



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND
YOUTH AFFAIRS**

(Reference: [Future use of the Fitters Workshop, Kingston](#))

Members:

**MS A BRESNAN (The Chair)
MR J HANSON (The Deputy Chair)
MS M PORTER**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

TUESDAY, 28 FEBRUARY 2012

**Secretary to the committee:
Mr A Snedden (Ph: 6205 0199)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

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Amended 9 August 2011

The committee met at 12 pm.

BURCH, MS JOY, Minister for Community Services, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Women and Minister for Gaming and Racing

HEHIR, MR MARTIN, Director-General, Community Services Directorate

WHITNEY, MR DAVID, Director, artsACT, Community Services Directorate

COLLETT, MR DAVID, Senior Director, Assets Management Branch, Community Services Directorate

THE CHAIR: As we have all the committee members here, we will start. I would like to welcome you, minister and department officials, to this hearing of the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs inquiry into the future use of the Fitters Workshop.

I will go through the usual housekeeping things that you are probably all very well familiar with. The privilege statement is on the table in front of you. I am sure you will have read it many times before. I draw your attention to that. I should note that obviously we are having the hearing today with officials. We will also be having hearings later this afternoon with other witnesses. We have had two hearings before as well.

Ms Burch: Sorry, is there another hearing this afternoon?

THE CHAIR: This afternoon from 2 till about 5. I mention that so you are aware that there are other witnesses coming in today. Before we go to questions from the committee, minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Ms Burch: I will make a very brief statement. You have received our submission. This is looking at the use of the Fitters Workshop. The decision by government to relocate Megalo into the Fitters Workshop has been longstanding. It has been in a series of budgets, and the Kingston precinct has been recognised to be a hub for visual arts. That is why the decision was made by government and we stand by that—that the preferred use for Fitters is Megalo. I find it, as I have said in the chamber, quite disturbing that members of the Assembly choose to upturn decisions of government that have been longstanding to the absolute detriment of community organisations. I will leave it there.

THE CHAIR: Just on that, I would like to say on behalf of the committee—I think I can speak for the committee—that there is no denigration of any community organisation that has been made here. I would make that point very strongly for myself.

Ms Burch: The impact on that organisation is on record, though.

THE CHAIR: I know and we have had a lot of submissions and a lot of various comments have been made. So we are aware of all the feelings, not just from the various arts communities. I just think it is important to make that point. I will go to my first question. It is on some of what you said in your opening statement about the decision for Megalo to go to this site.

I am not sure if you have seen the evidence from Colin Stewart, who is someone who has been involved in this arts precinct for quite some time, and some of the issues he raised around that. He has been sort of involved from about 1997, I think he said in his submission, with developing this area into an arts precincts. He said that it was always his understanding—the work that he had been commissioned to do for the LDA as well—that this was to be a multi-use, or multi-purpose arts precinct I should say. I am not sure if I have got those words exactly right. But that is something he said he had been aware of all along through this process up until 1997 as well.

I am trying to get a sense of something that I have been unable to get a sense of myself—when that decision was actually made that this would be a visual arts precinct and that Megalo would be the people that would go in there. That has not been clear. I think also from Colin Stewart's submission and what he informed the committee about in the hearing, was what happened to those plans and those processes that the LDA had been developing over a decade. What happened to those plans and at what point did this become the decision? That is not something, from questions I have looked at and from various documents that Mrs Dunne also had through FOI, that has been clear to me. That is something, as chair of this committee, that I am quite interested in getting more information about.

Ms Burch: Given that I was not here way back when this story began, it is my understanding that back in 2002-03 the development of the arts facility strategy identified Kingston foreshore as the centre for leading visual arts production and activity. So there has been a long-term understanding that the Kingston precinct would have a hub of visual arts, as we have been looking to develop other hubs for performing arts, in music and various disciplines within the arts.

There was money allocated in 2009-10 for the design and documentation and then to look at design and documentation for visual arts uses of the Fitters Workshop. That was aligned with the relocation of Megalo. That was confirmed in the 2011-12 budget—a commitment to relocate Megalo into the Fitters Workshop. There has been—

THE CHAIR: I understand all that. Sorry, I am not meaning to interrupt you, but that is something that is quite clear and I understand. But what I am trying to get a sense of—I think it is important in relation to this inquiry—is at what point, given that, as I said, Colin Stewart is a person who has been involved for quite some time; he had been developing plans with the LDA. At what point did those sorts of plans seem to have just been pushed to the side—

Ms Burch: Look, I think you will find—I can be corrected—

THE CHAIR: And at what point was it—

Ms Burch: If I may, chair, the plans for developing Kingston go back to 2002, where it was identified in an arts strategy that it would be a visual arts precinct. I am looking to David. He has been in the business for a tad longer than myself. The works around Kingston have also included the work from LDA, which is developing the residential area as well. It took us some time. Probably the Conroy report was another piece of

information that informed the footprint—that we could clearly, once and for all, determine what is the precinct that would be known as the arts precinct, given that it was embedded with an ever-growing and developing residential area as well.

In relation to the decision for government to support Megalo in its relocation in the 2007-08 budget, there was \$30,000-odd put aside to work with Megalo to explore the potential of establishing a print arts facility that was connected to the Fitters. That work was completed, as I understand, in 2009. That quickly then followed in the following budget around design that would facilitate the relocation. That was then followed by a budget and government decision to fund that relocation.

THE CHAIR: I will soon go to Mr Hanson and then Mrs Dunne. Again, I understand that. But, again, there is this 28 January 2010 brief, which I know you would be aware of. It says in 2007 that the LDA was looking at the space. But again it says in there that possibilities included a performance-based gallery and sculpture workshop and that Megalo relocation was considered. But still it is not clear to me, because you are saying then there was a decision made in 2002-03. I know I keep going back to Colin Stewart, but he is someone who has been involved in this for quite some time—

Ms Burch: David Whitney, can you—

Mr Whitney: Yes—

THE CHAIR: It still does not seem clear to me about where that actual decision was made, who made that decision and what has happened to all these other sort of previous plans that have been in place.

Ms Burch: Before David goes to the detail, the previous plans have informed the overall development of the Kingston arts precinct. The decision to support Megalo to relocate into Fitters is, as I have outlined, along those time lines. That is a government decision and it was made with the information to hand. But all the work continues to inform how we will continue to develop the Kingston arts precinct.

THE CHAIR: Okay, I guess it is a sense: who was that decision made by? Was it made in consultation with the LDA who had all these plans? Was it one person? I mean, who—

MR HANSON: I think the frustration—

THE CHAIR: It does not seem to be clear.

MR HANSON: for the committee—and I share—

Ms Burch: The government made the decision.

MR HANSON: I share the chair's confusion. When we look at the paperwork and what we have got in front of us, it is difficult to see how this has followed a logical sequence. I would be very interested to see what the department's view of this is and whether the department's advice was followed, whether there was a process that was followed. It does appear on the surface that a winner has been picked, that there—

Ms Burch: I object. I clearly object to that.

MR HANSON: You can object as much as you like, but there is a process that has been followed and then there is a break in that process and a winner is picked by someone in government. And I just—

Ms Burch: It is good to see an unbiased view coming to the proceedings, Mr Hanson.

THE CHAIR: Actually, I think to be fair, you made a pretty clear statement in your opening as well.

Ms Burch: Well, it is on record and—

THE CHAIR: Minister, that is fine, and I think Mr Hanson can have his view.

Ms Burch: He said on record that it is picking a winner and that is—

THE CHAIR: It is his view and—

Ms Burch: displaying his position. It is clear.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson can actually ask his question and have it answered.

MR HANSON: What I am trying to find is the evidence to the contrary. I want to hear from the department how this position came to be, that Megalo was chosen, because it does appear that there is a lack of consultation, that there is a lack of logical decision making leading up to that position.

So who actually made the decision and based on what advice? How did this come about? I would be very interested to hear what the department's processes were that led to this decision being made, because it just does seem to be inconsistent with what was leading up to that. Based on, I guess, the information that we have received subsequently, it just appears that a decision was made that may have been a political decision rather than a decision based on departmental advice or what the department was progressing. Can you provide some background on that?

Mr Whitney: I will try and fill the gaps in. I was not around in 2002-03 when the arts policy talked about developing Kingston as a cultural precinct and a visual arts precinct with a focus on making and producing art there. I am also not familiar with how the decision about how the Glassworks came about, but the Glassworks, again, was a building that was created as a facility for glass. It was the first of the major facilities on that site. That process obviously was undertaken and in 2006-07 the Glassworks opened.

Colin Stewart's work won the master plan for Kingston. In his presentation at an earlier hearing of this committee, he spoke eloquently about the need for not only a living precinct but a cultural precinct around where people were living and a mixed use to the area. Those very early plans, I think, are still held true by the LDA, but some of the detail has not quite yet been—at that stage it was not affirmed or resolved

how that detail would follow through. So with the idea of there being a visual arts precinct and there being some heritage buildings, okay, what would happen to those buildings? Arts worked with the power station to turn it into the Canberra Glassworks. There was also the Fitters building and also the former transport depot.

Now, the former transport depot has only recently come under discussion about what its potential future use could be. That is not resolved yet. The Fitters Workshop—the LDA stabilised the building to prevent it from falling into further decay. There was an intent at that stage to use the building for a purpose. At one stage there was the consideration of the LDA using it as offices. They elected not to do that. So it then became available to be part of the portfolio of buildings to be used as part of this creative-making workshop on-site.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, Mr Whitney, when was that? When did Fitters become part of that precinct, the buildings in that suite of buildings? When was it formally recognised that it should be part of the arts precinct?

