



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

**JOINT PARLIAMENTARY
COMMITTEE**

on

PUBLIC WORKS

**Reference: National Film and Sound Archives headquarters accommodation,
Canberra**

CANBERRA

Tuesday, 19 December 1995

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

CANBERRA

WITNESSES

**BRENT, Mr Ron, Director, National Film and Sound Archive, McCoy Circuit, Acton,
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**HODGE, Mr John Gilmour, Project Manager, Australian Construction Services,
Cirius Building, Furzer Street, Phillip, Australian Capital Territory 2606 3**

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**HYNDES, Ms Danielle, Member of Council, ACT Heritage Council, National Trust of
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**RODDA, Mr Douglas James, Manager, Support Services, National Film and Sound
Archive, McCoy Circuit, Acton, Australian Capital Territory 2601 3**

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**ROSENBAUER, Mr Robert William, Assistant General Manager, Australian
Construction Services, 169 Gladstone Street, Fyshwick, Australian Capital Territory**

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**TAYLOR, Dr Stuart Ross, Chair, Precinct and Building Committee, Australian
Academy of Science, Ian Potter House, Gordon Street, Acton, Australian Capital
Territory 60**

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

National Film and Sound Archive headquarters accommodation, Canberra

CANBERRA

Tuesday, 19 December 1995

Present

Mr Hollis (Chair)

Senator BurnsMr Andrew

Senator CalvertMr Braithwaite

Mr Humphreys

The committee met at 2.00 p.m.

Mr Hollis took the chair.

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing into the proposed National Film and Sound Archive headquarters accommodation, Canberra. This project was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report by the House of Representatives on 24 October 1995 at an estimated out-turn cost of \$12.4 million.

In accordance with subsection 17(3) of the Public Works Committee Act 1969:

- (3) In considering and reporting on a public work, the committee shall have regard to -
- (a) the stated purpose of the work and its suitability for that purpose;
 - (b) the necessity for, or the advisability of, carrying out the work;
 - (c) the most effective use that can be made, in the carrying out of the work, of the moneys to be expended on the work;
 - (d) where the work purports to be of a revenue-producing character, the amount of revenue that it may reasonably be expected to produce; and
 - (e) the present and prospective public value of the work.

This morning the committee inspected the National Film and Sound Archive headquarters building at Acton, the site proposed for the works and the archive's sound and light show at the provisional Parliament House. This afternoon the committee will hear evidence from: the National Film and Sound Archive; Australian Construction Services; the Australian Academy of Science; and the ACT Heritage Council.

BRENT, Mr Ron, Director, National Film and Sound Archive, McCoy Circuit, Acton, Australian Capital Territory 2601

RODDA, Mr Douglas James, Manager, Support Services, National Film and Sound Archive, McCoy Circuit, Acton, Australian Capital Territory 2601

HODGE, Mr John Gilmour, Project Manager, Australian Construction Services, Cirius Building, Furzer Street, Phillip, Australian Capital Territory 2606

ROSENBAUER, Mr Robert William, Assistant General Manager, Australian Construction Services, 169 Gladstone Street, Fyshwick, Australian Capital Territory 2609

CHAIR—Welcome. The committee has received a submission from the National Film and Sound Archive dated 22 September 1995 and a supplementary submission containing amendments dated December 1995. Are there any further amendments?

Mr Brent—No, there are not.

CHAIR—It is proposed that the submission as amended be received as evidence. Is it the wish of the committee that the document be incorporated in the transcript of evidence? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

The submission read as follows—

CHAIR—Would you now care to read your summary statement before the committee proceeds to questions.

Mr Brent—This summary statement relates to the proposed construction of a two-storey building on section 21, Acton, ACT for occupancy by the National Film and Sound Archive. The proposal is sponsored by the Department of Communications and the Arts with technical support from Australian Construction Services.

The National Film and Sound Archive, which I will refer to as the NFSA, has as its charter the development, preservation and promotion of the national collection of recorded moving images and sound materials.

The archive is the only institution in Australia that has a brief to collect audiovisual material other than those of its own creation. This heritage material is the core of our society—our television, radio, movies, documentaries, news and current affairs.

The archive's public, technical and administrative functions are housed at Acton in the existing headquarters building and residence and in a number of temporary demountable buildings. Its collections are housed in a number of storage vaults at Mitchell, ACT. The regional offices of the archive are located in Sydney and Melbourne.

The existing buildings at Acton are suitable for public functions of the archive but are inadequate for its administrative and specialist technical facilities. The existing basement technical facilities are inefficient and do not satisfy current occupational health and safety standards.

The current use of the gallery space for office and technical accommodation is at odds with the building's heritage significance and limits the space available for public exhibitions. The construction of demountable buildings has compromised the site's heritage significance and is not consistent with the intentions of the national capital plan.

These inadequacies were recognised in the Commonwealth government's October 1994 Creative Nation policy statement which announced that, 'The Government will provide the Archive with funding to extend its accommodation and facilities and refurbish its Heritage listed headquarters building.' This initiative will provide safe, secure and suitable facilities and accommodation for the NFSA and improve access to its collections by television and filmmakers and by all Australians.

The archive's objectives for the project are: to provide accommodation which is safe, secure, efficient and effective; satisfies the archive's occupational health and safety obligations; improves public access to the archive's collections; is consistent with the conservation plan for the existing buildings and site and with the national capital plan; and enhances the heritage value of the existing buildings on the site.

The current occupation of the existing building is unacceptable on health and safety grounds and undesirable on operational efficiency and heritage grounds. The continuation of the existing arrangement—the 'do nothing option'—is not sustainable. Six alternatives to the current proposal have been considered but are not preferred.

I now turn to the description of the proposal. The existing headquarters building will be retained and will continue to house the public functions of the archive. The existing south gallery fit-out will be removed and the gallery will be refurbished for use as an exhibition space, consistent with the conservation plan. The existing plant and toilet areas abutting the west wall of the courtyard will be demolished and minor consequential

refurbishment of parts of the ground floor will be carried out.

The existing residence will be retained and will house the archive's corporate relations branch. The existing demountable buildings, metal-clad storage buildings and nitrate vault will be demolished. A new two-storey building will be constructed to the north-west of the existing headquarters building to house the archive's administrative and technical functions. The new building will have a gross floor area of approximately 3,800 square metres, and it will include office areas, technical areas, meeting rooms and amenities, and associated site works, engineering services and landscape.

The existing permanent car park will be retained with minor modifications. The new permanent on-site parking will be provided for approximately 25 cars and five tourist coaches. Subject to parliamentary approval, it is intended that contract documents will be completed to allow construction to commence in June 1996, with the whole of the works to be completed by mid-August 1997.

The limit of cost estimate for the project at September 1995 prices is \$12.447 million, including construction allowances and professional fees. The proposal complies with the provisions of the national capital plan. Building setbacks, clearances, heights and materials have been developed in consultation with the National Capital Planning Authority and agreed with by the authority. A draft development control plan is attached to the NCPA's submission. Parking and traffic measures are being designed in accordance with the requirements of the National Capital Planning Authority and the ACT Planning Authority. That is the end of the summary statement.

CHAIR—What is the legal status of the Film and Sound Archive? It is not a statutory body, is it?

Mr Brent—No, it is not. Legally, the status is that it is simply a division within the Department of Communications and the Arts. However, there is a clear understanding that the organisation is to become a statutory authority, and this has been approved by government. Pending the completion of that process, the organisation operates as though it were a statutory authority: it has a separate budget appropriation, its administration is effectively distinct from that of the department, and it has a governing council which has been appointed to oversee its operations.

CHAIR—We are proposing to spend over \$12 million. How confident are you that that legislation will go ahead to make sure that it is a statutory body?

Mr Brent—That is a very difficult question for me to answer. The critical tests are things such as the parliamentary timetable and the resolution of issues relating to sales tax status. It is critical to understand that the statutory authority status of the organisation would not affect the implementation of the project. For example, we currently separately administer all the property that is our responsibility and that we occupy. That would also apply to the new building that is proposed.

CHAIR—In your summary statement you said that six sites were proposed. Are you confident that the site at Acton is the best possible site?

Mr Brent—Yes. There are a couple of considerations that, to my mind, make that reasonably clear cut. Firstly, we already own the land. Any other proposal will require the purchase of additional land and will immediately add significantly to the cost. Secondly, we have a major public visitation function; that is, we run an exhibition and visitors come

to the site. The existing building is ideal for that purpose, and it would be very difficult to find another site that would be suitable. Thirdly, the bringing together of all the facilities on a single site has significant advantages and, in the longer term, efficiency gains. Given those three factors, the existing site and the extension as proposed were a markedly superior option to the others considered.

CHAIR—All the facilities are not going to be on that site, are they? You are still going to have the vaults at Mitchell.

Mr Brent—Yes; I should have been more specific. What I had in mind was all the facilities that require staff operations. There is a very small group of people who administer the vaults and take things in and out, but all other functions of the archive are run from this building—except the regional offices, which are separate.

CHAIR—Some people have raised with the committee the question of car parking. Did you say in your summary statement that there would be a car park for 25 cars and four coaches?

Mr Brent—Five coaches. We will retain the existing car park which I think has 44 spaces in it. We will build a new space for five coaches and for another 25 cars. The reason for the new space is that coach parking is required because 80 per cent of our visitors come by coach. The vast majority of those visitors are school children and it therefore becomes necessary, for safety and security and effective operations, that the coaches should be able to park proximate to the front entrance of the building. The car parking spaces are required first because we need to move the existing disabled persons car parking close to the back of the new building where the new and improved disabled access to the entire building will begin. Secondly, we have been required by the National Capital Planning Authority to provide on-site parking. We are providing at the minimum the on-site parking required by the National Capital Planning Authority.

CHAIR—Is that parking adequate? Do staff and visitors use it?

