed to a level that ensures that it can continue to function as a world-class instrument and meet its obligations as a national icon. This funding should cover:
 - appointment of Director with sufficient expertise and international standing, such as our current outstanding Director
 - a recital program which ensures that residents and visitors to Canberra have the opportunity to hear the National Carillon in performance;
 - costs associated with tours which allow access to the National Carillon by the general public
 - promotion of the carillon activities and special events;
 - maintenance of physical structure of the National Carillon

Terms of reference

This Submission has been prepared by the six currently contracted carillonists for the Inquiry into the Role of the National Capital Authority being undertaken by the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories.

The Submission addresses the fifth item in the Inquiry Terms of Reference:

“5. The effective national promotion of the National Capital, and the Roles of the NCA and the ACT Government in advocacy for new infrastructure projects including responsibility for events and developing the distinctive character of the National Capital.”

as it relates specifically to the National Carillon.

It is intended to inform the Committee of the national and international significance of the National Carillon and highlight the risks associated with the current management arrangements.

What is the National Carillon?

The National Carillon is first and foremost a musical instrument, situated in a freestanding tower on Aspen Island in Lake Burley Griffin, at the centre of the National Capital. It is also a significant architectural Icon – a symbol for Australia and Canberra. It is a gift to the people of Australia from the British Government.

History

The history of the National Carillon, its erection and siting on Aspen Island, Canberra is a compelling story. It is a story that should act as a reminder not just for the significance of the Carillon as a symbol of the National Capital but also the importance of maintaining this outstanding musical instrument in its rightful place of international renown.

The concept of a carillon was first announced by former Prime Minister Ben Chifley as a national war memorial in Canberra in 1948. This suggestion was not followed up at the time.

It was on Canberra Day, 20 March 1963 that the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, announced the offer of a gift by the United Kingdom Government to commemorate the Jubilee of the founding of Canberra in 1913 as Seat of the Federal Government and to serve as a reminder for all times of the enduring ties between Australia and Britain. It was the British wish that the gift should reflect the common parliamentary heritage and blend with the grand design of the beautiful city of Canberra.

It was John Douglas Gordon, then the Carillonist at the University of Sydney, who suggested that Lake Burley Griffin offered a marvellous site for a carillon (rather than the location suggested in front of Old Parliament House, where playing time would necessarily be limited due to the sitting of the House). It was 12 May 1966 before the Lake island site was agreed upon for the Carillon, and a further three years before construction at Aspen Island commenced.

The winning design for the tower was awarded to a Perth firm of architects, Cameron, Chisholm and Nicol.

The contract for the bells was let with John Taylor Bellfounders of Loughborough, Leicestershire, England.

It was arranged that Queen Elizabeth II would, on Australia's behalf, personally accept the Government of Britain's gift of the Carillon and declare it open on Sunday, 26th April 1970.

It was very late in the arrangements that it was realised that this gift was an instrument and a carillonist would be needed to allow a performance for the Queen. On 3 February 1970 John Gordon made a visit to Canberra to inspect the carillon and meet with representatives of the government and Canberra residents interested in playing. (These included Maurice Turner and John Barrett, both of whom became students of John Gordon and resident assistant carillonists). On 1 March John Gordon was appointed Canberra Carillonist. He played the opening recital on 26 April 1970, eventually retiring from the post on 31 December 1988.

Over the years, the carillon has been played by many of the top international carillonists, visitors from around the world have heard performances by local carillonists and are invariably fascinated by the instrument. It is important to appreciate that the National Carillon can only fully realise its potential if both the physical fabric of the instrument and tower are maintained and its musical capabilities are exploited through frequent performances by skilled carillonists.

On 11 August 2007 the National Carillon was placed on the Register of National Estate and the Commonwealth Heritage Listing. The Place ID is 18373 and the Place File No is 8/01/000/0392.

The Statement of Significance for its listing notes that:

“The Carillon is a significant design feature in the important landscape of the Parliamentary Triangle. It is a strong vertical element in the landscape and provides a balancing vertical feature for the Captain Cook Memorial Water Jet. The Carillon and Jet are symmetrically placed either side of the land axis of the Parliamentary Triangle. These vertical features effectively mark the radiating boundaries of the Triangle (Criterion E.1). The Carillon is also a good example of the late twentieth century Brutalist style. Its use of strong shapes which are boldly composed, the diagonal line of the roofs, large areas of blank wall, use of precast non load bearing wall panels and strongly vertical windows and openings are all features of this style (Criterion D.2). The Carillon is a focal point for Lake Burley Griffin and has become a landmark in Canberra (Criterion E.1).”

Thus, the genesis, location and international profile of the National Carillon all highlight its significance as an integral contributor to the distinctive character of the National Capital.