Mr Whitney: I think 2007-08. Exactly within that time frame, I am not sure, because up until that point, the building had been—it was managed by the LDA and until very recently it continued to be managed by the LDA. But then it became opened up as part of the consideration for us to think about. Consultation in 2003 was with a variety of arts organisations, some quite small in scale. PhotoAccess is a very small organisation, Contemporary Art Space, Craft ACT, the Glassworks obviously were there as the lead tenant, and Megalo was the other visual art making organisation—

MR HANSON: In terms of Megalo, though, when was that decision made that they be given the Fitters Workshop and who made that decision?

Mr Whitney: The announcement, I think, in the 2007 budget was for investigation work to be going on to move Megalo into the Fitters Workshop, which we—

MRS DUNNE: So when was the decision made?

Mr Whitney: That budget announcement that year.

MRS DUNNE: And who made the decision? Budget cabinet—is that what you are saying?

Mr Whitney: We were advised that that was going to happen when the budget was announced and that we would undertake the work.

MR HANSON: Were you surprised by the decision?

Mr Whitney: No. I mean, decisions are—a variety of decisions are presented to us and we act in the best value way we can to enact those decisions.

Ms Burch: I think what David has just outlined is that there has been a long ongoing discussion since 2002-03 about how Kingston precinct would develop through LDA. The formal footprint and what is included that has evolved over time and certainly the transfer of those assets has, again, evolved over time since I have become minister or

since being—

Mr Whitney: Yes.

Ms Burch: Yes. So there have been ongoing various points along this where the planning was done. It has informed the next stage of planning. That has informed the next stage of planning and asset development and that. So if you are looking for a definitive date, there is a series of dates that have built up and have built on each other and inform decisions and the information to hand based on the premise that Kingston will be visual arts precinct. I think everyone recognises that the Glassworks is a great asset to our community, but it needs other partners there, other lively partners, that will create the dynamic and the throughput, the population flowthrough, that a visual arts precinct needs to be sustainable.

THE CHAIR: I will go to Ms Porter next because she has been waiting for a bit. Just on that, I do not think it is—you are saying it is not about a definitive date. What it is for me—and this is just for me, I guess—is about trying to get an understanding. We have had all these different plans in place. I know I keep going back to Colin Stewart, but I think he was very useful to hear from because he had been involved for quite some time. What he said in his submission was that this idea of a visual arts precinct—and I appreciate what you are saying, Mr Whitney, that it was not, sort of, exactly bedded down as to what it would be—would be more like an arts precinct. It is a community precinct, but that decision about it actually being a visual arts precinct did not seem to be bedded down then. Even in that 2007 brief, it still says that there are several possibilities, including performance-based galleries, sculpture workshop and Megalo relocation.

Ms Burch: Yes.

THE CHAIR: So even in that in 2007 it seems that that idea of it just being for visual arts for one particular group was still something which was being considered.

Ms Burch: I think—

THE CHAIR: I just wonder if that is actually accurate or not.

Ms Burch: The arts facility strategy back in 2003 identified the precinct as a visual arts precinct. But if you want to have it dynamic—if the logical conclusion then is that if you are not visual arts you do not have any space in the precinct, it is probably somewhat limited. If we are looking to create a vibrant, populated centre destination—there is some term for that sort of point of destination—

Mr Whitney: Yes.

Ms Burch: that people use, there will be all sorts of groups in there from static displays to workshops such as Megalo.

Mr Whitney: With the creation of cultural precincts across this country, and I am sure around the world, some of this happens organically. Someone tries to create a master plan around that. To have a focus on one particular art form, there is an

ongoing debate about whether that actually creates a synergy or whether, in fact, it is a sameness and it becomes a little bit unexciting. That is why the option that you are referring to there was presented. Yes, there is a focus on the visual arts and on visual arts making. I think that is a really important part. The Glassworks is not just about showing finished work. It is actually about the making of the work. Megalo will do exactly the same. It will be about the making of the print work so people can see work in progress.

I think the Conroy report is an interesting place to perhaps jump to because that helps inform the next part of the decision, which is the groups that were talked to in 2002-03—are they still interested in being a part of the precinct? Also, what are the considerations of the requirements that we need and also what land would be available? I mean, the LDA has got a very important brief to maximise return to government for most of that precinct area that is section 19 of the Kingston area. So what is it that arts need to have as a critical mass to create this sense of excitement?

I touched on the former transport depot earlier. That now has heritage listing and there was a proposal at one stage to demolish that building. That building now stays. Okay, that changes the mix. That changes how we can think about the site and what we can do within the site. Currently an argument could be that whilst it is well used on the weekend, there is a lot of time midweek when it is underutilised. Okay, how can we reinvigorate and use that as a space as well as the Fitters Workshop and the Glassworks building and a little building at the back that we call the chapel, just because it looks a bit like a chapel? That provides an artist-in-residence space for artists to come and live on-site and to work in the facility.

I think the decision to preserve or save the former transport depot as well as the consolidation of the various groups that Conroy consulted with indicates to us that there is actually an interest in really maximising the area for that cultural precinct.

Now, what is interesting is that from 2002-03 up until when Conroy's report was done two years ago, a year and a half ago, some of the organisations had changed personality. So there was a rethink and a rediscussion about groups to come on-site. What is interesting is that we opened up the scope a little bit to pick up film makers, because the film makers network was not anywhere near the scale it is now back in 2002-03. They are very keen to be on-site. That is about post-production in film as well as the shooting of film. We are also talking to fashion and design students at CIT. That is about making work and perhaps using the forum of the markets to sell their work.

There is nothing—there is very little opportunity in this exercise until you actually get to a point of decision. We are trying to evaluate best options all the way through. We are also talking to some of the—there are two gaming companies in town. These are people behind screens making computer games. They are very keen to consolidate onto the greater site as well and bring a commercial focus to what is happening.

The reason I am mentioning all of these is that that is how the thinking around the cultural precinct has expanded. The thinking has always been held to a visual arts precinct where work is being made. That is a critical part of our thinking and that is, I guess, a critical part of why Megalo's move onto the site is important. They provide a

scale. Most of our other visual arts organisations that are mentioned are quite modest. Megalo is not. It is quite a large organisation. It has a large workshop capacity for people to actually come and work and to come and watch work being made.

THE CHAIR: We will move on to Ms Porter because I know she has been waiting.

MS PORTER: Good afternoon, everybody. I wanted to go to page 3 of your submission, minister, where you talk through costs in relation to the Megalo Print Studio + Gallery being contemplated. Also there are the issues around performing arts being in that in that particular venue, if I read that correctly. Could you talk through that for us and give us a little bit more explanation about how you have established that—what you have written there?

Mr Whitney: The first part is the study that was undertaken in fact related to relocating Megalo and their existing operation. So the business model is established. They are applicants to the arts fund and a key arts organisation. From artsACT's perspective, we understand how their business works and their business model is strong and sound. So to transfer from one physical location to another physical location, there is a business model that is clearly articulated for them.

The other issues are issues that are of concern to us. I am not sure if I need to note a personal background of being a theatre manager for 25 years, including managing the Canberra Theatre Centre. There are lots of regulations and issues around places of public entertainment that would need to be considered in the event that Fitters Workshop were used as a place of public entertainment.

Our sort of cursory overview of some of those Building Code of Australia requirements and fire and safety audits that would need to be conducted indicate that there is a lot of cost involved in actually creating that within the Fitters Workshop. Currently it has no emergency services associated with the building. The exits are not suitable for fire exits. There are no immediate toilets nearby—all those sorts of practical questions.

But very importantly after that, there are a lot of other issues around how the place will be managed, how it would be worked. I guess that Albert Hall is an example where the territory recently has undergone quite a large consultative process with a firm from Sydney, Eltons, to look at how to best manage the Albert Hall. It is quite a complex exercise if you want to avoid the building becoming a carpet sale venue, which is what the Albert Hall, sadly, had become. I think there is a renewed vigour now to have a look at Albert Hall being something different from a carpet sale venue.

From our perspective here, what we are trying to point out is that there are a lot of issues that, because of the informal use of the Fitters Workshop by the music festival, the building was made available without some of these formal and legal requirements being factored through. If they were to be researched to make it a performance venue, I think you would find it would be a very expensive exercise to create that in the first place for the building and then how you would manage and make the building available for concert use. There is also—

THE CHAIR: Sorry, just on that; so you are saying if it was to be a space—what you

are saying is that facilities such as toilets, fire exit—are they the issues you are raising with the building?

Mr Whitney: Yes.

THE CHAIR: But will that not be the case regardless of any sort of use? Those things are going to have to be incorporated. That is sort of a key thing.

Mr Whitney: So—

THE CHAIR: Sorry, also if you are talking about the money, too, I am trying to get a sense of exactly where that money is going to. If it is going to the Fitters, is it mainly to do those things, because then there is going to be the annex as well?

Mr Whitney: The design work to move Megalo in has taken into account the usage, which would be the use for Megalo as a workshop, for visitors coming through to see the work and for exhibition openings. The scale of numbers of people going through the building at any one time is not the same as a formal seated place of public entertainment. The music festival talk of having 400 people in the venue at any one time.