Mr Brent—Staff and visitors. The short answer is that it is not adequate. We would anticipate a higher demand than will be provided on site. However, there are a large number of car parking areas in the relatively immediate vicinity, most of which are significantly underutilised. In particular, what I have in mind on that is opposite the archive on the other side of McCoy Circuit, and there are a number between the archive and the city that are underutilised. There is also a substantial amount of on-street parking in the vicinity.

Senator CALVERT—I was rather taken by the building this morning. I note that in your confidential cost estimates there is an amount for refurbishment. What is the state of the building? Have you had it checked out?

Mr Brent—Yes. We have had a very thorough life cycle study done of the building. That has identified a 15-year plan for maintenance and ongoing repairs for the existing building. That involves a figure of some \$5 million that will have to be spent over that 15-year period. In addition, there will be some items that will not be funded by that. That is included in the figure that you have there. It includes things like the refurbishment of the south gallery, which is not part of the maintenance of the building. There are other building refurbishment items that we would like to institute more quickly but which will probably have to take a little longer because of the funding that is available

for that refurbishment. By that I have in mind things like the airconditioning above the gallery skylight. To do something to bring that skylight back to its heritage standard is not included in the new proposal, nor in the maintenance 15-year life cycle study program, and it will have to be fitted into the minor capital works that the archive will be doing.

Senator CALVERT—But there have been no major faults found with the building as such?

Mr Brent—No major structural faults. There is a series of faults but they are all minor and most of them have been rectified. Those include, for instance, leaks, rising damp and so on.

Senator CALVERT—So the £66,000 they spent on it back in 1929 was money well spent?

Mr Brent—I thought it was £93,000. However much it was—

Senator CALVERT—I have been looking through this rather quaint report of the Standing Committee on Public Works in 1929. They used to charge for the reports in those days—one shilling and eight pence.

CHAIR—Do not give us any ideas, Senator Calvert.

Senator CALVERT—Once all the new proposals come to fruition what sorts of efficiencies do you think they will achieve?

Mr Brent—It is very hard to be too specific about that. What I would probably be able to do more effectively is identify the inefficiencies that we will be able to overcome. Most significant is the inefficiency of having our existing staff spread out amongst a number of buildings, most of which have either occupational health and safety or fire safety problems, and all of which have significant problems in terms of maintaining the reasonably stringent air quality standards we require for the work we do. The first gain will be to make the operations more effective because all of our staff will be in a single building. We will not be susceptible to the weather conditions outside if we wish to move film from one part of our process to another.

The second gain will be that the conditions maintained in the building will meet our requirements and we will not have to be particularly stringent, as we are at the moment, about how long film sits in laboratories or outside laboratories. There will be greater efficiencies in not having to move film back to vaults as regularly.

Further efficiencies will be gained in terms of the work flows in that materials can flow more effectively from one space to the next. There will also be efficiencies in terms of the quality of the air that we will be able to deliver and therefore the quality of the product that we will be able to deliver in terms of repaired and restored film and copied film. That gives a broad overview of the sorts of gains there are to be made.

Senator CALVERT—You provide a very important entertainment value for Canberra with your exhibition and all the rest of it. With the new buildings being erected and the reorganising of the old building, is it likely that you will have a bigger and better show?

Mr Brent—Yes. The exhibition space available to us will be somewhat more than double. We will gain the second gallery, the south gallery, that you saw this morning. At the moment we are only using the north gallery. In addition, a number of the rooms along the front of the building that are used as offices but were designed for a range of

purposes, generally public functions, will be able to be recovered so that we can use those as seminar and lecture rooms or for further exhibition.

Senator CALVERT—One reason why this has all been brought about concerns occupational health and safety. You explained to us this morning that you have got quite a large amount of nitrate film and that if it catches alight you cannot put it out because it creates its own oxygen.

Mr Brent—Correct.

Senator CALVERT—Have you got any concerns about the design of the new building, and have you had built into your proposal things that will control any fires and alleviate the concerns of the Commonwealth Fire Board?

Mr Brent—The work to date has been carried out in close consultation with both the chief fire officer of the Department of Administrative Services and the ACT fire authorities. We have in the building a nitrate vault—which will replace the existing bunker on site—which will be in the main building and, therefore, more readily accessible. It will be built to the American standard, a very stringent standard, for the safe storage of these materials. We are being exceedingly stringent about nitrate film. In addition, the entire building is going to be designed to ensure that the necessary safety requirements are met for general fire safety.

Mr ANDREW—What was evident from both the evidence presented to us and what we saw this morning was that it is currently difficult to manage the gallery as gallery managers would wish because of the dislocation. If we were to approve the proposal currently before us, there would still be some dislocation, as referred to by the chairman, by reason of the fact that the Mitchell vaults still hold some of the archival material. Given the inflammable nature of the material and the fact that if there were even a minor accident, ignition could produce disastrous results for not only the personnel involved but also the archival material, is there any risk in the transport of this material from the vaults to the administrative centre?

Mr Brent—The short answer to that is: yes, there is a risk. But there are a number of things that we have undertaken to manage that risk. The first point is that the vaults that hold the bulk of this material have been very carefully designed under the most absolutely stringent fire safety requirements, including small rooms, thick fireproof walls, special fireproof doors and explosion ports in the ceilings. It is the sort of construction that could not be contemplated on our headquarters site. That material does have to be housed separately.

The second point is that the bulk of our collection is not nitrate film; it is either acetate film or polyester film which actually does not burn very readily at all and is not a dangerous good. In moving the nitrate material there is a danger. All of our staff who move nitrate material in any bulk—that is, more than a very few cans—are required to, and do have, dangerous goods certification following specific training to allow them to handle that material. In addition, the material is only ever transported in small quantities, which is why we have a secondary bunker in the new building. We have a special facility to house larger volumes of the material on site so that when larger volumes are required for some particular restoration purpose, it can be shipped to the Canberra site in small loads.

Mr ANDREW—Mr Brent, you said there is some risk involved. The risk involved also concerns us because of the damage that was done to the archival material, as well as the occupational health and safety concerns. Why couldn't it be contemplated to build some sort of vault storage on site?

Mr Brent—For the other material, I guess, it is the size of the facilities that we are talking about. The three warehouses that we occupy in Mitchell are very large and in practical terms just would not fit on this site; they would tower the existing building.

Mr ANDREW—I had not appreciated the enormity of that. I had envisaged a bank vault.

Mr Brent—No, this is over a million film and sound carriers; it is a lot of material. The nitrate vaults are somewhat smaller because we have only about 12 million feet, which is about 12,000 cans of nitrate—each can being perhaps 12 inches across; that is to try to give it some dimension. The problem with that vault is that it is a hazardous site. It is at the moment on a site on its own. The vaults are three-quarters buried under the ground.

I think it would be unwise to contemplate a facility like that on the headquarters site. It would certainly take up significant space not just for the vault itself but also for the surrounding clearance that is necessary, because of the dangerous nature of the goods inside, and the construction. In addition the vault in Mitchell has, I think, about one dozen chimneys poking out the top which are explosion ports. If any vault does catch alight, the explosion will be carried upwards and outwards rather than into the vaults on either side. A series of chimneys would probably not be the right sort of amenity to have around a heritage building.

Mr ANDREW—But the sheer volume of material is what makes it impractical?

Mr Brent—Yes. That is the thing, as the bottom line, that makes it impossible to contemplate having that on this site.

Mr ANDREW—I presume that while this material is hazardous there is no possibility of self-ignition. It would need an outside ignition source to make it ignite?

Mr Brent—I have just recently had discussions with the head of the British archive, who is possibly the world's leading authority on the flammability of this material. It can spontaneously combust.

Mr ANDREW—That is what I wanted; thank you.

Mr Brent—But it requires the temperature of the materials to reach roughly 70 degrees. To do that, the material must stay in an overheated environment for an extended period. For instance, an experiment conducted in England required the material to be sat in a black plastic bag in hot sunshine for three weeks.

Mr ANDREW—In England?

Mr Brent—In England.

CHAIR—Impossible.

Mr Brent—Exactly. Any outside force—a spark, for instance, which is one of the many causes of the nitrate fires that have existed around the world—is the main cause. But the French nitrate fire—and there have been major fires of nitrate film in France, England, Germany, Sweden, Brazil and the United States—occurred because film was left out in the sun for an extended period. But it requires pretty careless handling in the

extreme to actually set up those circumstances. Certainly having the film just sitting around at 30 degrees centigrade on a hot day will not cause it to spontaneously combust.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—What is the anticipated use of the residence in the new system of things?

Mr Brent—It will be office space for one of the branches in the archive. It will house approximately 15 people in office accommodation.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—Is it used at the moment?

Mr Brent—Yes, it is currently used as office accommodation.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—So there is not going to be any change in staff numbers or any renovations done there?

Mr Brent—There will be a slight reduction in staff numbers. Our staff are reasonably closely packed there. There will be a slight reduction; but, otherwise, it will be the same sort of usage as it is currently.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—I think we can say that the efficiency will be vastly improved. What about staff numbers in the new complex?

Mr Brent—The anticipation is that we will not have any increase or decrease in the staff numbers. The facility is designed so that there is some small capacity for increased staff numbers, but we are talking about a very small capacity. There is also in the conservation plan another envelope described on the conservation plan in which we could build another structure, which is essentially a symmetrical site that mirrors the existing residence, should further accommodation be required by some significant increase in staff in the future.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—Does the new building double the capacity that you have at the moment?

Mr Brent—No. The net outcome is not a dramatic increase in total capacity. We will be losing the demountable buildings on the site and we will also be vacating the south gallery to exhibition space and vacating the basements to low grade storage. The net result is an increase from about 5,800 to about 6,800 square metres. Therefore, there is an increase of about 1,000 square metres. This roughly reflects the use of the south gallery as exhibition space and the basements as low grade storage. Therefore, for staff accommodation there is not a substantial change.

Senator BURNS—But that 5,800 includes the demountables.