Management of the National Carillon

Before 2001, day-to-day management of the Carillon was ‘farmed out’ to various Government agencies, arts organisations, and private consortiums (even a radio station, at one point). The Federal Government had always provided funding but uncertainty about the level of funding combined with the instability in the management arrangements meant that there was little scope to develop any sort of long term strategic plan. As a result, there was little attention given to the artistic direction for the National Carillon, nor was there a coherent program to develop an international profile commensurate with the quality of the instrument.

The appointment of Timothy Hurd as Carillon Director in 2001 under a contract with the National Capital Authority [NCA] signalled the beginning of new phase in the management of the carillon. Canberra was extraordinarily lucky to be able to obtain the services of a person with such outstanding credentials, in terms of both his expertise in carillon construction and maintenance and his international reputation as a player and composer. Timothy Hurd developed a program for physical regeneration of the instrument and lifting the artistic and performance standards. Under his management: the National Carillon has become:

- a world class 55-bell instrument with a comprehensive musical performance program and a team of professional, committed carillonists;
- recognised internationally as a significant instrument with a high quality, ambitious artistic and outreach program;

- a significant attraction for a regular group of dedicated followers;
- an impressive, iconic musical draw-card for the National Capital; and
- a distinctive, identifiable symbol of the National Capital for Australian and international visitors to Canberra.

He has also overseen the largest and most significant upgrade to the instrument since its inception including:

- replacement of the highest 28 treble bells and addition of 2 bells so the Carillon has a more cohesive resonance and larger, more versatile range
- managing the major capital works and maintenance project of upgrading the building interior and adding the scope for the Chimes function room, replacement of the tower lift
- continuing provision of policy advice to NCA on ancillary capital works (information kiosk design, digital audio-visual matrix, retro-fitting of sound proofing for air conditioning system, etc.)

A critical element in achieving these impressive outcomes was the significant funding support provided by the NCA over the past seven years. However, there has been no guarantee of the funding required to maintain the standards of excellence under Timothy Hurd's tenure and the National Carillon has had to compete with the NCA's other priorities each year. The risks associated with this approach were dramatically illustrated this year when the NCA chose to cut the budget for the carillon from its previous level of around \$200,000 per annum to \$10,000 plus an allowance of around \$1,200 per month for a skeleton schedule of performances. This argues the need for an alternative funding model that ensures that the operations of the National Carillon are not subject to the vagaries of internal agency dynamics.

What is an appropriate program of activities for the National Carillon?

Under Timothy Hurd's directorship, the Carillon built up a wide-ranging performance and outreach program that included:

- daily recitals, tours and practice sessions
 - o during 2007 there were more than 200 regular recitals & 150 public tours
 - o the annual usage of the carillon was estimated to be over 2000 hours
- the annual Visiting Artist Exchange Program [VAEP], connecting with different embassies and overseas carillon professionals
- the very popular summer evening recital series: 'Stillness and the Night'

- Christmas at the Carillon (Christmas Eve recital + evening of carols) which was attended by people from all over Australia and as far afield as Germany and the United States
- an Anzac Day and Remembrance Day recital
- a Canberra Day recital
- an Australia Day recital
- a Valentine's Day recital (Bells and Bubbly)
- the ever-popular Carillon Frolic (largest one-day annual promotional event)
- special recitals for events of national significance such as tolling for Bali bombing victims, Australian Federal Police Memorial annual commemorative service, Olympic torch relay, Harmony Days and the solemn Unknown Soldier Cortege.
- regular seasonal editions for carillon e-magazine REVERBbbb
- regular ongoing maintenance of the Carillon instrument
- regular ongoing maintenance of the heritage building

This extensive program was achieved with funding of approximately \$200,000 per annum and was only feasible because the current team of Carillonists has a wide range of musical interests, with nearly 175 years of combined performance experience. This extent of group expertise is unique in the Carillon world, affording a huge performance repertoire base to cater to a wide range of public musical tastes.

We consider that the above program represents the minimum appropriate given the importance of the Carillon in the National Capital and its international reputation.