THE CHAIR: But is that primarily for things such as the relocation? Is it primarily to do the work on the annex? Are you talking about the things like—

Mr Whitney: I think we might be talking at cross-purposes.

THE CHAIR: toilets, heating. I do not know—

Ms Burch: The cost of relocation is—I think Megalo themselves probably spoke at length about the design and the fit. I am not quite sure. I cannot recall their session with you, but certainly it has been articulated what the buildings are and some of those costs in there—the costs associated with doing the fit within Fitters to put Megalo in and the additional annex and those infrastructure requirements to their needs.

Mr Whitney: It is quite a different set of requirements for a building that might have 20 people working in there and at any one time maybe another 20 people observing what is happening or an opening that might have 150 people there. That is a very different set of requirements than a formal venue where you might have 400 people sitting a performance with 20 people on the stage. Fire exits have to be configured differently and services such as the provision of toilets, et cetera, have to be configured differently as well.

THE CHAIR: But there is still the same services that would have to go in there, regardless of the exits, though?

Mr Whitney: No, a different scale of services. I mean, for the—

THE CHAIR: Different scale, but they are still the same things you are going to have to factor into it.

Mr Whitney: Within the proposal for Megalo moving into the Fitters with the annex to the side, for example, the number of toilets that are made available is very different than if you had 500 people all needing to use the toilet in a 20-minute interval. There are different—you would need to have a separate toilet facility if it was to be a performance venue, whereas if it was to be a venue for Megalo, then you would need to have a much more reduced number of toilets.

Ms Burch: But I think there are different costs associated—we have costed and there is close on \$4 million for the relocation of Megalo. Any change to that brings an additional cost and an additional expectation of use, whether it is a gallery space—and I know there has been commentary here about the cost to put in a gallery space. Also, while I do not have it in front of me, I remember recalling one of the submissions that had the shared space where it had gallery space by day and entertainment by night. For the life of me, I cannot quite work out how you would do that—how you would decant the gallery and turn it into a performance space with all the obligations about OH&S, fire safety and centre management as well.

THE CHAIR: I actually do not think that was a suggestion by the groups that that is how it would work but, Mr Whitney, I am sorry I interrupted you answering Ms Porter's question.

Mr Whitney: There is another important consideration and that is the size of the venue as a performance venue. The music festival has had up to 400 people in the venue. My understanding is that it would not be appropriate to have 400 people in that venue if we were to follow the size of the fire exits and look at the appropriate aisle width, appropriate chairs and configuration of the chairs. I think the capacity would be much closer to 250, and that then I think is an important question, because that puts the venue back into the realm of other venues in Canberra that cope with that number. Also, if it were to be used by anything other than community groups, there is no commercial interest in a venue of 250 size because there are plenty of others in Canberra that satisfy that need and have much better facilities around that.

So I think that the current use, the use that has been done by the performance organisations for 400 people in the venue, is probably something that has happened, but I doubt that it would be able to continue to happen if it were to be used in the future, for that reason.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Further to that, minister, could you explain to me the significance or otherwise of the heritage when we are talking about this—the substantial work that will be needed and also what would happen if it was another use or a multi-use purpose building?

Ms Burch: We are quite sure—

MS PORTER: Reading through here and what it says about the heritage, what does that actually mean?

Ms Burch: We have done considerable work on the conservation management plan through Duncan Marshall, who is a heritage architect, and certainly the Heritage Council has accepted that conservation management plan. So the drawings that are available, for want of a better word, that support the relocation of Megalo have certainly been worked through and have taken much notice of the heritage value of that building, and the management plan to the building has certainly been agreed to by the Heritage Council.

Mr Whitney: If I can make a comment here, if we look at the sister building, if you like, the Canberra Glassworks, the adaptive re-use of that building, completely abiding by all the heritage regulations and requirements, has resulted in a building that has received national recognition. The design work for Megalo to move into the Fitters Workshop—although I cannot predict it is going to win the same national recognition—is certainly taking into account issues of heritage that were recognised and, as the minister was saying, it is certainly following the line of Duncan Marshall’s conservation management plan that any work done for Megalo within the Fitters Workshop is done with a sensitive understanding of the heritage qualities of the building.

MS PORTER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: On 6 May 2008 the arts minister announced a scoping study to identify the cultural uses of the Fitters Workshop. Can you put that in the context of all the varying scoping studies? Can you tell me who did the scoping study, when the government received it and what the government concluded from that, and can the committee have a copy of that report?

Mr Whitney: The scoping study was undertaken by May + Russell, an architect firm working with Megalo, to understand their current needs in their location at Watson and to—

MRS DUNNE: Sorry; on 6 May the minister announced a scoping study to identify the cultural uses of the Fitters Workshop. That is what the FOI request refers to it as.

Mr Whitney: Yes. I am just—

Ms Burch: We do not have the document in front of us, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: I am sorry, but your agency has provided it, so—

Ms Burch: Yes, we provided it; it was about a foot high and I do not have that document in front of me, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Okay.

Ms Burch: So if you want to provide a copy we may know exactly which document you are talking about.

MRS DUNNE: I am referring to the scoping study that was referred to in the FOI request, which was on 6 May and it says that it was a scoping study to identify the cultural uses of the Fitters Workshop. So was the decision already made about Megalo at that stage? And the question is: who did the study, when did the government receive it, and can we have a copy of it, because it is not in the FOI request?

Ms Burch: As to the time line, because I do not have that document in front of me, Mrs Dunne, I am not quite sure what you are referring to. In 2007-08 there was funding of \$30,000 allowed to work with Megalo—

MRS DUNNE: No, we have heard that, minister. If you do not know the answer, I am quite happy for you to take it on notice.

Ms Burch: Mrs Dunne, again you are referring to a document that we cannot sight, and there is probably other information and references in that document—

MRS DUNNE: If you do not have enough information now, would you like to answer on notice?

Ms Burch: I have asked you to provide the document and then we can respond accordingly.

MRS DUNNE: After this, I will give you the folio number for the FOI request and then you can take it on notice.

THE CHAIR: I suggest we take that on notice if we do not have that information. So we will take that on notice.

MRS DUNNE: The other issue which I think has not been answered is that on 28 August the executive director of Megalo wrote to the arts minister outlining a case for the Fitters Workshop to be given over to Megalo. There is an annotation on the letter from the arts minister saying that he thought that was a good idea. But did the minister ever answer that letter and, if so, can you provide a copy to the committee, because it is not in the FOI request?

Ms Burch: There was no formal reply to that. It is my understanding that that was part of the ongoing discussion about the uses of Fitters, narrowing down across all these plans, as David has outlined, about having a visual precinct, having a working precinct, having an action-based organisation in that building, which was why the government led to the decision to put Fitters in there.

MRS DUNNE: On the 12th—in January 2009—the government prepared a feasibility study statement of requirements to determine and scope the appropriate arts use for the Fitters Workshop. Who undertook the study and what were the findings and recommendations? Can the committee have a copy of the report, because it was not in the FOI request?

Ms Burch: That is the May + Russell one.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry; the May + Russell one is the January 2009 and the May 2008

one?

Mr Whitney: I would need to check. I think you are asking a question about the same study.

MRS DUNNE: No. There are two studies with two different dates. That is what seems to transpire from the FOI request.

Mr Whitney: Okay.

MRS DUNNE: If that is not correct, I—

Ms Burch: Again, 2009 was when we put some money aside for the design and documentation of print making as a use of Fitters Workshop.

MRS DUNNE: Yes. Okay.

THE CHAIR: Has that been taken on notice or is that the answer you were seeking?

MRS DUNNE: I am asking for it to be taken on notice because I would like a copy of the report, if such a report exists.

THE CHAIR: So that has gone on notice.

MRS DUNNE: On 29 October 2010 there is a briefing to the then arts minister that says, “The creative director of the centenary of Canberra and the Canberra Glassworks also provided input into discussion about the future use of the Fitters Workshop.” This is as late as October 2010. Can you provide the committee with copies of documents relating to the input, outlining the specific nature of the input provided by the director of the centenary of Canberra and the director of the Glassworks, because those documents are not in the FOI request?

Ms Burch: It is my understanding that that documentation was not released, Mrs Dunne, because it looks very similar to a question from Dr Moore.

THE CHAIR: Sorry; what is the answer on that?

Ms Burch: The answer is that it was not released, if the question was has it been provided. It is not released. There is information in there that we will not release.

MRS DUNNE: There is information in what that you will not release?

Ms Burch: You have made reference to a 2010—

MRS DUNNE: Yes.

Mr Whitney: Yes, briefing paper, 2010.

MRS DUNNE: A briefing paper in 2010.

Ms Burch: Let me just say: “was provided by the creative director of the centenary of Canberra and the Canberra Glassworks, see briefing paper 20 December 2010, 45/48”, and your question, Mrs Dunne, is: can the documentation be provided?

MRS DUNNE: Yes.

Ms Burch: Word for word from Dr Moore’s question. No.

MRS DUNNE: Why not?

Ms Burch: It is my advice that there is information in there that is considered confidential and it has not been provided.

MR HANSON: Confidential on what basis?

MRS DUNNE: Actually, this is not an FOI request. I am not a member of the committee, but if the committee so asks for those documents I think you would be bound to provide them. So the question is: would you like to provide them, or do I have to ask the committee to—

MR HANSON: Under the standing orders, that is correct.

Ms Burch: I will take some advice, because I do not know what documentation is there.