Mr Brent—That is correct.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—There was some concern by the traffic authorities that it might become a thoroughfare or that it might be an unsafe place to travel through.

Mr Brent—We had a traffic study done of the site and the surrounding areas in consultation with some of our neighbours. I am aware that the National Academy of Science has concerns about some of the options that the study has proposed. Those are concerns that we would fully support. We would not want to see any change in traffic arrangements that would increase the amount of through traffic. We would envisage that in the future the precinct would be one in which pedestrians could move comfortably and through traffic could be kept to a minimum but one in which traffic access to our site and the surrounding sites could be maintained. We would strongly endorse the concerns of the National Academy of Science about not creating through traffic in this zone.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—At the moment, the public access will be through the main building?

Mr Brent—That is correct, with the exception of disabled access which will be through the ramp at the back of the new building. We have been unable to erect an effective or sensible disabled ramp for the existing building without compromising heritage standards.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—So you will use the main building for display purposes. It will accommodate the shop and all the activities with regard to the public. The back area will accommodate staff working areas—

Mr Brent—And laboratories.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—It makes me wonder why your office will be on the second floor at the rear of the building.

Mr Brent—I guess to keep me out of the way. That raises a couple of factors. One is that the front of the main building, which is where my office is currently located, is intended to be public space. We put about 40,000 people, mainly school children, through an education program. We have one lecture hall that we use for that, and timetabling that number of people through one space is very difficult. I would envisage that the space now occupied by my office and that of the deputy director would become a small lecture room for about 50 people. Once we go to the new building, the intention is to keep the ground floor principally for the less flexible scientific facilities, laboratories and so on. The top floor would be for the more flexible partitioned offices. So the net result is that I will end up at the back of the top floor.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—You might recall that our last inquiry received a lot of public interest. One of the problems raised by the contractors was that a lump sum contract was going to be used as opposed to project management, which they believed would have been a better approach. How do you intend to do the construction?

Mr Rosenbauer—We are fully aware of the thoughts of the local Master Builders Association. It has to be realised that the size of this contract is not particularly large. The actual building works are about \$10 million. Our intention would be to go through normal processes of advertising seeking expressions of interest from those builders wishing to be considered. We would short-list them according to the qualification criteria. We would certainly be looking to take on one or two of the local constructors. At the end of the day, we would still find ourselves wanting to engage in a lump sum contract. As I say, this is not a large project. It is not like the previous projects which have been before the committee. We would see that as being the appropriate way forward. It would involve less administration and less risk for both parties.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—One of the other complaints that the Master Builders Association had in connection with AEM was that there was a requirement for a rather large up-front guarantee to be paid. It was not a bank guarantee; it had to be paid in cash. Is there any suggestion that this would be let on a basis whereby there would be an excessive guarantee that would make it impossible for the smaller builders to look at it?

Mr Rosenbauer—The recommendation that Australian Construction Services makes to its clients, which is in line with normal Commonwealth policy, is to seek a guarantee from the proposed contractor in the order of five per cent of the contract value.

That is in line with AEM's intention on the previous projects. We do not see that as being a great impost on a contractor—five per cent of \$10 million. He does not have to front up with that amount of money; he has to be guaranteed by an unconditional bank guarantee. We think that is more than a reasonable approach. We are taking a risk as well. I am sure you would agree that we would not want to take on a number of contractors who perhaps cannot raise the five per cent. We are looking for security in the situation, like they are.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—But that would still be \$500,000 which would preclude some contractors who might feel as though they had the technical base but did not have the financial base.

Mr Rosenbauer—I would suggest that a constructor envisaging himself undertaking this construction who could not raise half a million dollars worth of financial guarantee would not be a suitable organisation that we would want to do business with.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—Perhaps you ought to go back and speak to the Master Builders Association again, because I had a talk to them privately in connection with this matter. You are right that it is a smaller program. The other was in excess of five per cent on a lot larger contract. But there is a concern amongst the building industry that you might deny somebody who has the technical competence and is quality assured from doing a job because of raising the stakes too high on the guarantee.

Mr Rosenbauer—An observation might be that the style of contracting in the ACT has been on what they have named as a project management basis. It is not a style that we have brought ourselves to over the years. It leaves a situation in which from day one you really do not know where you are going to end up with at cost. We do not feel that, in the main, the constructors are taking sufficient risk in that situation. The risk is at large with the principal to the contract. We have a lot of problems just with the philosophy that the local MBA is pushing at this particular time. You might note that, with the other larger constructions proposed in Canberra—apart from perhaps AEM rethinking its situation—nobody else is going down the track that the MBA is looking for them to go down.

Senator BURNS—In the building industry, is there a history of people going out of business, taking risks and not having the right cash flow or is it just a really stable industry where no-one goes out of business, where no-one bids big and has nothing to back it up? What does occur in the building industry?

Mr Rosenbauer—It is a peculiar industry. The one thing you must note about the industry is that it is totally uncapitalised. It really does not have any money in the bank. Most of the constructors in this country, apart from some recent buy-outs from overseas interests, have got no substantial financial backing in a number of areas. The risk is running with the principal on many occasions. One would have to go on and say that the incidence of contractors becoming insolvent is relatively light. We do not have a large incidence of contractors going broke—

Senator BURNS—That is in Canberra?

Mr Rosenbauer—In Canberra or anywhere else in Australia. The Commonwealth and the state governments have now put in place procedures. We do go through a process which is seen to be perhaps too rigid.

Senator BURNS—The question I asked a while ago would have been general, not

just the work you do. I read all the time about people going broke and registering under a new name or their wife's name.

Mr Rosenbauer—Yes, that is quite an occurrence.

Senator BURNS—But because of your process you find that your record is much better than the general record.

Mr Rosenbauer—We think that we do have a better record. A particular interest at this time is security of payment in that all workmen, subcontractors and suppliers at the end of the day should receive an entitlement for the payment they have carried over the last month. We have procedures in place to ensure that, before we make a progress payment on a monthly basis, the onus is on the contractor to prove that all his creditors have been paid up. We are not experiencing that many difficulties at this time.

Senator BURNS—If you decided to go into business as a subcontractor yourself, would you think it is onerous to have to guarantee five per cent?

Mr Rosenbauer—Put it this way: we do not find that as a general comment or a complaint around the country. We are finding that as a comment out of Canberra at this time. As I say, the approach taken by the ACT building industry has been a much softer one, we would suggest, than the other capital cities.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—But you can understand their concern, particularly with bigger contracts. While I would like to think that this committee is trying to get small business, small contractors and subcontractors involved, a big guarantee on a big job means that it is only available to a national contractor of a big size, and you are denying people that opportunity underneath. So they do have a complaint, don't they?

Mr Rosenbauer—Well, perhaps thinking of it another way, the contractor himself would not contribute in excess of 15 per cent as to the cost of the works. Eighty-five per cent of the work is carried out by subcontractors, and they will not be denied under this process. The subcontracting industry in the ACT will have a full opportunity to work for whoever is the main contractor.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—Could you tell the committee how you intend to guarantee that the subcontractors are paid?

Mr Rosenbauer—We have, along with our other national affiliates in the public works arena, adopted a form of contract called Australian standard 2124 in that there is a requirement that, each time before the contractor is paid, he has to certify that he has paid up all those to whom he owed money for work carried out over the previous construction time of one month.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—So, before the contractor gets the next contract payment, he has to guarantee that people have been paid out of the previous contract term.

Mr Rosenbauer—We have a requirement that he produces a bit of paper and certifies—puts a statutory declaration to it—that he has paid his subcontractors and his suppliers in that time period.

Senator BURNS—Some of these processes that you talk about were put in place to guarantee you get the job finished too, weren't they?

Mr Rosenbauer—Yes, we have that point of view that it is public money. We have to put in the necessary safeguards to ensure that at the end of the day we do receive value for money. We do not have the problems of contractors defaulting. Every time we

get a defaulting contract—we do have one now and again—a lot of money is paid out. A job sits still for six or nine months because people have not been paid. We have paid the main contractor, but the subcontractors have not been paid in previous times; we cannot get the job moving; and the unions become involved because workmen have not been paid. We are trying to do everything we can to overcome that sort of situation.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—Is quality assurance high on your list of requirements as far as a contractor is concerned?

Mr Rosenbauer—You might say quality assurance has now become the norm in Australia in the building and construction industry. It would be a mandatory requirement for the constructor to have appropriate quality assurance processes and procedures in place before we would even think about engaging him.

Senator BURNS—But you are being pretty generous in saying that many contractors are conscious about quality assurance, surely. I know there is a tendency there—and I am not talking about you as managers of the project not wanting that to be in place—but my experience is that there are still a lot of people out there who just want to get the job done as cheaply as they can, get as much for it and walk away.

Mr Rosenbauer—Yes, that might be an observation you could make. Since 1988, through Australian Construction Services in the Department of Administrative Services, we feel that we have been leaders in introducing quality assurance. We have encouraged it and now we do have a mandatory requirement. It is the old problem that you can take a horse to water but you cannot make him drink.

Senator BURNS—If you hold him there long enough, you will.

Mr Rosenbauer—Perhaps if his head is under the water at times it may serve some purpose, but it is a difficulty. The actual quality of the product is in our minds.

Senator BURNS—It is very important.

Senator CALVERT—You mentioned that you were going to use Canberra labour as much as possible and all the rest of it. Given the fact that at about the same time you will have the Russell offices and the AGSO going ahead, in reality will that not soak up a lot of the subcontractors and other contractors around Canberra and it might increase the cost? I mean, if you do not have the availability of construction people, isn't there a possibility that might shove the cost up?

Mr Rosenbauer—I would have to go back and say that this is not a large project.

Senator CALVERT—It would be a large project in Hobart—\$10 million—I can tell you.

Mr Rosenbauer—It is envisaged that this project will have about 100 man years of work on site with a peak labour force of between 180 and 200 people. It will also engender similar numbers of people off site. We will be very mindful of what is happening in the marketplace.

