

## WALTER BURLEY GRIFFIN SOCIETY INC.

## CANBERRA CHAPTER

14 April 2009

Committee Secretary

Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories

Department of House of Representatives

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

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**INQUIRY INTO THE IMMIGRATION BRIDGE AUSTRALIA PROPOSAL**

On behalf of the Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc. (WBGSI), I tender this supplementary submission in the light of questions raised with WBGSI by Committee members during the 30 March public hearing. The hearings were very well conducted, productive, revealing and balanced. This supplementary submission does not attempt to reiterate or summarise the original submissions of the Canberra Chapter and Professor Weirick.

2. I am compelled to begin on a personal note. Senator Humphreys and Ms Ellis MP would have heard, in evidence to the Committee during the second session on 1 April, a Director of IBA impugn my credentials. I was astonished, particularly as each remark was false. It should be clear to people from the written and oral submissions of the Canberra Chapter of the WBGSI that we have bent over backwards to be fair and sympathetic to Immigration Bridge Australia. We offered considered thoughts (and we do so again in this supplementary submission) about immigration themes and alternatives to the proposed bridge. I used no emotive language. I was misquoted about Griffin's Plan for West Basin. Gary Rake of the National Capital Authority and David Headon in their respective statements on the Wednesday morning both agreed with my description of Griffin's vision and bridge in the area.

3. Afterwards I asked for an apology and two days later I was glad to receive it. I extended an offer to IBA to discuss with them at any time their project and the relevance of Griffin's Plan for Canberra. Later in this supplementary submission I include further thoughts about alternatives to the proposed bridge as this topic was such an insistent theme of the public hearing discussions between Committee members and various witnesses on 30 March.

4. **Question from Senator Lundy:** *Was the Canberra Chapter consulted about the NCA's draft report **Lake Burley Griffin and Adjacent Lands Heritage Management Plan**?*

I answered in the negative, which is not quite correct. In fact, on 30 July 2007 a sub consultant invited both the WBSG and the Canberra Chapter to a stakeholder information session on Stage 2 of the 'development of a heritage management plan for Lake Burley Griffin.' I recall it was held in the Carillon building on 13 August 2007. I attended, studied the EPBC heritage values provisional assessments and statement of significance and the results of community surveys of values and options for protection measures. I also spend some time at the session filling in feedback sheets on 'developing policies.' We had not been involved in Stage 1. To the best of my recollection, we were not at all involved in any subsequent stakeholder or community consultations.

5. Comment: The WBSG is a key stakeholder in such matters, so it is regrettable that no further opportunities were provided for our contribution. Rare invitations to participate, virtually no feedback and frustration at having no notice taken of our submissions is typical of our experience with the NCA.

6. WBSG's preliminary analysis of the *Heritage Management Plan* is not reassuring. It seems far from adequate, superficial despite over three years' work and adheres closely to the NCA's contestable *Griffin Legacy* re-interpretations of Griffin's Plan. With regard to the Immigration Bridge proposal, the impact criteria at pages 9-10 are brief and omit any mention of Griffin's planning and landscape principles pertinent to the West Basin in particular. Also omitted is any mention of local Canberra history and values associated with Lennox Crossing and Acton Peninsula.

7. The Policy Actions C6-1.6 and C6-1.7 are classified 'high' and 'immediate' but they are based on inadequate 'existing heritage values' (paragraph 6 above).

8. **Question from Senator Lundy:** *At what point would it have been appropriate for either the NCA or the IBA to formally instigate a conversation with the public or a public forum to discuss the merits, design, heritage and associated issues with interested stakeholders and members of the public? When do you think that ought to have occurred?*

I replied 'between three and four years ago' but that Professor Weirick's submission (32.1) would yield a closer answer as he has detailed the sequence of activities by NCA and IBA. His answer would be between 14.11.03, when the NCA gave 'in-principle support' to the IBA proposal, and 4.3.04 when Ms Pegrum, Chief Executive of the NCA, told the NCET Inquiry into the NCA that their discussions with IBA had entailed the 'options for delivery' of the project now that 'in-principle' approval had been obtained. See paragraphs 2.56-2.62 of submission 32.1.

9. Professor Weirick's inference is that project appraisal, basic studies and public consultation should have commenced **five years ago**. He concludes also that the proposal should by then have been referred to the Canberra National Memorials Committee (CNMC) as well as the Board of the NCA.

10. Furthermore, by April 2004 the NCA was circulating an Exposure Draft of **The Griffin Legacy** which incorporated the Propositions and Strategic Initiatives along with the historical research. *The Griffin Legacy* was published and launched at Parliament House on

9 December 2004. In his media release of 7.12.2004 Minister Jim Lloyd said that *“The Griffin Legacy offers the most extensive development transformation for Canberra since construction of the new Parliament House... the Legacy is underpinned by economic and engineering feasibility studies...for West Basin.”*

11. This question of timing is central to term of reference 1: **Process**. Both IBA and NCA have avoided responsible, standard and sensible criteria of project appraisal, consultation and impact assessment appropriate to a major bridge proposal in the central area of the National Capital. At the preliminary stage leading to ‘in-principle approvals’ by the NCA and the CNMC, **the NCA (not IBA) should have** carried out planning, land use, transportation and feasibility studies and scoping of environmental and heritage values.