MR HANSON: No, no—

MRS DUNNE: It is really a matter for the committee.

THE CHAIR: What might be useful would be if you could actually provide an answer to the committee as to why we would not be able to access that information. From your answer, minister, to be fair, it is not clear why we would not be getting access to that information, so I think first off if we can get that answer for the committee then we can determine what is the best action to take from there. Thank you.

MRS DUNNE: Could I just also ask: how many versions of the Conroy report were there and how much did the Conroy report change, if at all, from the first draft to its final version?

Mr Whitney: Sorry, there are two questions there: how many—

MRS DUNNE: Were there multiple versions of the Conroy report and, if so, was there substantial change, and did artsACT or anyone—

Mr Whitney: There is one version of the Conroy report—

MRS DUNNE: in the ACT government ask for changes in the report?

Mr Whitney: There is one version of the Conroy report.

MRS DUNNE: There is only a final version?

Mr Whitney: Correct.

MRS DUNNE: Ms Conroy was not asked to redraft?

Mr Whitney: There was a draft that was provided and there were some things within the draft that we asked if she would consider reworking elements of and she was very happy to do that. But there is only one copy of the report.

MRS DUNNE: So there was a draft and a final?

Mr Whitney: Correct.

MRS DUNNE: And you had input from the draft to the final?

Mr Whitney: Correct.

MRS DUNNE: Could the committee see the request that you made for changes to the report?

Ms Burch: I think it is fairly standard practice for any report to come from a consultant and there to be tweaking. I think that is fairly standard practice. So I do not know if there is a tone in there, Mrs Dunne, that you are trying to imply.

MRS DUNNE: I think some members of the committee might be interested in the extent to which there was tweaking.

MR HANSON: Open and accountable government would suggest that you should release that.

Ms Burch: You are the one that is making it political, Mr Hanson. You are the one who has—

THE CHAIR: Can we just—

Ms Burch: through the Canberra Greens pulled a funding agreement out from underneath Megalo.

MRS DUNNE: Madam Chair, this is—

THE CHAIR: Can Mrs Dunne have the floor?

MRS DUNNE: All I am asking is: is it appropriate to know the extent of any tweaking? There may be not very much, but it has been put to me that there may be, so it may be of interest to the committee to know that. I can leave it there and the minister can take it on notice.

THE CHAIR: Yes. I think that is fair, if that is taken on notice and we can get an

answer on that.

Ms Burch: We were just having a conversation about what changes, because I certainly—

THE CHAIR: What we have just suggested is that that be taken on notice and the committee be provided with an answer on that. I appreciate that you were having conversations there, but it was not particularly helpful for anyone here getting answers. So if we can get a proper answer on that that would be good. I have got a question, if that is okay.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, sure.

THE CHAIR: The Kingston arts precinct strategy, the 2011 document, has been mentioned. Some of the comments in that are interesting. You said that this document has been adopted and will be followed through by government. I will read out some of the comments in there. In talking about the heritage aspects of the building, which we have all talked about this morning, it does actually say:

It is important to note that there is strong support for Megalo to be in the Kingston Arts Precinct but it was perceived as an opportunity lost if Megalo is in the Fitters' Workshop: that "destroys the open and beautiful features of one of the older buildings in Canberra".

It also talks about recognising the design, the siting and all those issues. Is that something which is being recognised in terms of what is going to go forward with this particular plan? It is noted in here that there are some concerns around that. Looking at the recommendations, I cannot see how that has been figured into that. I am just wondering how that was actually being accounted for.

Ms Burch: I might ask David Collett to talk. One, there is a conservation plan in place that clearly articulates that—

THE CHAIR: I understand about that, but this is saying that there has been quite a mention of this being adopted and recognised, about the fact that those things have actually been recognised in here.

Ms Burch: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Is it actually going to happen?

Ms Burch: Is what going to happen?

THE CHAIR: These concerns are about what could be the potential impact on the space, and it also mentions that it is a unique space in terms of also showing art works. Has that been accounted for in what has been adopted by government?

Mr Collett: I note that Alastair Swain, the architect that was engaged to complete the works, is going to appear before the committee later this afternoon; he will be able to provide you with some more advice. But certainly the conservation plan was given

careful consideration by the architects in the preparation of his scheme. He has, in fact, in the Fitters component of his works introduced the elements freestanding from the existing structure, so we have inserted a box which contains the offices, the meeting rooms and the plant room, and we have kept that free from the external walls of the building. This gives you two capacities: firstly, the capacity to remove that at a later date if some other adaptive re-use of the building is anticipated, but, more importantly perhaps, people entering into the space can see that this is an intervention. They can see the space in terms of the volume, the scale, the proportions of the space and the nature of the finishes.

So that work has been given careful consideration and, as I say, the interventions, the new works, have been kept quite separate, both in terms of their style and in terms of their physical configuration, from the existing structure.

The Heritage Council and the heritage unit have been involved in discussions about that. They have cleared the drawings. The new penetrations into the existing structure that make possible its use, which would have been necessary for any sort of use, have been carefully considered so that they clearly are different elements to the original structure and fabric of the building. Things like the entrances, the access through to the extension, the way in which the floor is treated, have all been carefully considered and they have been discussed with the Heritage Council members and with the heritage unit.

THE CHAIR: Okay, so you see that as addressing that concern that has been raised?

Mr Collett: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Mr Whitney: Can I add some additional information: that report was done when the designs were not complete and there was speculation that Megalo would completely fill the whole void and there would be no sense of the space that is there. In fact, after that report was finished, architect Alastair Swain continued to work with Megalo, as David has just expressed. There is now a rethink of how the internal works within the Fitters Workshop are going to occur. There is the option also of providing a mezzanine level so that patrons, visitors, can actually enjoy that space and look down on the work being created. So there is quite a change from what was an unknown when this report was being considered to the very sensitive development to put Megalo in.

You also mentioned about an exhibition space. Part of the welcoming address when you walk into the Fitters Workshop, when Megalo will be in there, will be an opening. The opening will go straight into an exhibition gallery, which is a critical part of the business side of Megalo's work and also adds to that sense of public engagement when people come in.

THE CHAIR: I think the point it makes in here is actually about the fact that there are few locations in Canberra spaces that can accommodate sort of large-scale artworks. That was the actual point that is made in here.

Mr Collett: That is right—

THE CHAIR: So that does not impact on that, you do not think, by having that in there?

Mr Whitney: I think we need to look in the greater context of Kingston as well, because the other arts organisations I mentioned that we are looking at moving to the greater Kingston precinct also have exhibition and display needs. There is identified in Conroy an area of about 3,000 square metres for arts organisations to have new accommodation built for them and some of that would be an exhibition/gallery display area. If we look at the Belconnen Arts Centre as an example where we have built a gallery that does have quite considerable height and also does have appropriate hanging systems and lighting systems, we can actually build that in the new building to create an exhibition space for a variety of users to use, whether they be those organisations I mentioned earlier or other arts organisations or other artists that might want to display work.

THE CHAIR: But that is not something that could be incorporated into a multi-use building, if it was to be that?

Mr Whitney: That will be a building that will have a series of the smaller arts organisations and be a multi-use building.

THE CHAIR: No, but I am saying something like the Fitters; that is not something that could actually be incorporated in that?

Mr Whitney: Megalo have identified to move into the Fitters Workshop and they have an exhibition and display requirement as part of their business and their business case operation.

THE CHAIR: Maybe I am not bringing you to the point. If Fitters was to be a multi-use space, are you saying that is not something that could actually be incorporated in those sorts of features that would allow artworks to be hung? I am just—

Mr Hehir: I think it might be better if Alastair Swayn was able to talk you through David's explanation around the fact that we are not putting objects into the wall or inserting into the wall but trying to keep the wall spaces there. My understanding is that is where the displays are likely to be, but Alastair will be able to talk you through how he has managed those sorts of issues, rather than us trying to reinterpret his work for you.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Thanks. It seems that, since the decision was made, new information has come to light with regard to the acoustics and the nature of the Fitters Workshop. I guess that is why we are here today, isn't it? I am just wondering what response there has been from government to that and whether they have said: "Is there a new piece of information here? Have we made the right decision?" Have you reviewed the decision? That is the first part of my question.

Then I suppose the second part is: do you see that there is scope, as some people have suggested, that the Fitters Workshop remain as a stand-alone facility for a variety of uses and that Megalo be provided a purpose-built facility so that, as has been suggested, you get the best of both worlds, which is Megalo getting a purpose-built facility but you maintain the unique characteristics of the Fitters Workshop?

So the two parts are, firstly, there is new information to light; have you considered that? Secondly, moving forward, has government thought about whether that is a viable option or not?

Ms Burch: The government has made a decision, and this is a government that stands by its decisions. In good faith we had conversations with Megalo. In good faith Megalo were party to those conversations and have built their forward plans on the decision to relocate into Fitters. They have, on record—and I think they have shared it with you—that their forward plans are in tatters because of the decision by some within the Assembly and this committee.

We will support our decision, and you have brought new information to light. I have looked with interest at the two acoustic reports that you have put in to this inquiry. What I get from that is that there is reverberation that is unique, but it is a very, very narrow field of music. Classical music I do not think would suit. Fast music I do not think will suit. So I think it has been noted that it was a very limited—

MR HANSON: So in terms of—

THE CHAIR: Can I just—

Ms Burch: There was some article about Gregorian monks—

THE CHAIR: I was just going to make the point that we will be hearing from the specialists later on, so I think it might be useful for everyone to listen to their evidence as well.