As previously mentioned, we have a program starting in June next year and finishing in August 1997 where we will not go into the marketplace while anybody else is there. We will stagger it to a number of months, if possible. We would envisage in any circumstance that a lot of this construction project would come out of Sydney and Melbourne. The major elements of it are precast, and you have seen some of the other aspects. It is a complex building in many ways. There is about 35 per cent of office space

and 65 per cent of specialised areas of laboratories and other specialist activities. A lot of that would have come out of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane anyway. We would see the impact of this project being very minimal on the total scene.

Mr HUMPHREYS—I want to go back to your lump sum fixed time contract. I do not recall ACS coming before the committee previously and saying it was going to operate in this fashion.

Mr Rosenbauer—I have been in Australian Construction Services for some 15 years and I would say it is the norm.

Mr HUMPHREYS—So you do this all the time?

Mr Rosenbauer—This is our preferred method of operation. When we are going to undertake projects and there are other goals at stake, such as we want to build them quickly or we want flexibility or we are faced with a repetitious situation, we adopt other delivery methods, other forms of contracts. We can go into construction management where we let on a trade by trade basis. This means we have the flexibility to change our mind and not let the majority of contracts at the time but down the track. We get a project manager which the ACT master builders requires us to do. That is highly geared for us in terms of manpower but in terms of management it is not a cheap way to undertake a construction. We could not afford to undertake that sort of role with the commission we work under.

Mr HUMPHREYS—Can you give me an example of a contract like this?

Mr Rosenbauer—The NBSL, the National Biological Standards Laboratory building—the building you might see when you fly into Canberra and the wing of the aeroplane dips over Symonston; the building with some 50 chimneys—cost about \$85 million. That job had been around for 10 years. All of a sudden the client had it built in three years. There was a major redesign. All sorts of other requirements came in from the department of health. You might say that we built it as we went. We got approval, we let contracts for earthmoving, concreting and form work and we built it as we went. This gave the client a lot of flexibility because he could catch up with all the latest world developments in relation to that type of activity. We built those requirements in as we went.

Mr HUMPHREYS—Was it over or under budget? Were there savings to the Commonwealth?

Mr Rosenbauer—It was under budget. The client still now has the benefit of some of the money saved. He is doing some enhancements. John Hindmarsh, a major player in the construction industry and a member of the Master Builders Association in the ACT, was the construction manager for that construction.

Mr HUMPHREYS—If you have a fixed time contract what happens if it is not on time? Do they do their \$500,000?

Mr Rosenbauer—The \$500,000 is security in case they default. We would normally have other provisions in the contract relating to liquidated damages. We have in this case a 14-month construction period. There are extensions of time for legitimate reasons such as industrial problems, wet weather, delays with supply and major changes by the client. If he did not meet that extension of time we would apply liquidated damages. They would be calculated on the basis of the damages incurred by the National

Film and Sound Archive.

Mr HUMPHREYS—When the contractor comes before you what do you tell him the penalty is? Do you say that if you do not finish on time it will cost you this much?

Mr Rosenbauer—We would work out with the client the cost of not finishing the job on time. We would state that in the documents and he would be aware when entering into that tender—

Mr HUMPHREYS—What is the penalty? You must have it worked out if you have done all this before. You must know what you are going to do to that person.

Mr Rosenbauer—It is a monetary penalty. We never strike a figure beforehand. It is calculated on a job by job basis. It might be one per cent of the contract sum or it could be four or five per cent. It depends what the Commonwealth's penalty is for not finishing the job on time.

Mr HUMPHREYS—How can you get a person to enter into a contract with you when he does not know the penalty?

Mr Rosenbauer—He will at the time of tender. We would state that in the tender document.

Mr HUMPHREYS—But you cannot tell us now the penalties you stated before in the other contracts that you operated on a lump sum fixed time basis. If you have done so many of them before, what were the penalties?

Mr Rosenbauer—Previously it has been between two and three per cent of the contract price. It is not a large impost.

Mr HUMPHREYS—If we go to confidential costs, Department of Finance, allowances; what is that, contingencies?

Mr Rosenbauer—Yes, that is correct.

Mr HUMPHREYS—That is a new name.

Mr Rosenbauer—There are two allowances in there. As the committee has noted, we are renting into a market that might become a little bit heated. We have an estimate; it is based on a certain level of documentation. We have calculated, to the best of our ability, on that documentation. There is bound to be a fluctuation in that figure when we come in to tender. So there is what is called 'a tender stage adjustment allowance' in there and also a contingency sum to carry out those changes that need to be made to a construction grid.

CHAIR—What methods are put in place or what guarantees do you have that there is not collusive tendering in this? Are you going to call tenders from a selected group of tenderers?

Mr Rosenbauer—We will advertise in the press in Canberra and in the *Australian* around the country for people to express an interest in undertaking this construction as constructor. We will have them register. Then we will mostly strike up a list of five or six preferred tenderers.

CHAIR—That would be on a cost limit estimate?

Mr Rosenbauer—We would inform them of the approximate cost of the job, what we anticipate it to be. Then we would invite those five or six tenderers to participate in a tendering process for them to win or not win that particular contract.

CHAIR—What guarantee can you give to the committee that in five years time we

will not read in the *Canberra Times* that five building firms in Canberra have been taken to court for a list of collusive tenderings on a whole range of government buildings, including the National Film and Sound Archive building? How can we guarantee that there is no collusive tendering in projects that we let?

Senator BURNS—Can you measure it?

Mr Rosenbauer—I, like everybody else in our situation—that is, the situation of the Australian Construction Services—or other principal consultants in the building industry, can give no guarantees as to the behaviour of the participants in the building construction industry in that regard. What we have had in place, since the royal commission in Sydney some five or six years ago, is the requirement that the tenderers give to us with their tender a statutory declaration that they have not colluded with any other participant in that tender process: they have not talked to one another, they have not exchanged any information whatsoever and they have been involved in no joint meetings with the Master Builders Association in any regard whatsoever in putting that tender together. We do not know where we could go after that situation.

CHAIR—I accept that. But what has come to light, not only in the royal commission in New South Wales but also even in recent weeks in Queensland with a whole series of projects there, is collusive tendering. When you say that they have to give a statutory declaration, how legally binding is that? If there is collusive tendering and it is proved, are there measures to put these people in gaol, are they fined, are they given a slap on the wrist, or what?

Senator BURNS—They can get a gaol sentence.

Mr Rosenbauer—If they were found to be untruthful as a result of signing that statutory declaration, they would be subject to criminal action and civil action. The actions you are seeing now in regard to Queensland and the major fines which have been imposed in recent times in Sydney are actions brought on by the Trade Practices Act, which is no doubt a civil action. We can only, like you, sit and observe and be somewhat amazed and disheartened at what happened in the middle to late 1980s.

Senator BURNS—But, generally, collusive tendering is up rather than down; no-one colludes to get the lowest price. Do you have any way of measuring whether the quotes are reasonable? I think that if you could measure it would be the key to it, wouldn't it?

Mr Rosenbauer—We like to think of ourselves as expert in a number of areas, and one thing we do undertake every time a tender is to be submitted is to calculate our own tender figure. So we know within a benchmark where that sits. Unfortunately, that is not always the correct situation because we do get what you call supply and demand situations, and figures that you find yourself accepting at the time are somewhat away from your own figure.

Senator BURNS—If that became obvious to you, would you not look at the other elements that you have just spoken of?

Mr Rosenbauer—Yes.

Mr HUMPHREYS—In terms of those contingencies, seeing that you believe the lump sum, fixed time contracts are the you-beaut way to go, why do you need all that money? You said that you came in under budget for the other building.

Mr Rosenbauer—The National Biological Standards Laboratory, yes.

Mr HUMPHREYS—What did you do with that money?

Mr Rosenbauer—That money would have been allocated from the Department of Finance to the department of health at the time.

Mr HUMPHREYS—You did not have to give it back?

Mr Rosenbauer—They found themselves ahead of budget at the time. No doubt they kept that as part of the project to do some of the things they found they wanted to do after construction was finished in order to bring their building up to the latest techniques. They have done some of those in the meantime.

Mr HUMPHREYS—Why do you need this contingency money? Is it so that you have extra money to do something later?

Mr Rosenbauer—As I said before, we have estimated a cost based on the best information available in these documents. Nobody can guarantee those figures as being 100 per cent correct. We will require contingent moneys. There were bound to be some omissions and discrepancies in documentation that we prepared ourselves. There were bound to be some client changes. The client cannot know everything he wants from day one. Some minor requirements will be taken up in that contingency allowance. I suggest that the actual contingency allowance by the Department of Finance is a very stringent one indeed to work within.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—Does that mean the Department of Finance allowance is the contingency?

Mr Rosenbauer—There are two Department of Finance allowances. One is a contingency allowance once you have let the tender, and one is an allowance between now and the date of tender to make up for any shortfall that there may be in the figures at this time.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—What wish list does the client have at this stage if you come in under the price? Have you got a prioritised order?

Senator BURNS—Before you answer that, could you make clear the situation regarding the contingency? You mentioned the extras that were carried out to complete a laboratory. They were not out of a contingency; they were out of savings. That should be made clear.

Mr Rosenbauer—Yes, that was out of savings.

Mr Brent—I was going to clarify that, as I understand it, we do not get to keep the contingency. If the building comes in under the original budget price as distinct from the budget price plus the contingency allowance, and depending on negotiations with the Department of Finance, there may be some scope to utilise that saving to enhance the building.

Mr HUMPHREYS—You have not been as good at asking as the department of health, apparently.

Mr Brent—There is a nice precedent that we would certainly refer to. We do not have a wish list at the moment. We have had to work very hard to keep within the funds that are available. We have had to trim very hard to make sure that we provide a building that is adequate in every regard but which still fits within the funds that have been allocated by the government. There are a number of other things we would like to do were

there additional funds. For instance, you saw our lecture hall which we use as a cinema. If there were sufficient funds, we would certainly like to put in a new cinema in order to screen films properly for the public. That is something we cannot do in that facility. That said, that is a very large expense in its own right and I doubt that there will be sufficient savings to fund something like that.