12. In collaboration with IBA, NCA should have examined the purposes of the project and included alternative monuments and sites in the basic studies. Obviously, preliminary calculations of costs and economic feasibility should also have been estimated at this stage. Economic analysis should also include assessment of planning opportunities forgone or diminished by building the bridge. For example, Griffin Legacy Amendment 61 for West Basin lists a number of untested and rival options: the pedestrian bridge, ferry services and alternative walks and promenades.

13. Public consultation on some aspects of this information at this early stage would have enhanced the further development of the project. Use of terms such as ‘bridge concept’ and ‘detailed design’ is sophistry and no excuse for delay and drift. Neither NCA nor the proponent should have presumed simply upon a Works Approval process.

14. One unfortunate consequence is that IBA has failed to engage genuinely with Lake and Lakeshore users, other stakeholders and the wider public. Significant opposition to the Bridge idea is evidently emerging, in Canberra at least, from amongst people well aware of their migrant and Australia’s immigration heritage.

15. Another unfortunate circumstance is that over the past several years the NCA has been de-skilled and under-resourced in the areas of project appraisal, engineering, heritage and environmental impact assessment, risk analysis and public consultation. The NCA does not have the capability to manage a Works Approval process for the IBA project.

16. **Question from Senator Lundy:** *For the Committee’s benefit, can you describe Griffin’s land and water axes?*

I had a go at defining the heritage significance of the land and water axes in terms of their centrality to Griffin’s landscape geometry and connections to nature, topography, land and water, just as many other great cities have been aligned. The axes are organisers of the relationship of built form to natural landform in his plan for Canberra. I spoke particularly about the relationship of the axes with the National Triangle and the east-west orientation of the water axis as it is vital to the setting of West Basin.

17. After discussion with WBGS members, I wish to emphasise the following points:

- Griffin's great purpose was to anchor the built environment – the buildings in the great triangle and the three formal basins of the lake – into the natural environment.
- The great triangle delineates and integrates the national and municipal functions of the city.
- The water axis is a nature axis anchoring the three formal basins in the natural land forms of Black Mountain and the Jerrabomberra Wetlands.
- Buildings and other structures would be subservient in the wider West basin landscape.
- The Immigration Bridge as proposed would adversely impact upon the geometry of Griffin's plan and confuse what is now 'a scheme which the mind can grasp.'
- Just as Commonwealth and Kings Avenue Bridges define the space of the central basin, the Immigration Bridge would define and reduce the space of the West Basin.

### **Alternatives to the Bridge proposal**

18. This topic was raised by Committee members at the public hearing on Monday 30 March 2009. Considered views were given by various witnesses. The WBGs desires to make some points, additional to our submissions (32, 32.1 and 32.2). We believe the subject is especially relevant to the terms of reference of the Inquiry and to the question: **What next?**

19. The Inquiry has served to publicise the Immigration Bridge and raise issues about the basic concept and the project design. The publicity has encompassed concurrent plans for Lake Burley Griffin, such as the Yarralumla Bay and Weston Park draft Master Plans, the Lake Heritage draft Management Plan and the World War I and II memorials planned for Rond Terrace in the central basin.

20. People have been excited by the idea of commemorating immigration by a monument in the National Capital. Unimpressed by the Bridge concept, people have suggested various alternatives and appear keen to discuss them. The WBGs believes there is a major opportunity to integrate the purpose, enthusiasm and organisation of IBA forthwith into the current planning for expansion of the National Museum of Australia, within the NMA buildings. The Director, Craddock Morton, has over the past year been seeking resolutely expansion of the buildings, exhibition spaces, repositories and research capability.

21. The NMA should be on a par, for example, with the Australian War Memorial, having immense potential to upgrade the exhibits and stories of Australia's identity, ethos and achievements, particularly immigration. The Acton peninsula is a magnificent site where in the foreseeable future political will and imaginative design should be able to add a new wing to the building, more galleries and exhibition spaces, resource and research centre, and function rooms, together with necessary additional parking and taking advantage of the superb all round vistas.

22. Australia's immigration history and continuing experience warrants so much more than subscribed names of arrivals on a static bridge monument. The family arrival details should not be separated from the great themes and dramas of leaving one's home country,

the arrangements made by the host community for reception, settlement and assimilation, triumphs and tragedies, and the phenomenon of multiculturalism.

### **Canberra National Memorials Committee**

23. The National Memorials Ordinance of 1928 does not define “memorial” but employs the term ‘**commemoration.**’ The genesis of the Ordinance and subsequent activities by the CNMC indicate that the term **memorial is equivalent to monument.** A memorial can be ‘an object, institution or custom’ (Pocket Oxford) or simply nomenclature. In the early period two eminent historians were members of the CNMC; in 1952 their two seats were reserved simply for two Canberra residents.

### **Final note**

24. The Walter Burley Griffin Society hopes that this Inquiry will:

- a) serve to re-direct and re-define the processes for appropriate assessment and public appraisal of the IBA project and
- b) reinforce the findings and recommendations of the Committee’s previous reports (2004, 2007 and 2008 *The Way Forward* especially) and thereby influence the Commonwealth Government towards rebuilding national capital planning and the National Capital Authority.

25. The WBGs thanks the Committee and the Secretariat for the opportunity to make this supplementary submission.

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Chair, Canberra Chapter  
Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc.  
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