Ms Burch: I think it would be. It is certainly—

MR HANSON: Going back to my question, though—

Ms Burch: No. If I can go back, about the new evidence—

MR HANSON: I am asking the questions, minister. You can just clarify, because there is a lot of waffle coming through—

Ms Burch: I am just making reference to the new—

MR HANSON: What I want to know is what the process for review was, whether it was you just having a look at it and saying, “No, we have made a decision and we’re sticking by it,” or whether there was any more formal review based on, in the light of, new information coming forward? Was it just you simply saying—

Ms Burch: The new information—

MR HANSON: “No, we’re sticking by it—

Ms Burch: The new information is still coming forward, and that is certainly held in the two acoustic reports that have been provided through this committee and are online, as I understand. My interpretation of those is that there is very limited musical use and that there is a good swag of music that would just not be appropriate. So the new information that has come to light is that it is a clear sublime musical venue; that has been found not to be correct if you read and interpret, as I have, those acoustic reports, which show the limited nature of the benefits of those venues.

MR HANSON: So that is your interpretation; okay. Then the second part of the question was that a number of proposals have suggested that, because it is a matter of interpretation whether it is of use or not—

Ms Burch: “Limited use” I said.

MR HANSON: Okay; that is an interpretation. Others that have come before this committee have a different view. One of the proposals was that Megalo be provided with a purpose-built facility so that the community can retain the Fitters Workshop for a broader range of uses. Have you looked at that as a viable option or not?

Ms Burch: We have considered that along the line, and we considered the best use for Fitters was to relocate Megalo in there. More building, more development, will go along through the precinct. As Mr Whitney has just indicated, there will be other opportunities for space, for use, for mixed community space, whether it is for demonstrations, whether it is for gallery space. This is just the beginning of how we develop Kingston into a precinct, Mr Hanson.

THE CHAIR: Following on for that quickly, in 2007 a lot of things started happening, but that was the time, too, when the acoustics were raised as being a quality of the Fitters Workshop. Did that get factored into any decisions that were made?

Ms Burch: We were aware of it. As you know, I think members of the Canberra musical society—the music festival—wrote. We looked at that but, again, others have said that it is of limited musical—is not an overall building that will accommodate every notion of music known to mankind—

THE CHAIR: No, and that has been recognised.

MR HANSON: Show me a building that does.

THE CHAIR: No, no, and that has been recognised—

Ms Burch: Pardon?

MR HANSON: Show me a building that does.

THE CHAIR: There are not many that do. All I am just trying to get a sense of—I take what you are saying but, again, this is one of the things that could have some

subjective interpretations applied to it. You have made that point yourself. We are taking different interpretations from the report possibly. But—

Ms Burch: It is good to know that in advance.

THE CHAIR: No, no, I am just saying that in 2000 when that was raised, it was actually something that was—when it was raised some people had very strong views about it being a very good music venue. Was that actually then factored into the decisions? Was it something that was looked at properly?

Ms Burch: It was considered in the decision making. The government stood by its decision that Megalo would be the best use for Fitters Workshop.

THE CHAIR: How was it actually considered, though?

Ms Burch: It was before my time. Certainly—

THE CHAIR: No, I understand that, but—

Ms Burch: But I have had—

THE CHAIR: How was it considered?

Ms Burch: a number of discussions with people who have an interest in music. I have sought advice about what other musical venues or other venues and buildings could be used for music. I have put on record, I am quite happy to say now, that I will work with the musical fraternity—what we can do with Albert Hall or what we can do with other venues such as Ainslie music hub, which I think is designed by the same architect as well. So I have put on record and I will continue to put on record that if there are other things that we can do with other venues to provide a broader usage, then we will do that. But the government up until now continues to have the view that the proper use for Fitters for a range of reasons is Megalo.

MRS DUNNE: Can I just follow up on—

Mr Whitney: Can I make a—

THE CHAIR: Sorry, Mr Whitney was just going to make a point.

Mr Whitney: I think it is important to be mindful that there are a variety of venues in Canberra that are currently used for music—

THE CHAIR: Yes, we have got that in the submissions.

MR HANSON: We are across that.

THE CHAIR: We have got that information in the submissions.

MRS DUNNE: Could I actually follow up on the final point? You have asked, Madam Chair, a lot of questions about what the government did when it discovered—

when it was told about the acoustics at Fitters. The evidence from Pro Musica is that they were told in no uncertain terms not to mention it again. It was evidence that was given in the submission. When Professor Aitkin wrote to the Chief Minister acquainting him with the success of the festival and what he called the amazing musical space that they had unearthed, it is accurate to say—this is from Dr Latham’s submission—that this letter was not well received. Explicitly in reply to the letter and indirectly through channels, Pro Musica was strongly advised not to proceed with further public or private comment on the advocacy of the building and the building’s future uses. These are also documents which are not in the FOI request. Could the committee see the letter that Professor Aitkin wrote to the Chief Minister in May 2009 and the government’s response to Professor Aitkin?

Mr Whitney: I do not know that we have that. I would need to—

Mr Hehir: I do not think we have that letter.

MRS DUNNE: Where would it be? Professor Aitkin wrote to the Chief Minister and the Minister for the Arts. According to Pro Musica’s submission, they received a response from someone. So someone in the government must have those letters.

Ms Burch: We will explore it, but I also understand that he went on to say that any comment was certainly not in a threatening manner. It was just as a friendly comment. That is my understanding, as I recall—

MRS DUNNE: If we could see a copy of the letter—it has been put to the committee and it has been put to members of the public that—

Ms Burch: I will go back and look at Chris Latham’s *Hansard* as well.

MRS DUNNE: that Pro Musica was not well received.

MR HANSON: I am happy to formally request, Madam Chair, that you do provide us with that—

THE CHAIR: I think what is the best thing—

MR HANSON: if it exists.

THE CHAIR: to do, Mr Hanson, is just to—there has been quite a lot of documents quoted by Mrs Dunne. I have actually lost track myself of the documents. I think it is actually worth getting a proper answer on all the documents that have been raised and seeing whether or not they are relevant. I agree that we have not had any clarification on some of the documents raised about why we cannot actually see those. I think if we can actually get a formal response to that it would be the most useful starting point.

Ms Burch: Could we in that have a reference to the folio numbers that the questions are coming from.

MRS DUNNE: I do not have a folio number. It was not mentioned in the FOI request. It was mentioned by Pro Musica and has been mentioned elsewhere, but it is in the

Pro Musica submission.

THE CHAIR: What we can do as a committee if there is a lack of clarification about what exactly we are looking for, we can follow that up as a committee with Mrs Dunne as well.

MRS DUNNE: Could I also ask about acoustics? I know that the government did not commission an acoustic report. I was wondering whether someone could tell the committee why—

Ms Burch: Sorry, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Why did the government not commission an acoustic report? Why has it been left to this committee to do so several years down the track? Also, was there any acoustic study done in relation to the proposed fit-out of the Fitters Workshop with the insertion of the box and the impact, positive or negative, that that box might have on the reverberation in the Fitters Workshop? It has been put to me and to members of the committee that the box may ameliorate—dampen—the reverb. But it has also been put to people that it may exacerbate the reverb and it may actually make it very uncomfortable working there in that space because of that. Has any acoustic study been done about the impact of the refurb on the reverb?

Ms Burch: Look, I think you would have to talk with Alastair Swayn—

MRS DUNNE: Okay.

Ms Burch: about the box, the pod.

MRS DUNNE: But my first question is: why did the government never do an acoustic study when it was raised?

Ms Burch: Again, it was raised, but there was other commentary that has been put to this committee and in the public arena that while some supported it as a musical venue others did not. The government had made decisions and planned for Megalo to be relocated into Fitters.

THE CHAIR: We are out of time. Thank you, minister and department officials, for appearing here today. Obviously, there are a number of questions taken on notice that we will seek some clarification on.

Ms Burch: You will put those through?

THE CHAIR: Yes, what we will need to do is clarify that and make sure everyone knows what we are looking for.

MRS DUNNE: Madam Chair, is there scope for questions on notice because I have still got a lot—

THE CHAIR: Sorry?

MRS DUNNE: Is there scope for questions on notice because I have still got a lot of questions for the government?

MR HANSON: Questions on notice.

THE CHAIR: Questions on notice, yes.

MRS DUNNE: Okay, thank you.

Meeting adjourned from 12.59 to 1.59 pm.

VENNONEN, MR KIMMO, Acoustic Consultant, KVDL Acoustics
LOWE, MR DUNCAN, Acoustic Consultant, KVDL Acoustics
NEISH, MR MURRAY, Acoustic Consultant, SLR Consulting (Australia) Pty Ltd

THE CHAIR: I would like to welcome Mr Neish, Mr Vennonen and Mr Lowe here today to appear before the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs inquiry into the future use of the Fitters Workshop in Kingston. Obviously, the three of you prepared the acoustics report for the committee. I mention that for the *Hansard*. I will go through the usual housekeeping because I think it is useful, particularly the privilege statement, just to make sure that you are aware of that, have read it and are aware of its implications.

I know we have got you for a limited time. Did anyone want to make an opening statement or are you happy to go to questions from the committee, given that we have got limited time?

Mr Vennonen: We have prepared an opening statement.

THE CHAIR: I will let you go through it.

