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Joint Standing Committee on the  
National Capital and External Territories

Submission No: ..... 9 .....

Date Received: ..... 4/4/08 .....

Secretary: .....

Clerk Assistant (Committees)  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**SUBMISSION TO JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE  
NATIONAL CAPITAL AND EXTERNAL TERRITORIES.  
Inquiry into the role of the National Capital Authority.**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE TO WHICH THIS SUBMISSION IS  
RELEVANT:**

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.

**PERSON MAKING SUBMISSION:**

Mrs Sandra Whichelo. Interpretive volunteer at the National  
Capital Exhibition.

*Sandra Whichelo*

Sandra Whichelo  
4th April 2008

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**TERMS OF REFERENCE:**

No 5:- The effective national promotion of the National Capital...

I submit that the reduction of staff at the National Capital Exhibition (NCE) will have a severely detrimental effect on the education of the thousands of school students who visit Canberra annually.

Prior to the budget cuts to the National Capital Authority, there were at least two staff members and one volunteer available at the NCE to conduct tours for school groups. There is now no staff member available and the volunteers (often only one) are required simply to direct traffic as teachers try to conduct their groups through the exhibition.

**IT USED TO WORK THIS WAY:**

On arrival at the NCE, a group of 70 - 90 students was divided into two or three manageable groups, each with a fully trained guide. In a structured and orderly fashion each group would see a film and then be guided through the exhibition to hear the story of the stages in the development of the capital. Students were fascinated and teachers considered value had been added to their visit.

**IT NOW WORKS THIS WAY:**

On arrival, the students are divided into groups with their own teachers in charge. The teachers, to their dismay and disappointment, are handed a guide sheet and advised to read it out as they lead the students around. The volunteer(s) in attendance then must try to help the groups to coordinate their timing so they do not all arrive at the same point at the same time. It has taken the staff and volunteers a great deal of practice to develop the ability to time presentations to ensure that three groups of students can move smoothly through. Teachers who are

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not familiar with the layout of the exhibition or the quantity of information that can feasibly be imparted cannot be expected to handle this task. There is now disorder and confusion; the teachers are stressed and the students lose focus.

In an attempt to re-establish an educational environment, I ( and other volunteers) when on my own, and in sole control of a group of 90 students resort to dividing them into two groups of 45, which was formerly considered undesirable. While one group views a ten minute film, the volunteer rushes the other group through the exhibition and leaves it at the "sound and light show." The volunteer then rushes to the theatre to collect the other group and starts the tour. A few minutes later the volunteer has to leave this group briefly to conduct the earlier group to the theatre.

Obviously, this frantically-paced process is depriving the students of the benefits of a comprehensive educational experience.

Teachers used to feel that an early visit to the NCE was an essential start to their Canberra excursion because the students, from all over Australia, gained an understanding and appreciation of the amazing Australian achievement that Canberra represents. They completed their visit with a new sense of ownership of and pride in their National Capital. I believe there is a risk now that this highly educational attraction will be dropped from schools' itineraries.

The effect on experienced and intensively trained volunteers has been detrimental to maintaining their passion for their role as educators, and promoters of Canberra. I personally now feel that my role is becoming less rewarding and satisfying. If I or other volunteers resign the exhibition will revert to a minor museum.

I urge that consideration be given to restoring staff of the NCE to a level which can effectively maintain its status as the ACT Tourism Award winner in the category "Heritage and Cultural Tourism", as it did in 2005, 2006 and 2007.