Mr HUMPHREYS—Looking at the model of the building before us and at the various options before the committee, how much extra will this building cost because you have to conform with the heritage building requirements of fitting in with the architecture? What would be the extra cost for the option of building another facility at Mitchell, where you have your other office?

Mr Brent—Perhaps I could answer the first part and then pass the second part to the ACS. There are some additional costs for the construction of a building such as this because of the heritage constraints, and I will ask the ACS to comment on that in a moment. The other options that we looked at were more expensive, because the difference in cost is less than the additional cost that would be imposed by the other factors that I mentioned earlier. Firstly, we would have to buy land in another location, whereas we have the land here. Secondly, we would have to accommodate in some way the fact that we either split our facilities—which carries with it additional costs—by having the exhibition here and the scientific and staff facilities elsewhere, or we would have to shift the exhibition facilities, which adds another substantial cost.

Mr Rosenbauer—The addition itself represents a cost of some \$2,500 per square metre. That is quite a healthy figure. We think it is very good value for money. Looking at the building as part office block and part specialised, we would expect that if it were constructed in Civic it would be \$1,600 a square metre, and here it is costing us \$1,800. So the building generally throughout has an impost of \$200 per square metre because of the nature of the site, the nature of the existing building and what we have done to the building to make it fully compatible with the rest of the construction.

The short answer is that it is costing us \$200 a square metre over and above what we could have built that building for. If it were in Symonston, where we had a previous project, it would cost us somewhat less. There is a facade, or precast, as you have seen this morning. There is some sandstone; the roof has a colour to it; there is minimal use of copper over some of the windows and some of the edge treatment. All of that adds up to around \$200 per square metre for the additional wing.

Senator CALVERT—You said in your report that there is a need for the building to age gracefully; can you tell me how 1929 sandstone and 1996 sandstone would look the same?

Mr Hodge—It is true that the new sandstone, which is mainly at the ends of the new building, will appear to be newer than the present material, but we can attempt to match the present colour when we select the new sandstone. Once placed, the new sandstone will weather gracefully because it will be a high-grade material.

Mr Brent—It is not intended that the new building and the old building should look the same. They should look compatible, but we are not trying to have the new building imitate the existing building.

Senator CALVERT—It is designed to respect but not to mimic; I think those are

the words that were used.

Mr Brent—Yes.

Mr HUMPHREYS—I am still waiting for an answer to my question: what is the difference in price?

Mr Hodge—The difference in construction is roughly \$200 per square metre.

Mr HUMPHREYS—You have got this building worked out, and we know that that is confidential cost. How much is buying land and building another building which is not conforming going to be compared to this? What is the saving to the Commonwealth?

Mr Brent—In particular we looked at moving this facility entirely out to Mitchell, moving the exhibition to Old Parliament House and giving up this site altogether. In preliminary costing that came out at about \$18 million. In view of the stringency with which we have designed and planned this building, I would envisage that it may have been possible to trim as much as \$2 million off that figure, but there would certainly be no possibility of that figure coming below \$16 million as against a total of under \$12½ million. So, once allowing for those other factors, this option is perhaps in the vicinity of \$3½ million cheaper than the next best alternative.

Mr HUMPHREYS—When we look at confidential costing and costs of refurbishing the building you are now in, how much is it going to cost you per annum to maintain that building?

Mr Brent—The existing building, whether we or anybody else occupy it, is expensive to occupy. I do not in any way want to understate that. The figure that we were given on the 15-year life cycle study was \$5 million; that amount would have to be spent on that building over the next 15 years. There will be some other costs in addition to that, such as the refurbishment costs encompassed in the existing plan; that is the \$610,000. That includes some exhibition fit out and some refurbishment of the south gallery, for instance restoring the floors to timber floors.

That means that the cost of the existing building plus the refurbishment work that is planned is about \$5.2 million over the next 15 years, but I imagine that there will be other items as well that we will want to refurbish that will cost more—I again refer to those airconditioners over the library skylight. I would be surprised therefore if the outturn figure is not even higher than that.

Mr HUMPHREYS—What does it cost you to maintain the building now as it is with all its occupational health and safety?

Mr Brent—That is a much higher figure. In fact, we had been given some emergency funding by the Department of Finance in the previous financial year, not the current financial year, to deal with emergency works. Most of that has gone into fire safety and occupational health and safety work, which is essentially lost money in that in the longer term it has not solved the problems or made the building acceptable. I would imagine that if we continued to occupy the building we would probably be up for—and this is a guess; no more than that—something in the vicinity of \$200,000 a year on top of the costs that we are confronting.

Mr HUMPHREYS—What I am trying to get out of you is this: how much are you going to save the Commonwealth by building the new building?

Mr Brent—That is a very hard figure to estimate and I guess I am deliberately

being very vague on that. My personal guess is that it could be as much as \$200,000 a year that we would have to sink into the building in addition to the other costs to maintain the habitability of areas that are just not suitable for habitation.

Mr HUMPHREYS—The Department of Finance must have had some inkling of savings if you could talk them into spending this money. So you must have had to prove a point.

Mr Brent—I would have to say that the Department of Finance were very supportive of our proposal because we did, in fact, brief them very thoroughly on the problems we faced. I think they have accepted that this is the only practical solution if we are to maintain the use of the existing building at all.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—Did you take the Treasury officials over there to show them as you did us this morning?

Mr Brent—We certainly did, yes.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—Ours was not a dry run.

Mr Brent—No. In fact, we have taken quite a few people through the building: our ministers, Department of Finance officials and departmental officials. It is our view that, once you look at the building and see the circumstances we are in, a lot becomes quite clear about the need for the new building.

Mr HUMPHREYS—So, when you get all this up and running, how much per annum will you receive from the public in making it a better facility so that there may be some cost recovery at the end of the day? There will always be an expenditure to the Commonwealth.

Mr Brent—There is no doubt that the existing building will always cost us money because it is a heritage building; it is a very specialised building with limited alternative use. Having said that, we anticipate that there will be some significant opportunities to improve revenue. For instance, we currently have about 80,000 visitors a year, paying about \$1 a head for visiting the site. Included in that are about 40,000 who come on coaches as part of our education program. They pay \$2 a head. We would anticipate that once we have the south gallery recovered, which will probably be as much as a year after the rest of the building is completed because of the need for refurbishment and fit out, there could be at least a doubling of those visitor numbers to reflect the more than doubling of the space available. That will see an increased revenue.

Mr HUMPHREYS—Are you sure you are not overdoing it with this building? What is the area that each person works in now compared to what they are going to work in there? Are you sure it is not too big? What is the planning for expansion?

Mr Brent—The Department of Finance has pressed us very hard on that. What we have done has been to segregate out the special purpose facilities such as laboratories. The office space that is left over has been allocated according to the standard Department of Finance guidelines for space per person. In addition we then have the special purpose laboratories. So we are very confident that there is not a waste of space in there.

Having said that, there is some minor capacity for expansion. Some of that actually relies on the existing top floor front wing of the existing building rather than the new building. There would be some small capacity for increase in staff numbers, but it is pretty small. We were looking at accommodating up to perhaps an extra, I think, about 10 staff.

It is about a 10 per cent contingency for increase in staff.

Mr HUMPHREYS—Thank you.

CHAIR—To follow on from Mr Humphreys's questions, if these extensions are approved, how long will that be suitable for your requirements? Are you going to come to us in another two years and say that you want an expansion or what?

Mr Brent—I guess there are two sides to that. The first is that, in relation to our technical staff and our technical facilities and our administration staff, there is always the possibility that the pressure we are under as an institution to deal with a very large collection of heritage material that deteriorates rapidly may see our staffing being increased. If it is beyond that contingency of 10 per cent, we would have to look to use the remaining space on site for a further extension. I would have to say, though, that I would consider that unlikely in the foreseeable future.

The other side that I should foreshadow is that our warehouse facilities in Mitchell are not encompassed in this project at all. In the future we will certainly be looking to the storage requirements that we have. It is my anticipation that we would not need additional storage facilities for at least another 10 years because we are very severely culling our collection to try to reduce its size and store it more efficiently. But at some stage in the future I am certain that there will be a need to revisit our storage facilities. In fact, we have been told that one of our vaults will need either replacement or major upgrade in about 10 years.

Senator BURNS—Will it have to be on that site?

Mr Brent—No, it would be at Mitchell.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—In connection with your activities such as heritage, archives and things like that, how much of your work is going to gradually phase out as access to the really old films is no longer available? To what extent do you then give preference to modern-day film that comes through to make sure that that is properly preserved? What is the balance of work that you expect in three or four years time? Is there going to be more restoration or is there going to be more preservation of what you have now?

Mr Brent—I guess I should give you a very brief thumbnail sketch of what we do at the moment. There are really three parts to what we do. One part is the restoration work of very old materials—for instance, the copying of nitrate film, which we have discussed already. The second part is the care and maintenance of more modern materials that deteriorate less rapidly but which still deteriorate. The third part is that of access. Over time, the emphasis would be on the latter two categories rather than the former. That said, we have now copied only about three million to four million of our 12 million feet of nitrate. We have copied only about a quarter of the material that we anticipated, and our audio collection needs urgent attention and so on. There is still a very long lead time before we complete that work.

Furthermore, the older the so-called modern safety materials exist, the more problems we discover with those. For instance, acetate film, which is called safety film mainly because it does not burst into flames the way that nitrate does, is not safety film in terms of safe, long-term security for the images on the film. Some acetate film as little as 10 years old shows dramatic fading in its colours. As soon as one problem is resolved,

another one crops up. I would be very surprised if we do not see ourselves confronting ever renewing and ever repeating cycles of materials that require substantial work. In summary, I do not think there will be a significant change in the foreseeable future and certainly not in the next three years.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—With regard to the restoration of nitrate film, I think you mentioned three million as against 12 million. Do you have the other nine million in stock, or are you still looking for it?