Mr Vennonen: Firstly, thank you for allowing us the chance to say a few words about our report and its conclusions. We have had a very limited time to survey the venues, analyse the data, build a computer model and write our report. Though this was no-one's fault, it meant we had really precious little time to digest and reflect on the data we generated. In the last two weeks we have had some time to reflect a bit more. We really welcome this opportunity to expand upon the meaning of our data and to clarify any confusion, correct any misunderstanding or expand on any of the points or issues in our report.

Clearly our brief is not to judge whether the space is going to be used for print making or for music. But based on our long experience with music and acoustics, we are here to assess three points as objectively as possible. These points are, firstly, the acoustic qualities and characteristics of the Fitters Workshop building; secondly, whether the building may have any identifiable unique acoustic qualities which make it a superior venue for live music and/or choral performance; and, thirdly, possible or likely alteration to any unique existing acoustic qualities which could result from changes such as fitting out to the current bare nature of the building. That is our brief, in effect—to answer those three questions.

Here are the points we would like to make following on from all that. Firstly, the Fitters Workshop is not, and probably never will be, a standard concert hall. Therefore, it might not be appropriate to use standard concert hall parameters to assess it. The same argument could be applied to a well-known German medieval cathedral like the Frauenkirche. That is a very highly valued acoustic space in another country.

The Fitters Workshop is certainly a unique acoustic space within Canberra, as we found when we compared it to six other venues. Comparison to the other venues is most relevant when thinking of large churches like St Andrew's or St Christopher's. As it is the most empty of all the spaces surveyed, it is also the most sensitive to alterations like seats, audience, stage and so on. Variation in audience numbers will

have a large impact on the sound, whereas a venue like Llewellyn Hall has much more soft surfaces, and so is much less affected by the audience numbers. However, the very same surfaces also make it less suitable for some styles of music—I am talking about Llewellyn Hall here—making amplification a must.

The Fitters Workshop has nearly perfect dimensions for what we in the acoustics business call trouble-free brew modes. Basically, what that means is that it results in a very even base response and the smoothest long reverberation we have heard in Canberra. It is an excellent blank slate, if you want to look at it in those everyday terms. It is a pure space that can be temporarily modified somewhat to suit different needs.

Initial interrogation of the model we made—we are talking about the computer model—would suggest that many acoustic properties are remarkably consistent across the audience area, meaning that a large number of people would hear a similar sound. As an empty room, however, its acoustics are not sensible for most speech and music events, as an empty room.

The model shows that with a seated audience, the space could well be a superior venue for some forms of unamplified music. This is confirmed by recordings of music we have heard. It is our opinion that the data we collected and our modelling shows that some of the claims that have been made about the positive quality of acoustic cannot be discounted.

If this space is to be preserved for its acoustic, then any permanent alterations required to make it usable or habitable have to be kept to an absolute minimum, lest what we are trying to save is destroyed. So we would not like, for example to whack a partition down the middle of the room or do something really obvious and gross to the dimensions of the space.

To increase the range of uses, the reverberation needs to be controlled at will, a bit like the Wesley Music Centre has got systems in place for that. We suggest in this case, though, instead of something like the Wesley, we suggest a minimal modular and removable fit-out that allows for variable acoustics—for instance, using very everyday things like curtains and carpets. This will allow the option of the space remaining as is for some events and being adaptable for multiple purposes like visual arts exhibitions, creative development et cetera.

We must also recognise that it may never be appropriate for most rock music events using PA systems and neither for film festivals, mainly because to screen a movie you need a certain certification for the theatre or you lose things like dialogue and so on. It clearly would not—I do not think it would work to put a film on in there. We found that with these minimal modifications we proposed the speech intelligibility would still be a problem. So you would need more extensive work to be done to make it a good venue for speaking in.

The favourable qualities of the Fitters Workshop have arisen by accident, not design. The addition of a cement floor, plus the replacing of the ceiling in 2007 altered the internal dimensions and would have massively changed the acoustic properties of the room. Any alterations should be carefully assessed and acoustically modelled like we

have done, but with more time to do detailed work.

If we were to extend our modelling process, it needs to be informed by issues or considerations like how much storage space is available for chairs. Could the chairs be partly absorbing or just hard plastic? Is it practical to have movable carpets or retracting curtains? Can we use curtains to cover either the wall and/or the window surfaces? What size of modular stage are we talking about? Do we need to make allowance for a heating system or also, very importantly, what changes do we need to make to the exits to make them conform to what is appropriate for fire exits and so on? We do not have that information because we have not been given that direction. But all this could be modelled and designed down the track.

So now I want to correct a bit of a misconception. We have been reading the submissions and so on and noticed a sort of common thread running through that, which we believe is mistaken. It goes like this: various people without acoustic knowledge—without actual acoustic knowledge, scientific knowledge—have sort of construed that the Fitters Workshop acoustics would be destroyed by any modification like chairs, fire exits and so on. Therefore, it is pointless to think about it being a practical musical space, because when you put something in there, you change it and you spoil it and it is no longer nice—something like that.

We need to say pretty much unequivocally that this is wrong. This is not the way to look at it. Every time you do something so simple as bring in an audience, you are radically changing the acoustic. By our calculation, bringing an audience of 300 people halves the reverb time, for instance. There is nothing wrong with minimal and permanent alterations like lighting, power points or fixing the doors up to become safe fire exits if they are done with the acoustics in mind, just as there is nothing wrong with temporary changes like extending curtains, putting out a carpet or inviting an audience in. After all, it is all temporary. So in our opinion, the acoustics are actually enhanced by such things. This is proven by the live recordings we have heard and the computer modelling we have done.

Something else to think about: since writing the report, we also want to present another way of thinking about the space, given that it cannot be a standard concert hall. Our modellings show that even with chairs, audience and curtains, the Fitters Workshop is at the outer boundary of what is considered acceptable for standard concert halls. Whatever happens there has to take the acoustics into account, as it is not a neutral venue. When we use this term “a boundary venue”, we do not want to imply or say that it is marginal quality.

In fact, some forms of music would thrive in there. The Fitters Workshop could be by far the best and most suitable venue in Canberra in those cases. We have not attended performances there; so we cannot with authority advise what sort of music works there are the best. But there are public submissions with statements from people who are authorities. They are composers, musicians and conductors. So they know things we do not. They have been there, after all, when these things have been happening.

Canberra already has a range of normal venues which measure up well according to most of the standard concert hall criteria. We will also grant that some of these venues have big accessibility issues like cost, poor disability access, operating hours, being

attached to schools—you name it—a lack of facilities like dressing rooms. They can be religious spaces and therefore not suitable for some artworks, music works and so on. But it is not really our job to talk about those aspects. We are just sort of noting it along the way, because we have thought about these things along the way.

But there are not many venues that are both accessible and exciting at the boundary of what is sensible that spur the artist to be sensitive to their space, to create new work or reassess their basic assumptions. Our culture thrives, grows and progresses through action at the boundaries. Contemporary art is clearly motivated by taking things to the edge. We only need look at Beethoven, the Beatles, Jackson Pollock, Picasso, Percy Grainger, Brett Whiteley for examples of taking things to the edge in their eras—be it 400 years ago or two decades ago. As time passes, these things become more mainstream and even lucrative. As well as being suitable for very old art forms like choral music, we believe the acoustics of the Fitters Workshop could potentially be curated to be very amenable to contemporary music and performance.

Finally, a few closing thoughts. In our culture, the acoustics are often neglected in the design of public spaces. Just think about how many restaurants have got conditions that make it impossible to hold a conversation with someone across the table. Large interior spaces like the foyer of the National Museum of Australia, while visibly impressive, are nearly impossible to work with owing to the acoustic conditions. In the Fitters Workshop, our community discovered a centrally situated space with unique acoustic values which arose by accident over many decades. In this case, we believe we could consider acoustics as a heritage value as much as building materials and architectural style.

Whether Canberra is able to seize this opportunity to accept this as a boundary space and creatively curate a multi-arts program that builds on what is there is not for us to decide. But we see that possibility if that is the decision made. As acoustic consultants experienced in music, we have verified that the space can be minimally modified to increase the range of uses, while retaining and enhancing its favourable properties, which are at times superior to anything else in Canberra. If it is retained in its current form, it could become a functional and complimentary extension to the range and variety of venues around Canberra.

So there you have it. There are a few things to sort of add to what we wrote in the report. Some of this is clarifying and some of this is the result of us having discussed it over the last few weeks and having bit of time to consider all these things.

THE CHAIR: Wonderful, thank you. I appreciate that. I am sure the committee appreciates that too. Mr Lowe, did you want to add anything to that? I know, Mr Neish, that you have a separate report. Do you want to add anything?

Mr Lowe: No. We wrote that together, so.

THE CHAIR: You all wrote that? Yes.

Mr Lowe: Do you want to say something?

Mr Neish: I think Kimmo summed it up very well, actually. If you look at the general

themes of both our reports, we have come to similar conclusions, even though there was no collaboration involved. So at this stage I do not have anything to add to that. I thought that was well said.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you. I just want to ask a little bit further about the sort of modifications that you discussed—what alterations would be made. I appreciate that you said that that is not something you have been tasked with looking at. You made the point that you consider that it could also be used to accommodate other forms of music, apart from the choral which you mentioned. In terms of those modifications, are you able to give the committee a bit of an idea about what would be acceptable so you still retain those qualities?

