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The Secretary
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament of Australia
Parliament House
CANBERRA 2600
via email at:
pwc@aph.gov.au

Submission No. 04

(ABC Melbourne)

Date: 19/04/13

SUBMISSION TO PARLIAMENTARY WORKS COMMITTEE-CONSOLIDATION OF ABC MELBOURNE

I write in regard to the Committee's inquiry into the proposed consolidation of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) Melbourne operations associated with the site at 102- 118 Sturt Street Southbank.

I do so as the State Parliament representative for the District of Albert Park which includes this area of Southbank.

I write in support of the proposed development.

I do so not just for the many obvious reasons of the need to consolidate the Melbourne operations of the ABC from its currently inadequate Elsternwick operations site to a more modern and efficient location. I do so but because this proposed project takes into account the changing nature of communications and arts performances and the need to provide both suitable venues and broadcast services for such evolution.

These new collaborations in arts and performance will increase the opportunities for the co-operation of different media forms that will flow from their consolidation into a suitable venue.

Equally, the state of the Elsternwick facilities are such that the ABC is faced with a choice of significant investment in them to bring them up to a suitable standard for production, performance and occupational health and safety - or look to the same if not better outcomes by investing in the purpose built facilities in Sturt Street. I would argue that long term benefits accrue from the investment in Sturt Street as opposed to trying to bring Elsternwick facilities up to scratch. I suspect an analysis of the relative costs and benefits of the two sites would support the consolidation in Southbank

I support the investment and development of Sturt Street by the ABC as it both fulfils the ABC needs in regards production, creativity, greater flexibility of staff and other resources, whilst also ensuring that the wider Sturt Street Arts precinct in Melbourne continues to develop as Australia's leading creative and artistic precinct.

The leading role the ABC plays in the precinct through its significant investment in arts, cultural industries and related activities makes it a driving force in the precinct. Indeed, the ABC is arguably the main investor in the cultural and artistic precinct. This anchor investment has led to numerous other State, Federal and private investments from theatre, education, multimedia, digital arts development, visual arts and a host of other arts and cultural sectors operating in the precinct.

As the Australia Government's recent Creative Australia policy has shown, the ABC is a leading investor in the creative and innovative economy and arts fields generally. This investment in Sturt Street will only further enhance this position.

The investment direction of the precinct will look to this key ABC controlled site as being the next significant project to the area. It is to be expected that the current precinct wide development plan being undertaken by the Victorian Government will look to lever off the ABC proposed development.

I would also suggest that the development aligns with the City of Melbourne's Southbank Structure Plan and long term vision for the area as a dynamic art and cultural industries led precinct of national and international standing. That the arts and cultural sectors contribution also drives strong interests from the residential community of Southbank and surrounding communities should be seen as a further factor shaping the Government's mind on supporting this investment. The 102 - 118 Sturt Street investment will be a significant contribution in the emerging development of Sturt Street that will be welcomed by the local business, arts and cultural industries and the residents of the area.

From material available to me it would also meet the ABCs strategic and long term goals.

From the material available the building merits support as it will also ensure a vibrant street focus of activity that will be a significant factor in the development. This - subject to ensuring proper funding - will meet the needs of the ABC and the broader precinct.

Given the area is well served by Public Transport the one suggestion I would respectfully make to the Committee is to examine the impact that development in particular and growth more generally in the area is having on the Tram network and related infrastructure. I would submit that the Committee should call upon the Victorian Government, Yarra Trams and the Melbourne City Council to invest in new safer, more accessible "Super Stops" for Trams and related tram infrastructure that would variously meet the growing needs of commuters, be safer and help the State meet its targets on access for disability access to Public transport in the area.

Traffic congestion in the area is becoming markedly worse as Melbourne's lack of investment in a 21st Century Public transport network forces an ever greater reliance on private car use. Therefore any assistance to be leant to the expansion and modernisation of Public transport in the precinct would be a sensible and responsible position for the Australian Government and the ABC to take.

I thank the committee for the opportunity for the opportunity and look forward to learning of your support for this significant investment.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Foley MP
State Labor Member for Albert Park