Mr Brent—No, we have that. That is what is currently housed in our nitrate storage vaults in Mitchell. A small amount of nitrate film still trickles into the archive, but most of it has been pretty effectively dragged out of the Australian community through a program that was run in the early 1980s called the last film search. We actually sent people and vehicles around the country hunting down all the nitrate film that we could find.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—I think you have answered this question, but could you just repeat the answer. What is the capacity of the current building to undertake the requirements of your association for the next 10 years? Will this restoration work be sufficient to do that for the next 10 years?

Mr Brent—Provided we do not get any increase in staff to reflect the massive work that we have in front of us—and I would not plan on that—and provided the staff remains roughly constant, the building will meet our needs for the next 10 years. That is in relation to that scientific work. There are still those issues—one of which I alluded to earlier—about a theatre for public presentation of films, but they are separate from those existing at present.

Senator BURNS—You ought to bear that in mind when you are looking for this building.

Mr Brent—Yes, that is correct.

CHAIR—What will the residence be used for?

Mr Brent—It will be used for office accommodation for roughly 15 people. That is its current use, although we anticipate a slight reduction in the number of people that we have fitted into that building at the moment.

CHAIR—Is there going to be work done on that residence?

Mr Brent—Yes. Some work is required on the residence and on the landscape around the residence, some of which is encompassed in this program and some of which is in our ongoing maintenance funding for the archive.

Senator CALVERT—We talked earlier about the glass ceiling for the new part that you are building. Is that double glazed or is it single glazed? How does the old part tie up with the new part with regard to energy saving? I note that you were going to have double glazing. Is that for any particular reason other than saving heat or cutting down noise?

Mr Hodge—The double glazing in the new building is for two purposes. The first is energy efficiency, through insulation through those windows, and the second is sound isolation, to some extent, to prevent exterior noise leaking into the building.

Mr Brent—In contrast, I would describe the existing building as monumentally inefficient in an energy sense: the rooms are high, the windows are single glazed and the

existing heating systems are very old. It is a very difficult building to manage as a suitable work environment.

Senator CALVERT—Will there be some changes to the old building to make it more energy efficient?

Mr Brent—There will be, yes. One of the things we will be doing will be combining the airconditioning plant for the new and the old buildings.

Mr Hodge—Part of the funding in the proposal before you includes a centralised plant option where the plant in the basement of the new building will be used to serve not only the new building but also the existing building. We expect some cost savings from that, not necessarily from energy conservation but from maintenance simplicity and less overall complexity. In addition, I might say, it is likely to remove the need for plant on the roof of that heritage listed building.

Senator CALVERT—So that will be a significant change?

Mr Brent—It may be. There are still questions about the airconditioning for the library and how that will link into the new building. I do not think at this stage of the planning we can guarantee that, but it is certainly something I would like to see.

Senator CALVERT—Are you planning to have an exorcism to get rid of the ghosts?

Mr Brent—We like our ghosts. We should probably try to retain the ghosts in the heritage building because they are after all heritage ghosts.

Senator CALVERT—Seriously, though, have there been any credible accounts of the so-called ghosts?

Mr Brent—I will give you three short anecdotes. The first is that we had three alarms along the basement corridor of the existing building—that is, one at either end and one in the middle. The ones at either end encompassed the only entrance and exit to that corridor other than to that sub-basement, which is a dead end. For a period of time, the alarm in the middle of the corridor kept going off whereas the two at the ends did not. One wonders how that could happen. I think even the type of alarm was changed to different sorts of alarms and it still kept going off.

The second story is that in our previous exhibition we measured visitors by an electric eye on the door. Every evening it was set back to zero for the next day. Every morning it read two. One wonders how that happened.

CHAIR—It might have been the cleaners.

Mr Brent—I am an arch sceptic. I have no doubt there are very logical explanations for all of these things. The third story is that there are people—we think they were sober—who claim to have seen two old women dressed in old clothes and hats on the gallery level of the existing exhibition hall.

Mr ANDREW—I am sure it is very good for tourism.

Mr HUMPHREYS—You said in the old building the water runs in when it rains and floods it. What are you going to do, or is it a bit hopeless to try to stop that?

Mr Brent—We have in fact dealt with a number of those drainage issues by improving the drains around the outside of the building, improving the treatment of the materials that lead up to the outside walls of the building. We have also treated leaks in the ceilings, and so on. There will be an ongoing program of that sort of work out of the

maintenance funding we have.

Mr HUMPHREYS—It looks like a catchment area there.

Mr Hodge—Those fire exits from the basement, north and south, will be connected into the new building and will be covered by the links that you can see on the drawings.

Mr HUMPHREYS—It just looks like a catchment area at the back door. I could not see where it got away except for the drain that is there.

Mr Brent—There is a drain at the bottom but that will now be covered over by the new links to the new building. So that actually will be dealt with.

CHAIR—Is the material here a sample of the roofing material?

Mr Brent—Yes. The colour bond, which is one of the greyest of those materials there—the flattest in colour, not the two copper sheets—is the main roof material. The copper will trim that around the edges.

CHAIR—That is to keep in with the heritage character of the building?

Mr Hodge—The present proposal is the result of some cost savings. The copper surfeit and eaves are certainly required for heritage purposes, but the coloured ordinary zinc loom deck is the result of cost cutting measures.

Senator CALVERT—As part of the heritage concerns, are you intending to retain the burglar proofing that was put in in 1960—those spikes?

Mr Brent—I do not know.

Mr Hodge—There will be two penetrations of that wall, so I imagine there will certainly be a need to remove the grilles in those areas. To tell you the truth, I have not thought about the rest of it.

Mr Brent—I just looked over to our architect, who nodded that we will keep our defences against the university in place.

CHAIR—We have no further questions. Are there any last issues you wish to leave with us, any areas you feel we have not dealt with sufficiently or anything you would like to draw to our attention, bearing in mind that you will come back after the other witnesses have appeared?

Mr Brent—I think we have covered most of the issues. The only one I would allude to now is the question that I raised informally this morning, and that is the possibility of being able to undertake the concurrent preparation of documentation.

CHAIR—We will not make a decision on that here and now, but we would like you to put that request to us in writing and we will discuss it as a committee and get back to you at the earliest convenience. There is nothing to stop you putting that letter to us this afternoon.

Mr Hodge—It is in the supplementary evidence, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR—We will have a look at it and we will give you a response to that in the not too distant future.

Mr Brent—Thank you for that.

CHAIR—If there are no further issues, thank you very much.

[3.30 p.m.]

TAYLOR, Dr Stuart Ross, Chair, Precinct and Building Committee, Australian Academy of Science, Ian Potter House, Gordon Street, Acton, Australian Capital Territory

CHAIR—Dr Taylor, in what capacity do you appear before the committee?

Dr Taylor—I am the chairman of the house committee of the Australian Academy of Science.

CHAIR—The committee has received a submission from the Australian Academy of Science dated 1 December 1995. Do you propose any amendments to the submission?

Dr Taylor—No, we have no amendments to it.

CHAIR—It is proposed that the submission and the National Film and Sound Archive's response to it dated 12 December be received as evidence, taken as read and incorporated in the transcript of evidence. Do members have any objections? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

The document read as follows—

CHAIR—Dr Taylor, do you wish to make a brief opening statement before the committee proceeds to questions?

Dr Taylor—Yes. Our concern with the project relates entirely to the option proposed by the consultant's report for the associated traffic and parking arrangements. These were contained in a report which we received from the National Film and Sound Archive showing various plans for changing the road allocations and so on.

When the arrangements for taking traffic from Parkes Way to the city were determined, it had been established that the area bounded by Edinburgh Avenue, Marcus Clarke Street, Ellery Circuit, Liversidge Street and McCoy Circuit should be protected from the impact of through traffic so that the area could serve its public purpose as a whole with accessibility for pedestrians across the site and a visual identity between the different institutions located in it. Traffic from Parkes Way now flows along Edinburgh Avenue, connecting with Marcus Clarke Street and London Circuit, with a restricted provision for slip traffic from Parkes Way to feed into the Australian National University.

The proposal from the traffic consultants would create opportunities for through traffic by creating what is in effect a set of new opportunities to move between Parkes Way and the western side of the city. The main element in achieving this end would be the transformation of Hales Crescent from a one-way slip lane into a two-way road, providing direct access from both east and west bound lanes of Parkes Way. We feel that any proposal which would increase the amount of through traffic through the site would be undesirable, partly because there is a large vacant block occupied by the temporary National Biological Standards Laboratory and the long-stay car park, which is a prime city site and which no doubt will be developed in due course.

Further, the survey from the consultant said that over 80 per cent of visitors arrive by coach. We certainly agree that adequate arrangements for coach access should be available. We do not think this would be helped by creating higher volumes of commuter traffic. According to the traffic study, the projected increase in visitors will generate very little additional traffic. So we do not see that there is a rationale for these proposed roadworks. Our feeling is basically that we want to avoid any prospect of creating some mechanism by which through traffic can come through the area. We would like to keep it as a precinct with traffic routed around it.

CHAIR—Thank very much, Dr Taylor. I understand that the archive agreed with the comments that you have made there. Is this a proposal by the ACT government?

Dr Taylor—No, it is a consultant's report of a traffic and parking study which the National Film and Sound Archive commissioned. They sent us a copy of that report.

CHAIR—Do committee members have any questions for Dr Taylor?

Mr ANDREW—I understood the National Film and Sound Archive witnesses to indicate that they shared your concern and that they were similarly anxious to ensure that through traffic did not increase to the disadvantage of neighbours. Were you reassured by their evidence?

Dr Taylor—I was reassured by their evidence today.

CHAIR—Do you wish to leave us with any further comments, Dr Taylor?