Mr Vennonen: Sure. The first thing is that any modifications would need to have minimal impact on the acoustics, and it may be that some of those modifications would need to be movable—for example, chairs; and carpet you may consider as an option that you can put up or put down depending on the event. Obviously, putting a carpet down will dampen down the reverberation and therefore if you had a smaller audience in mind the carpet could make it acceptable. The same for curtains; we have discussed about whether we could have curtains that, for example, retract into boxes or are full length. That way you can have your cake and eat it too: you can have it used as is for venues like the International Music Festival, where all you need is 300 seats and a stage, or you can use some other devices to absorb sound to make it cater for a broader range of music.

THE CHAIR: I think you were here earlier this morning when we had the department. Mr Whitney made the comment that he did not think, with the accommodations that would have to be made, you would be able to then have an audience of 400 people. He thought it would be more like 250. Do you have any comment to make on that? Do you think that would be the case, or that you could still do that and accommodate 400 people?

Mr Vennonen: We cannot comment on accommodating 400 people; it is not our area of expertise. We did our modelling based on 280 people, and we arrived at that number because we discovered that, based on leaving two sort of blocks of seating, a stage and a bit of milling around space at the back, in a standard computer model we could put in the equivalent of 280 chairs. So I think that is about the maximum you would put in that room.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Thanks very much for your reports. In terms of the modification of the building, one of the other uses that have been put forward is a sort of visual arts display space—a temporary gallery, I suppose. You have said that speech is a bit of a problem, but with the sort of minimalist modifications you were talking about in your view would you be able to hold a visual arts display, either from Megalo or from the glassworks or some other visual arts organisation, and have that as a usable space for that, or would the acoustics be unsuitable?

Mr Vennonen: I do not think the acoustics are that vital for a visual arts display space. There are a lot of very lively reverberant galleries around. If people wanted to do

some public speaking in there, that is where we would run into trouble. Even with the acoustic modifications we have shown that speech could be problematic.

MR HANSON: Sure. But as a temporary gallery it is fine?

Mr Vennonen: I do not see an issue with that as a visual arts gallery. If you are talking about an audience of people coming in through a two-week time frame looking at works I do not think the acoustics are relevant.

MR HANSON: Okay. Thanks.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter?

MS PORTER: No, I do not have a question at the moment.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: This is probably outside your brief, but are you aware of the configuration that is proposed to accommodate Megalo, which is essentially a drop-in box. It was actually up there at one stage, but it has disappeared. Do you have any views on, or does your modelling indicate, how the acoustic might be affected by putting the drop-in box in the middle of it?

Mr Vennonen: We have not gone there. We were not made aware of that proposal at all, and I do not think you were either?

Mr Neish: I haven't seen it.

MRS DUNNE: All right. It has been put to us that the box may sort of dampen the reverb but it also may exacerbate it. I suppose it is a live issue. If you were going to work in that space could you end up perhaps with an intolerable reverberation?

Mr Vennonen: All we know is that putting something in there will change it. As it is there I do not see anything in that plan that does reverberation controls, but our next speaker, who is the architect, may be able to advise a bit more on that. You would hope that acoustics have been taken into account if you are talking about turning that into a workplace, which is what has been proposed, and a workshop that creates noise. You do not want to have that bouncing around for 10 seconds after you have made the noise initially.

MRS DUNNE: I think that what was put to us was that when it was a workshop it was a pretty noisy place. But you also said in your comments that the 2007 refit may have contributed significantly to creating this unusual acoustic.

Mr Vennonen: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: So what did they do? They put the ceiling in?

Mr Vennonen: The ceiling has changed. According to what we have heard—I cannot remember who said it—the ceiling has been redone, resurfaced, and also the concrete

floor has been changed. Originally, the building may have had a dirt floor, a long time ago, which would have been fine because it would have been a highly absorbent surface for loud noises. But I am not sure what was in place between the 1920s and 2007. The concrete screen is about this thick, and it is quite bouncy acoustically. I do not think that was in place before 2007.

MRS DUNNE: I see, yes.

Mr Vennonen: The acoustics have arisen by accident. I do not think the LDA would have wanted to design in a 10-second reverb time. I think they would have just plonked the floor down and said, “We will deal with the rest later.” And here we are.

MR HANSON: The LDA have probably done stranger things.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne, did you have anything more?

MRS DUNNE: I did not write down the term you used, but you were sort of saying “acoustics at the margins”; what you were saying by that was that it was a challenging acoustic, that it would challenge people to explore different things. Could you just elaborate a little more? You were saying that is a good thing, not a bad thing?

Mr Vennonen: Correct. There are a few venues in Canberra already which are very standard. We are talking Llewellyn Hall, Sitsky Room, Uniting Church, Royal Theatre et cetera. There are plenty of standard venues where you can commercially fit 1,000 people in and make money and it is a reliable thing. Yes, you have to use amplification. Yes, you have to charge high ticket prices. No, you cannot let community groups in because they cannot afford it et cetera, whereas this is a different venue. It is not a boundary where those conditions do not apply. Yes, that means you have to take on the acoustic. It is not neutral. You have to work with it. That is going to affect your work as a musician or an artist, and I believe that is a good thing as well as it could be to some people a problem. You would not put The Police in there, because it would be a total mess—I mean the band, not the—

MR HANSON: I think they broke up a while ago.

Mr Vennonen: You might be up to date, but I am not. You would not put on a rock band without really having your eyes open, because it would be a mess. Possibly a Japanese noise band would be brilliant in there, as would a rave party with 300 people. It could be a great thing. But for commercial music that is there to make money it may have problems, and there are other venues that cater for that already in Canberra. This could be a venue that fills in the gaps. That is how I have always been thinking of it. You cannot compare it to Llewellyn Hall, and I actually believe that this venue could be superior to Llewellyn Hall in some respects.

THE CHAIR: You said it could be the venue that fills in the gaps. You probably have already answered this in a way: what sort of performances or types would you see as more suitable to that than, say, Llewellyn?

Mr Vennonen: For example, contemporary music. There was a festival called SoundOut here in Canberra about a month or two ago. I think they were in Theatre 3,

because they did not get into the Street Theatre. Anyway, a contemporary music event like that might go well in there, if the acoustics were controlled a bit. They could have had a couple of hundred people in there. Also of course any choral music from medieval onwards would work in there. I am not sure about fast classical music; I think we have all said that that would be a problem. But then again you have Llewellyn Hall and the Sitsky Room for those events.

THE CHAIR: And when you say about the acoustics being controlled a bit, are you talking about the sort of things you have already outlined about those sort of basic removable modifications that you can make?

Mr Vennonen: Correct. Basically, what was done for the Canberra International Music Festival seemed to be very successful in terms of controlling the acoustics. Yes, they also brought in three or four hundred people to control the acoustics, and the sum total of all that made it—in our opinion, having heard the CD—an excellent venue; not just a normal venue but an excellent venue. As a recording engineer I would prefer those sorts of recording conditions to other things in Canberra, even if I could control the acoustics.

MS PORTER: I would like to explore a little bit more around the modifications that would need to be made. We heard the minister or the officials earlier talking about some things that would need to be done to make it more permanent, like the fire doors, for instance, and heating obviously in our Canberra winter, and maybe cooling. I do not know what that building is like inside in the summer. Maybe it is automatic. Maybe because it is so thick it is okay, but heating would probably be necessary. In fact when I did attend one of the concerts in the winter I recollect that it was very unpleasant going outside. Because there was nowhere else for people to go at half-time, it was very crushy under the canopy and stuff outside. So some things would need to be modified in order to make it suitable for even temporary hiring, with different groups coming and utilising it, to make it financially viable, I suppose. I just wanted you to talk a little bit more about those kinds of modifications that would be permanent, not so much things you can take out and put back in and so on. Just hold that thought.

Secondly, about the spoken word: are you saying that people cannot hear the spoken word at all? If you are holding a concert, for instance, of some description—a choral concert or something—would people not be able to hear the person announcing who is performing next? And what happens if people in the audience cough, if children talk, or if people start to make comment to one another about whether they are liking the music: does that reverberate all around the place, or do people not hear that kind of noise that sometimes audiences make?

Mr Vennonen: I wish I could answer that question more fully having actually attended concerts there, because then I would know the answer. But I think on the spoken word the modelling indicates that it would still be a problem with the minimal modifications. The information would come from what happened in the Canberra International Music Festival. How did they do announcements? I do not actually know what happened there. Maybe they did announcements and maybe everyone did not hear them—I am not sure—or maybe everyone did hear them because there was enough audience in there to soak up all that reverberation.

As for coughs, I have not heard a problem like that in the recordings. I am sure that there would have been some audience noise, but in the recording you cannot hear it, basically. It has not marred the recordings. And I do believe the recordings are a true and accurate record, that they have been untampered with et cetera.

We privately also discussed whether an electronic PA system could help in making the spoken word more audible. That is an issue that I guess we have not been asked to comment on and we would need to do some more work on—

MS PORTER: And the issue of the not so temporary modifications that need to be made?

Mr Vennonen: On the permanent modifications, obviously you need some storage space to store your chairs and stuff, and that would be an addition that would be on the outside of the building, like a shed at least, and no problem at all for the acoustics. Whatever you do with the outside will not affect the inside. Other permanent mods would be the fire exits; they will have a tiny effect, I believe, on the sound inside the building. They take up about two per cent of the surface area of the building, we calculated—the doors. So we would have to be careful about those doors, but I do not think there is a big issue in that per se.

