

11<sup>th</sup> April 2008

The Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories  
Department of House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
AUSTRALIA

### **Inquiry into the role of the National Capital Authority**

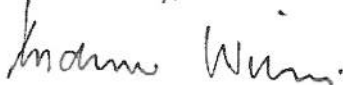
Dear Secretary

My experience of living in Canberra since 1964, (with 12 years in Sydney and overseas from 1980 to 1992,) emphasises the importance of leadership in the design of our built environment. For two reasons, the role of the National Capital Authority must be enhanced, not diminished:

- Canberra is among the few cities in the world in which the built environment is conceived by design professionals and the results surpass the ordinary. Over years of my experience, Federal Government commitment to the design of the built environment has lead to delightful and sustainable outcomes through the existence of:
  - o The National Capital Development Commission (approximately 1958 to 1988)
  - o Australian Construction Services and its previous forms – The Commonwealth Department of Housing and Construction and The Department of Works (until approximately 1994) and briefly,
  - o The Department of Urban and Regional Development approximately (1972 to 1976)
- Without Federal Government leadership of the design of the built environment, Australia is left with public bodies that are:
  - o *Inexpert in conceiving of public works.* Current, common building industry experience is that, 'briefs' – a statement of 'what' is to be provided - either do not state or, poorly and inaccurately state or insufficiently elaborate on 'what' is required. A 'brief' must outline the public, owner and user's requirements.
  - o *Inexpert in procuring public works.* Current experience is that, the 'contract conditions of engagement' – the agreement in which 'what' is to be provided in return for, usually remuneration - are full of what will be done to the built environment designer should they fail to provide 'what' is required while stating little about 'what' is required.
  - o *Inexpert in budgeting of public works.* Current experience is that, those who cannot brief 'what' is required, cannot accurately forecast the anticipated cost.
  - o *Inexpert in managing public facilities.* Despite the enormous effort by the building industry in sustainable design outcomes, facility managers without expertise, fail to operate the built environment to achieve its intended sustainable outcomes.

Rather than be the Australian Government that disbanded the last expert public body with the skill to acquire a better than the ordinary and a sustainable built environment, the National Capital Authority, please be the first Australian Government for many years to value the role of built environment design expertise. Please rebuild expertise in public instrumentalities to facilitate leadership in the design of a sustainable built environment. Please do not continue to dismantle it. I look forward to elaborating on this submission to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,



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