



Mr Quinton Clements
Secretariat
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
Department of House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Email : jscncet@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Clements

SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AUTHORITY

The Cultural Facilities Corporation is pleased to provide the following submission to the Committee's Inquiry into the National Capital Authority (NCA). Thank you for providing an extension to the deadline to enable us to make a late submission.

Background

The Corporation is a statutory body of the ACT, with responsibility for managing a number of the Territory's major cultural assets. This role includes the provision of a wide range of cultural activities and programs at the following facilities and sites :

- Canberra Theatre Centre;
- Canberra Museum and Gallery;
- Nolan Gallery;
- Historic Places : Lanyon; Calthorpes' House and Mugga Mugga;
and
- Civic Square cultural precinct.

General comments

The Corporation acknowledges and supports the NCA's objectives of enhancing and promoting the status and special character of the national capital. Whilst our own role is focused more on Canberra as a community rather than as the national capital and seat of government, our mission - *we will enrich the cultural life of people in, and visitors to, the ACT and region* - complements and contributes to the NCA's objectives.

The Corporation has developed good working relationships with officers of the NCA on a range of matters, and appreciates this cooperative liaison.

Specific issues

1. Civic Library and Link Project

- 1.1 The Corporation is currently undertaking a major capital works project within the Civic Square cultural precinct, in the city centre of Canberra.
- 1.2 The project will involve demolishing the existing Link building between the Canberra Theatre and the Playhouse, and building a multi-level facility that will house both the Civic Library and also theatre patron services of the Canberra Theatre Centre (ticketing, cloakroom, bars, hospitality areas etc).
- 1.3 As a result of its Civic Square site, the project is subject to planning approval by the NCA.
- 1.4 National capital requirements, especially the restriction on the height of the development in order to preserve the view corridor on the City Hill – Mount Ainslie axis, have led to the need for extensive modifications to the original design, resulting in significant delays to the project and additional costs.
- 1.5 The project illustrates the complexities inherent in building territorial/municipal facilities in an area of major civic significance, yet subject to national capital planning controls.

2. NCA role in programming cultural activities and celebrations in the ACT

- 2.1 The Corporation notes that the NCA is pursuing an increasingly active role in programming cultural activities and celebrations in the ACT, including a range of outdoor, free-entry events.
- 2.2 We appreciate that the NCA is undertaking this role in keeping with its objective of enhancing perceptions of the national capital and promoting its role and special character amongst all Australians; for example, by national television coverage of major events such as the Christmas concert.
- 2.3 We note, however, that those attending such events will primarily be drawn from the ACT and region.
- 2.4 While we support the opportunity for Canberrans to gain access to a wide range of cultural activities, the increasing role of the NCA in events programming illustrates the need for close liaison with ACT cultural organisations, including the Corporation and artsACT.

2.5 Such liaison can help to ensure that events are programmed in a coordinated and mutually beneficial manner and that potential conflicts (e.g. timing clashes) can be avoided.

3. Blundells' Cottage

3.1 As noted above, the Corporation is responsible for historic houses including Lanyon and Mugga Mugga.

3.2 The NCA has responsibility for Blundells' Cottage, a cottage dating from about 1860, in the Central National Area.

3.3 These responsibilities are in many respects complementary; for example, both Mugga Mugga and Blundells' Cottage housed workers on the Duntroon Estate.

3.4 In view of this complementarity, close liaison between the NCA and the Corporation is important in the management of Blundells' Cottage and the programs associated with it, so that we can work together in interpreting and presenting the pre-Federation history of Canberra.

4. Stage 88 in Commonwealth Park

4.1 Stage 88 is an outdoor stage located within Commonwealth Park. It was constructed by the National Capital Development Commission with Bicentennial Program funding. In February 1988 the Commonwealth Government gave the use of Stage 88 to the then ACT Administration as the Commonwealth's bicentennial commemorative gift to the people of Canberra.

4.2 The Corporation has been managing Stage 88 on behalf of the Territory. However, legal ownership remains with the Commonwealth and the facility is located on land that is subject to approval by the NCA for usage. This has created complexities for those organisations or individuals, including community groups, seeking to use the facility, as most usages would involve approaching two bodies : the Corporation and the NCA.

4.3 We therefore welcome the NCA's recent offer to take over management of Stage 88, while maintaining community access to this facility.

4.4 This should result in coordinated management of Stage 88 and Commonwealth Park, and a more streamlined approach to usage of the facility.

The Corporation appreciates the opportunity to make this submission and would be happy to provide any further information in relation to the above points.

Yours sincerely

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Cultural Facilities Corporation

27 May 2003