Dr Taylor—I would hope that these proposals would be somehow cemented into the committee's report.

CHAIR—We will take note of what you have said on behalf of the Academy of Science and what the witnesses from the National Film and Sound Archive have said.

[3.36 p.m.]

HYNDES, Mrs Danielle, Member, ACT Heritage Council, Castle Hill, Tharwa, New South Wales 2620

KEIRNAN, Ms Catherine, Member of Council, ACT Heritage Council, Woodhead Firth Lee, c/o Cottage 5, Lanyon, Tharwa, New South Wales 2620

CHAIR—The committee has received submissions from the ACT Heritage Council dated 4 December and 6 December 1995. Do you propose any amendments to these submissions?

Ms Keirnan—Given that we received a response from ACS addressing our submissions, we would like to expand on those comments and bring these matters to your attention more fully.

CHAIR—For the record we will have the submissions incorporated, and then you can make your statement and comment on the issues. It is proposed that the submission and the response from the National Film and Sound Archive be received, taken as read and incorporated in the transcript of evidence. There being no objection, it is so ordered.

The documents read as follows—

CHAIR—Perhaps you would like to make a short opening statement and then committee members will ask some questions.

Ms Keirnan—I will just summarise the two letters that we sent on the 4th and the 6th as an opening statement. The National Film and Sound Archive and its surrounds—it is important to note that it includes its surrounds—have been nominated for entry onto the ACT Heritage Places Register but have yet to obtain interim registration. Council has expressed the view that the project should include the conservation work that has been identified for the existing building in the conservation study that was done on the building. This work is not identified in the present project. However, council is of the view that it would be detrimental to the overall building complex for the new works if the conservation work were not proceeded with in tandem.

The council is concerned that the proposed car parking is not consistent with conservation policy 2.5, page 37 of the report, which states that the removal of trees to permit large paved areas is not to be permitted. Council noted that the construction of bus and car parking areas would require the removal of eight important trees. After counting them today I found that there are at least eight, if not more, important trees. The council was concerned that the proposal does not include a landscape plan to permit an evaluation of the impact of the proposals on the landscape. Council observed that the site plan does not adequately serve this requirement, particularly as there is no indication of restorative landscape works to the main building or to the residence.

Finally, council observed that the following proposals would conflict with the plan and text in the conservation report dated 1995 and, in particular, with the removal of street trees, which is contrary to policy 4.1, and with the creation of a car park beside the residence.

Going further from that: we have received comments from the ACS saying that a landscape plan is being prepared and that it will be in accordance with the conservation plan. However, if the site plan—which is the evidence before you—is the basis for a landscape plan, then that is problematical for us because there are changes shown on the site plan that are directly in conflict with the conservation plan. The committee could perhaps look at policy clause 2.5 on page 37 and clause 4.1 on page 36, which talk about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in terms of the landscape. Would you like me to read them to you?

CHAIR—I would like you to explain what you mean and point out where these eight trees are going to be removed.

Ms Keirnan—If one looks at the model in front, one will see that the bus semicircle and lay-bys that have been created there, and the additional visitor car parking for 25 cars, is the area of main concern in the removal of these trees. There are also some trees being removed as a result of the new building; but that was identified as being a building envelope opportunity for the site, so we are not necessarily objecting to the removal of those trees to build the new building.

But it does specifically say in policy clause 2.5 that the removal of trees to create large paved areas is not to be permitted and additional driveways are not to be permitted. We feel quite strongly that the front semicircular address point off McCoy Circuit is the front address to the building, that the landscape and the urban design qualities of this

precinct deserve recognition and that the buses that pull up and drop off passengers should do so from that front address and not have a separate lay-by off to the side. They may then go and park off site or elsewhere, but they should drop their passengers at the front entry.

We are concerned that, with the new building having its lovely new entrance on the other side, this entrance will become a de facto backyard. We are concerned that the landscape, which has gone into decline since its original construction, will be left to continue to deteriorate and be carved up and chopped up for car parks and ad hoc development.

There is an area of native grassland, which is identified in the conservation plan, considered to be of enough importance to be kept. The residence, which is currently used for offices, has certain hedges and garden spaces around it. It is worth while noting that in the conservation plan it is felt that that work should be conserved as well.

CHAIR—Where are the native grasses?

Ms Keirnan—On the plan which is included in the report—at the back here—the native grassland areas are identified. In any given time of the year it is a bit hard to tell, if they are mown. Because it is an older part of Canberra and was developed at a time when the native grasslands were kept—the big construction traffic was not bulldozing the whole site clean to start with—the native grasses have persisted in many areas there; not in the front forecourt, because that has been irrigated and changed over time, but off to the sides.

CHAIR—Let me get it clear what you are saying about the buses. What are you saying about the buses? They have identified a parking area for five buses. What are you saying about that?

Ms Keirnan—When the buses arrive to drop off their passengers—and, given that they are likely to be school children, they will be dropped off on to the grassy space off to the left of where the buses park—the passengers are going to trample over that grassy space and pass the buses back to the front door. It would be better, one would think, and more logical if the buses arrived in that semicircular driveway that was created for that purpose, drop them at the front door and then go somewhere else to park.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—We have just had explained to us the traffic hazard that the whole complex is going to create—five buses parked adjacent in the street. Would that be further aggravating that problem?

Ms Keirnan—I am not suggesting the buses should park in the street and I do not pretend to have all the information to say where the buses should park. It may be that some bus parking needs to occur on site. Perhaps it does not need a new loop created as a drop off area and a bus park at the same time. If there is a multistorey car park being built across Edinburgh Avenue, there is opportunity for bus parking off site. The visitation stay of people coming there must be of certain duration so that the bus can drop passengers off, go off site and come back again.

Senator BURNS—Using the existing driveway?

Ms Keirnan—Yes.

Senator CALVERT—Does the organisation that you represent have any major concerns about the new buildings respecting the old ones and not mimicking them? Are you happy with the design?

Ms Keirnan—On this issue I would rather not speak as a member of the council. I would rather speak as an individual. Unfortunately, our expert in the architectural sphere is overseas and unable to attend today. He felt that they had done a reasonable job in respecting the qualities of the old building. When I looked at the plans, it occurred to me that there were perhaps problems between the two interfaces that had not been fully resolved, particularly in relation to the courtyard spaces and how they flowed from one to the other. Also the model shows that they are extending the wings much further either side than has been suggested in the building envelope proposed in the conservation plan on page 45.

Senator CALVERT—Yes, you are right. The model certainly does extend further.

Mr HUMPHREYS—You do not believe that the new building detracts in any way from the heritage of the old building?

Ms Keirnan—I do not know that I would make that blanket statement. I think that it does respect the existing building and that it has been sited as best as possible, given its size and its mass. I would like to see the landscape respected and not bulldozed for bus parking and car parking bays. I would like to see traffic management addressed according to the bigger picture and not solved all on the site.

CHAIR—Surely what is proposed is better than what is there at the moment. That area has all the demountables. If anything detracts from the existing building, it is that area with all those demountables. Have you had the opportunity of looking at the traffic study?

Ms Keirnan—No, I have not. You are right, in that the removal of the demountables will certainly improve the look of the site, but that does not mean to say that we cannot take away A and put back B. We should be going forward and respecting the work of the conservation plan and implementing the restoration of the landscape. It may be that the landscape plan that we have not seen is going to do that. We do not know.

Senator CALVERT—But the buses would not be there all the time, would they?

Ms Keirnan—Unless they intend to park there. But I do not know whether they intend to have five all at once or just one, with a possible overlap of two. I do not know about the traffic management or the visitation rates. I was not able to get that information.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—As I understand it, this map refers to trees of strategic importance as opposed to trees of lesser quality. Is it an opinion of your organisation that all trees should be treated equally? I am not trying to be facetious about this, but we understand that some of those trees on that block are of very poor quality and might need replacement in any case. What is your council's opinion of that?

Ms Keirnan—Again, we have not discussed this matter in council. I would rather speak as a professional landscape architect rather than as a member of council. In any given landscape, particularly one of this age, there will be trees that are senescent—that is, getting old—and that will require removal and renewal. There will also be trees that are younger or that have a longer lifespan. So management of the landscape, including its trees, is very important.

I am not by any means suggesting that no tree should ever be removed. I am just suggesting that one does not have to go removing trees, which were put in place

deliberately with a design intent, to accommodate what is an inadequate visitor parking area. The people from ACS have already said that it is not going to meet their needs and that they are just doing it because the NCPA said they had to. If that is the case, then perhaps we do not need to remove the trees at all and we can find another solution.

Mr HUMPHREYS—The council has not discussed the trees. You are just giving a personal opinion.

Ms Keirnan—Unfortunately, the council has not had a great deal of time to deliberate on this proposal. Council's opinion is that the trees are of heritage significance and should be retained as part of the landscape. But we are relying upon the body of evidence in this conservation report and not looking at specific individuals.

Mr HUMPHREYS—So is the council happy with the National Film and Sound Archive having responsibility? Are they good tenants? Are you happy about having them in the building and having carriage for maintaining the building?

Ms Keirnan—I do not think the council or I have an opinion on that matter.

Mr HUMPHREYS—Why not? You are here telling us other things. It is a heritage building. Surely you would have to have an opinion on whether they are bad or good tenants. You have not discussed this whole project with council?

Ms Keirnan—Not whether they are good or bad tenants.

Mr HUMPHREYS—Have you discussed the whole project? I cannot work out whether you have. You have not discussed the trees but you have discussed the building.

Ms Keirnan—We have discussed the implications of the building and the site plan. We have discussed the information we have been given to date from ACS; hence our submission to you and to them. We have arrived at the point where we feel they need a landscape plan. We feel that it should be in accordance with the conservation plan, not the site plan, as they have stated.

Mr HUMPHREYS—That is the council's only concern?

Ms Keirnan—The main concern is the landscape, yes.