However, we, together with the Director, were continuing to look for ways to build on our successes. Ideas that were in the planning stage included:

- composition competitions organised to encourage Australian and international composers to write new music specifically for this instrument
- programming of special recitals featuring such music composed
- photography and/or art competitions, featuring the heritage aspect of the National Carillon tower
- enhance recognition of the Carillon, with special events organised jointly (thus fostering good working relationships) with the diplomatic community
- build a recognised and certified Carillon education program by linking with one or more international Carillon school(s)

- submit another bid to host the triennial congress of the World Carillon Federation, with the support of the Carillon Society of Australia and the Commonwealth Government
- build a covered listening area close to the instrument so that Canberra residents and visitors could recognise the beauty and uniqueness of an outdoor concert instrument in their midst

The recent budget cuts have necessitated:

- a reduction in the regular recital program to 80-100 recitals p.a., shared between seven carillonists (on average, one recital or less per carillonist per month)
- discontinuation of all regular public tours and carillon demonstrations
- cancellation of all significant annual carillon events
- cessation of recitals and tuition by the Carillon Director as resources to fund his travel to Canberra are no longer available

This is clearly inadequate given the importance of the Carillon in national life. Without sufficient funding to maintain an appropriate yearly program (as outlined above), there are likely to be additional detriments:

- uncertainty over future funding may lead to attrition of current musical talent as Carillonists find other musical employment (being financially unable to wait for the funding situation to be resolved);
- deterioration of the instrument through insufficient regular playing
- deterioration of the professional artistic performance component because of the lack of performance opportunities
- damage to the standing of the Canberra instrument in the international carillon world
- reduced overall quality of the musical program
- the acoustic environment may be threatened by other events and urban development competing for the same 'airspace'. If this happens, it will be difficult for the Carillon to regain the standing it has in the international carillon world as an envied and well-supported location
- disappointment of Australian residents who are unable to hear or access what was a gift to the country;
- damage arising from the 'demotion' of the status of the Carillon, with the implicit denigration of the importance placed on this gift from Britain, intended as a symbolic reminder of the enduring ties between Australia and Britain

A better management model

If the National Carillon is to continue as a centre of international excellence and a significant contributor to the life of the national capital, it is essential that on-going support be provided for the professional and artistic development of the instrument. Long-term program stability is required to hone professional skills and the artistic endeavours of the players. Time, application and education are all required to bring these standards to the highest order required for public performance.

A management model is required which provides for:

- the necessary funding stability
- *consistent* promotion of carillon events to enhance public awareness of the instrument
- concentration on the Carillon as a concert musical instrument, instead of fighting the perpetual 'squeaky wheel' battles to secure funding for what should be a steady-state program
- better understanding of the acoustical requirements of the instrument and ensuring proper communication with planning agencies to prevent potentially damaging development encroachment upon the National Carillon

In our view, this could be best achieved through use of an identified appropriation item specifically for the National Carillon that is administered by the Carillon Director. The organisational location for the National Carillon would not be so important under this arrangement provided there was administrative support from the parent organisation. The Director would be responsible for developing the artistic direction for the Carillon and allocation of resources, having regard to the national significance of the instrument. We believe the importance of the Carillon warrants consideration of establishing a statutory basis for its operation and the duties of its Director. Consideration could also be given to the appropriate reporting lines for the Director and whether he should report directly to the Minister or to the Parliament.

Invitation to the Committee members

The carillonists would like to extend an invitation to each member of the Parliamentary Committee to view personally the heritage tower and hear this unique musical instrument. We are confident that such a tour experience will assist your appreciation of the National Carillon and its national significance.

Recommendations

We urge the Committee to embrace the opportunity offered by the current review to protect the National Carillon, to allow it to resume its rightful place as a nationally significant structure and musical instrument, and to ensure that whoever manages the Carillon understands its significance as an exceptional national asset. We believe that this can best be achieved through the following measures:

1. formally recognising the national significance of the Carillon in Commonwealth Legislation which sets out the role of the National Carillon and the duties of its Director;
 - the legislation governing the National War Memorial Carillon in Wellington, New Zealand and the Peace Tower Carillon in Ottawa, Canada provide precedents for this approach which could be readily translated to the Australian context; and
2. an identified Commonwealth appropriation that provides guaranteed funding for the National Carillon so that it can continue to function as a world-class instrument and meet its obligations as a national icon. This funding should cover:
 - appointment of Director with sufficient expertise and international standing, such as our current outstanding Director
 - a recital program which ensures that visitors to Canberra have the opportunity to hear the National Carillon in performance;
 - costs associated with tours which allow access to the National Carillon by the public
 - promotion of the carillon activities;
 - maintenance of physical structure of the National Carillon

Concluding Remarks

The Carillon Director and the current team of contract carillonists are professionals devoted to the instrument and committed to ensuring its proper use, promotion and development as an iconic asset of the Australian Government. The carillonists put in a great deal of effort and time outside of their contracted performances and organisational responsibilities to promote the Carillon and to educate themselves further musically, to learn about carillon history for the benefit of visitors, and to foster an appreciation for the National Carillon as a concert musical instrument. All current carillonists are members of the Carillon Society of Australia; many also maintain membership in other world carillon societies.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission and we hope you will make time to visit the National Carillon. We would be happy to elaborate on any of the issues raised in this submission if that would be helpful to the Committee.

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