

To: Stephen Boyd
Secretary, JSC on the National Capital and Territories
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

SUBMISSION: INQUIRY INTO IMMIGRATION BRIDGE AUST PROPOSAL

Dear Mr Boyd

I strongly support the principle of an 'Immigration Bridge' subject to certain clearly defined conditions. I am happy to elaborate upon any or all of the following, if necessary:

1. That the bridge, as stated in *The Griffin Legacy* (2004), 'link the National Museum to Lennox Gardens with a high-quality, long-span ... The bridge would allow sufficient clearance for sailing craft, would provide direct access to King Edward Terrace cultural attractions, establish a pedestrian/cycle circuit of West Basin and afford excellent views of the Central National Area (CNA)'. The bridge's utilitarian role would undoubtedly give the CNA much-needed connectivity. It pre-supposes greater building density in the West Basin area, but such a bridge would surely stimulate this development, according to the 'Field of Dreams', build-it-and-they-will-come principle.
2. That the bridge be the subject of an international design competition and be funded appropriately—to a level commensurate with its significance and central strategic location. Far too often key buildings, plaza areas and design features in Canberra have been under-funded to the point of embarrassment. This design feature must have no expense spared in order to be an ornament to the nation's capital city, not an eyesore. European cities seem to experience little trouble creating elegant, visually compelling pedestrian bridges in some of their most sensitive, central real estate. Why can't we?
3. That the bridge establish its funding through a higher-profile public campaign than has been the case so far, one which reaches out purposefully to Australia's population of migrants of this and earlier generations to support it. Such a campaign should be funded in part, or wholly, by the Australian Government. The campaign thus far has been something of a micro success in eliciting impressive rank-and-file support, but this can and must be expanded. The campaign needs re-invigoration and clever, carefully targeted marketing of the bigger end of town.
4. The thrust of such a campaign would be to increase the sense of ownership of their capital felt by Australians across the continent. One of the most successful smaller national projects in Canberra in recent years was the Old Parliament House Gardens refurbishment. Its success derived from the fact that Australians from all walks of life, from former Prime Ministers to anonymous visitors of yesteryear, felt compelled for any number of private

and public reasons to have their stake—a subsidised rose—in the capital. After witnessing the very emotional opening of the Vietnam Memorial in 1991, media owner Kerry Stokes stated that this was exactly the role a country's capital should be playing: bringing its citizens together for important community purposes, being a place of pilgrimage. He's right. A capital city's 'symbolic role' seems certain to be its most significant role in the 21st century. A 'million' tiny plaques on the bridge and surrounds would create a wonderful place of pilgrimage. Capitals are not meant to be 100% pristine—rather a mix of dignity and blue-collar. This worthy, symbolically powerful idea can be both.

The arguments against an 'Immigration Bridge' will probably revolve around the visual and someone's interpretation of Griffin's 'intent'. The first can be overcome simply by hiring the best architect with the best design, and a credible budget. Yes we can. The second is more complex, but it is worth noting that Griffin had no less than five connections across the lake. This bridge would make four, and that includes Scrivener Dam. I believe such a bridge would be consistent with the philosophy of a democratic capital held by both Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin.

Dr David Headon

March 2009

- I am currently an Adviser to Senator Kate Lundy, who is aware of the fact that I am making this submission as an engaged citizen of Canberra.