CHAIR—I understand that the National Film and Sound Archive is in the preliminary stages of a landscape plan. Have you seen it?

Ms Keirnan—No. They have written to say that that is the case. But if their site plan is an indication of what they propose to do in the landscape plan, we are saying that this does not respect adequately the conservation plan policies 2.5 and 4.1, where it says specifically not to have large areas of paving and not to remove established trees and where it says that the restoration work should proceed.

Senator CALVERT—When did the ACS first contact you about all this?

Ms Keirnan—They contacted the secretariat to the council, not the council members directly. At our first council meeting of the second heritage council, which was on 1 December 1995, we discussed the matter.

Senator CALVERT—Do you think that was adequate time for the council to consider all aspects of this as far as the landscaping and heritage aspects are concerned, or do you think you should have had better knowledge of it?

Ms Keirnan—ACS probably would have done more had there been a council in place to discuss it. Council was late in being appointed.

Mr ANDREW—I can understand Ms Keirnan's concern about tree planting. I can

immodestly claim, I suspect, to have personally planted more trees than anyone else in this room. I wandered around there this morning and did not see too many young trees. It seemed to me that fundamentally they were removing, not entirely but mostly, trees that it would not hurt to have removed if they were going to be replaced by more vigorous young trees. I found myself not indignant about the tree removal simply because they were not removing trees that as a general rule had a lot of promise and they were being replaced by an intention to landscape and, as the chairman has said, generally improve the whole facility.

Ms Keirnan—The point you raise is quite valid. We are not saying that any individual tree should be retained as such.

Mr ANDREW—I was not as offended as you by the tree removal program, because I was not as impressed with the trees.

Ms Keirnan—My problem is not with the removal of the trees; it is with what they are putting back. The landscape is more than just the trees; it is the urban design of the space.

CHAIR—Are there any last points you wish to leave with us—any issues you wish to highlight or any areas you feel have not been adequately covered?

Ms Keirnan—It would be appreciated by council if, when the landscape plan is finished, we could see it and have another opportunity to comment.

CHAIR—We will put that to them. Your concern is to see that what happens there is in tune with the conservation plan?

Ms Keirnan—Correct.

CHAIR—There being no further questions, I thank you for your appearance.

[3.55 p.m.]

BRENT, Mr Ron, Director, National Film and Sound Archive, McCoy Circuit, Acton, Australian Capital Territory 2601

RODDA, Mr Douglas James, Manager, Support Services, National Film and Sound Archive, McCoy Circuit, Acton, Australian Capital Territory 2601

HODGE, Mr John Gilmour, Project Manager, Australian Construction Services, Cirius Building, Furzer Street, Phillip, Australian Capital Territory 2606

ROSENBAUER, Mr Robert William, Assistant General Manager, Australian Construction Services, 169 Gladstone Street, Fyshwick, Australian Capital Territory 2609

CHAIR—A number of issues have been raised. Do you want to respond to them? What you do not respond to, we might question you about.

Mr Brent—I think that makes sense. Very briefly, I will refer to the submission from the Australian Academy of Science and reiterate an unambiguous assurance that we agree with their concerns. We would not like to see increased through traffic through the area. We welcome their input and will certainly consult with them to the extent that we are involved in traffic arrangements around the site.

CHAIR—You commissioned the study?

Mr Brent—Yes. We commissioned the study, which provided various options.

CHAIR—That should be a warning to you. It is like royal commissions; you never commission a study unless you are certain of the outcome.

Mr Brent—To some degree we are in that we would not want to support or pursue those options that make no sense to us. But I take the point. The more substantial areas of concern or contention are those raised by the Heritage Council of the ACT. I would like to make a couple of small comments. Certainly there are concerns about how the parking area in particular and the bus parking bays relate to the conservation plan. The conservation plan clearly makes unambiguous that we should keep to a minimum the impact of paved areas on the site.

Our concern is that we have certain, what we would perceive to be minimum, requirements that we would like to see dealt with in some way. We would be only too happy to see more of the parking provided off site, but we have some concerns about that, including the requirements from the National Capital Planning Authority. Also bear in mind that the off-street parking is beyond our control. Therefore, if we rely exclusively on that parking, the institution is quite vulnerable to not being able to accommodate visitors in the future, depending on what happens to that planning. That is a general lead-in.

I will make a couple of more specific comments about the car park and the bus parking in particular. A suggestion was made that the buses should continue to unload passengers on the existing semicircular driveway in front of the building. Unfortunately, we have some concerns about that option. There are a number of reasons why that causes some particular difficulties. The first is that, at the moment, that is a driveway that has

through traffic. It leaves us with two options for the buses. One is that they unload passengers against the side where the steps are. But that closes off access to the building, because the buses then park in front of the steps.

What happens instead is that the buses park on the opposite side; that is, away from the building. Students and old people—I refer to those categories in particular, because they make up the vast bulk of our bus visitors—then have to unload directly on to the street and across the street through which traffic passes. There is a genuine safety issue there.

Added on to that is the real concern that the fumes from those buses, even when parked a relatively short time, billow into the front entrance of the building, into my office and the other rooms along the front of the building. While I can leap up at short notice and shut my windows, that is less able to be done in relation to the front door of the building. There are therefore health and safety concerns for the people using the building and the fumes from the buses. It should be noted that unloading and loading buses, which can hold over 50 passengers, can take some time.

There is an additional concern about the buses parking somewhere further away from the entrance than our existing proposal, and which may be off site. A lot of students return to the buses to get their hats, cameras and coats. A lot of the buses bring picnics. At the end of the tour, people will go back to the bus, unload the picnic gear from the bus and then have a picnic on the grounds. These are things we would like to support, but if the buses are parked some distance away there are then safety and logistical problems.

Given all of the factors that I have quickly run through, it is our view that unloading or parking on the existing circular driveway is not effective, not safe and not consistent with health concerns. Parking off site is a problem even if the passengers are unloaded in front of the building. Therefore, we feel that it is necessary that the buses have somewhere safe and out of the way where they can unload and unload onto an off-street zone rather than a street or a through traffic zone. We have designed this parking area with that purpose specifically in mind. The buses can park and unload to the left and onto a non-paved or non-street area.

We are certainly amenable to any other suggestions that might see fewer trees damaged or less paving, but we cannot see a ready formula that allows us to meet the other requirements we have. That is quite a long spiel on the buses. I will give you a short one on the cars.

In relation to car parking there is a minimum requirement to move some disabled parking close to the new disabled access point at the back of the building. Therefore, we will require at least some car parking in that vicinity. It cannot be on road parking because as disabled parking it properly should not be on the side of a road. Disabled people need to unload in safety. It has to be somewhere in the vicinity of the existing parking area. Whether we need the full 25 spaces is a more complex issue. It is at the minimum end of the recommendation for our site. I am concerned that we have some facilities for the public, bearing in mind the uncertainty of parking in the precinct. We have designed the car park to have a minimal impact although certainly some trees will be lost. Most of the trees that will be lost are in poor condition and we anticipate replacing those trees in a manner consistent with the parking area.

The last point I want to make, which is separate from those two specific issues, relates to landscaping. Because of the early stage of this project we have only reached a very preliminary stage with the landscaping. I saw the landscape plan that you saw this morning for the first time only yesterday. We would certainly consult the relevant authorities.

We would like the consultation to be with the Heritage Council, as recommended in the conservation plan, through the Australian Heritage Commission. We want to ensure that we get a consistent response from the two relevant heritage organisations. We are certainly committed to consultation on all aspects of the development of the site and we would certainly look to see that the Heritage Council continues to be consulted as we have done in the past. If new arrangements for more effective consultation are required we will certainly talk about those.

In the meantime, we have a very preliminary plan that has only just been delivered. I would be wary about consulting on the basis of that plan because it does not meet all of our needs. We want to see something that represents our views rather than a landscape designer's first notion. We would certainly consult on that. The site plan does give a good sense of what we believe are the minimum requirements for meeting the needs of the site, the requirements of the National Capital Planning Authority and the requirements of shifting people. I think that will do me by way of introduction.

CHAIR—Are you aware of the native grasses that are housed there?

Mr Brent—Yes, the native grass area is at the moment behind the residence. On the model it is on the left hand side nearest you. It is at the base of the semicircle near the residence. We would not anticipate any threat to the native grasses in that area because they are beyond the construction site. The area to be used, including the existing driveway and the original driveway to the residence, does not have native grasses. The parking area and the driveway are either under the existing driveway or under the demountable building.

CHAIR—Are there any further questions? As we have no further questions, are there any last points you wish to leave with us?

Mr Brent—No, I do not think there are any other points.

CHAIR—As there are no further questions, I propose that the documents shown on the list circulated to members be incorporated in the transcript of evidence. There being no objection, it is so ordered.

The documents read as follows—

CHAIR—Before closing, I should like to thank the witnesses who appeared before the committee today and those who assisted with our inspections this morning. I took on board what you said about the very early stages of your landscape planning. We would like to recommend that you continue consultation with the ACT Heritage Council so that, if there are difficulties, they can be worked out.

In answer to my question today about the 25, you did say that there was adequate car parking somewhere else. A question I meant to ask though: in that 25 car park, will there be designated spaces for people with disabilities?

Mr Brent—Yes, certainly. That is a very important feature of that car park.

CHAIR—I do not see what we are going to do about the bus parking; I thought you had solved it. I appreciate the concerns that the Heritage Council have raised about that. So I would like to suggest that you ‘dialogue’, if that is the right word, and hopefully there will be a solution found.

Mr Brent—Yes.

CHAIR—We did have a short meeting of the committee members, and we will give authority for the concurrent documentation. We will confirm that in writing to you. I would also like to thank my committee members, *Hansard*, of course, and the secretariat.

Resolved (on motion by Mr Andrew):

That, pursuant to the power conferred by section 2(2) of the Parliamentary Papers Act 1908, this committee authorises publication of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 4.07 p.m.