You can do lighting systems that are acoustically just about irrelevant, and it is easy enough to install power points on the walls and not destroy the acoustics. Heating is the biggest problem of all. Lots of air-conditioning and ventilation systems put out a lot of noise—like this one. They have got bulky pipes, which would spoil the look of the place perhaps; I do not know. They might resonate. They might also have other issues that you might have some comments on. But air conditioning is something that would have to be explored very carefully.

Mr Neish: I think there is a possibility you could go to a chilled beam system or something of that nature, which does not involve a fan. Most of the noise you hear through this is actually the fan. You could use a chilled beam with a heat pump. I have measured them in offices at very low volumes, so that is a possibility.

THE CHAIR: Okay. We are out of time. There are no further questions, so thank you for all your reports to the committee and for making your time available to come and address the committee today. We do appreciate it.

A transcript of today's hearing will be sent to you so that you can check it for accuracy.

MARTIN, MR ERIC JOHN, President, National Trust of Australia (ACT)

THE CHAIR: I welcome Mr Eric Martin, President of the National Trust ACT, to the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs's inquiry into the future use of the Fitters Workshop at Kingston. I draw your attention to the privilege statement that is in front of you, just to make sure you have seen that and you are aware of the information in it.

Mr Martin: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Before we go to questions from the committee, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Martin: Yes. I have a copy of my submission in writing with me if you wish to deal with it.

THE CHAIR: When the committee secretary comes in, we will get that.

Mr Martin: I will summarise the key points out of it. The submission was actually prepared for a comment on the development application, but it deals with the issues that the National Trust is concerned about with respect to the proposed change or adaptive re-use of the Fitters Workshop.

It is quite clear to the National Trust that the building has significance and the key issue that is concerning us is the space—the volume or the appreciation of the space. In the various conservation plans and studies, particularly the conservation management plan that was prepared for the place, one of the things that come out quite strongly in the significance of the building is the impressive size of the internal space and the appreciation of it. It is interesting to point out that the appreciation of that space seems to be fundamental in maintaining the significance of it. This does come out in the conservation policies. It also comes out in the ACT Heritage Council citation of the place. One of their criteria refers to “the internal alterations and additions will respect the proportions of the space”.

So it is the issue of the intrusion of the mezzanine that is of the greatest concern to us. We believe that that mezzanine and the proposed changes will have a high impact on the heritage values of the building and therefore adversely affect the significance of the place.

The conservation management plan does talk about issues of prudent and feasible alternatives and in the context of the arts precinct development I do believe that there may well be some feasible improvement alternatives in the context of what may happen on the whole site. It is also interesting to note some of the earlier comments on the sketched plans—I am quoting from a 2010 document—that the mezzanine would have a high impact on the interior space, and this is the sort of issue that is of great concern to the National Trust.

In summary, the issue is that the proposed fit-out, which includes the mezzanine, destroys a fundamental aspect of the significance of the building, which is the appreciation of the fullness of the space, and that is the primary issue that is of

concern to the National Trust. While you may be able to appreciate the ceiling or some part of the volume at each end, you will never be able to appreciate the true volume of the space with the intrusion of a mezzanine, and that is the fundamental issue that the National Trust is concerned about. It is inconsistent with the Heritage Council's citation and guidelines, it is inconsistent with the conservation management plan and therefore it adversely affects the significance of the place, and that is of concern to us.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Martin. You were a participant in the development of the arts precinct strategy; is that right?

Mr Martin: Yes. I am President of the National Trust but I am a conservation architect by profession and I was involved with the arts precinct development as a conservation architect, and an architect and also a disability access consultant in the development of the arts precinct strategy document under Susan Conroy.

THE CHAIR: So were these issues you are raising with us over those concerns incorporated into the strategy? Were they made aware that these were the people developing the strategy?

Mr Martin: Obviously I have had an ongoing, if you like, awareness of the precinct for a number of years and certainly a strong interest in developing it. In the proposals that we put forward looking at whether it was feasible to put an arts precinct into the area we saw the Fitters Workshop as being an important part of that precinct. Our direction that we would prefer to go, having consulted with a range of people, was that there was a demand for a central gallery come common space. Most of the organisations that we spoke to under that exercise had some major presentations or exhibitions once a year and yet to actually put that sort of space into everybody's own individual allocation of area would be over the top. So there was a value in actually coordinating a central venue where each could hire it for a month and put on a major exhibition and it then becomes a programming thing. That means that a space like that gets maximum use and becomes really a viable proposition.

We honestly saw that the Fitters Workshop was in the centre of where the potential development could go. It could serve that function quite effectively as far as spatial demands were concerned. Although we did not obviously go through a design exercise, we were principally looking at areas and functions. It seemed to suit that purpose and then leave the new buildings that could be developed in and around that site for providing a specific design to suit the individual requirements of the organisations, which means that they had an unrestrained and better opportunity to get the best outcome for their organisation. So from that broad context we thought it was feasible and that was put forward as the strategy, which has now taken another step in respect of the master plan.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Hanson?

MR HANSON: I have no questions.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Ms Porter?

MS PORTER: No.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne?

MS DUNNE: Yes, thank you. Mr Martin, you have basically said that the problem as far as the National Trust is concerned is the intrusion of the box, essentially.

Mr Martin: Yes.

MS DUNNE: The National Trust's concern is that that will take away the perspective of the volume of the building and the height so that you would no longer walk in there and be able to look up and get the full impact. It has been put to us that that box is going to be put in in such a way that would allow for its removal. Do you see that that would ameliorate the trust's concerns?

Mr Martin: In the long term, if it was to be removed and returned to a better space, then a box inside a room actually minimises the impact on original fabric. What tends to happen with buildings that get adaptively re-used is that they tend not to be a short-term usage but a long-term usage. The concern that we would have from a heritage point of view is that, having invested a considerable amount of money into the re-use of it, it would remain for decades. Therefore, over that period, the full appreciation of the building is compromised for anybody that goes into the space. So I think it would be most unfortunate to actually go down that track, because of the impact; people coming into the space would not be able to fully appreciate it compared with some other options.

MS DUNNE: So what other options would the National Trust envisage as appropriate adaptive re-use of the space?

Mr Martin: I think it can be used as a common overall space, keeping it quite open, as was indicated in the arts precinct strategy, and therefore maintaining those heritage values.

THE CHAIR: Are there any things in terms of that use as well that would concern you? Different things have been raised about providing hangings for art pieces and—I do not know if you heard the acoustic specialist there—having to put in new exit doors and possibly heating. Do any of those things concern you or do you see them as being potentially compatible with retaining—

Mr Martin: I think they can be. You can retain the volume and obviously for each particular exhibition or function that may occur there may be some temporary arrangements brought in to provide a suitable venue or display for whatever it might be. I think the basic services can be incorporated into a heritage building in a sympathetic way and still not destroy the true heritage values. There are a large number of examples where this has occurred, whether it be warehouses in Sydney or other industrial buildings; you can still retain the character and the essence of it without destroying it by a fit-out.

THE CHAIR: So, if there were to be, say, structures to allow things to be hung—all those things—do they present a concern for you at all? Again I guess, as you said, it

depends on the way it is done.

Mr Martin: As architects we have been involved in some art galleries where we have used panels that sat on the floor. You can reconfigure spaces—they may be two to three metres high—for hanging art or sculpture or presenting a range of things and they are totally movable.

MR HANSON: They do that at the Albert Hall, don't they?

Mr Martin: Yes, that is right. So there is some flexibility in how you solve the problem and still appreciate the space for a range of functions.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter?

MS PORTER: We just heard before from the acoustic people that in fact the building has already been modified along the way, so it has apparently a new ceiling and a different floor from what it originally had. Does that alter the National Trust's—

Mr Martin: There has been a ceiling lining change. I am not quite sure what the original ceiling lining was. It certainly does not affect the appreciation of the volume or the space. It may affect some of the details. As far as the floor goes, it is a different floor. I have got no idea exactly what the original floor was, but it would have been a workshop floor. It would have been reasonably flat, probably with various mounting blocks for some equipment, but it would not have been substantially different to what is there at the moment. So I do not think that that has adversely affected the significance of the building.

MS PORTER: I do not think we have got any information about what the floor was like. The suggestion has been made that it was a dirt floor, but we have not got verification of that.

Mr Martin: The trust actually coordinated a site visit of the precinct at the last heritage festival to take people around. Some people who worked in the building turned up on our inspection. I do not know whether I have still got the names of who attended, but I believe through our network we could possibly find people who worked in the building. That may provide some further information if it was of value to the committee.

MR HANSON: It seems to me from a heritage point of view, though, that what you are saying is that it is what is not in the building, rather than what is in the building. It is the emptiness of it that is unique, rather than necessarily the other attributes.

Mr Martin: Yes, it is the volume as it is. Obviously, unfortunately, the industrial function and the equipment are gone. That is a fact of life now. What we are left with is a building which is unique. There is nothing else in the ACT. Therefore, there is some value in it.

MR HANSON: Given, though, that it was a workshop and that what Megalo would be doing is providing a workshop, isn't there a cultural or heritage link there?

Mr Martin: The difference is that it was a workshop with larger pieces of equipment interacting in an overall space. It had a gantry. It had other pieces of equipment but you could always appreciate the total volume. When you actually introduce another industrial function, if you like, of Megalo or whoever, you end up breaking it down to a whole series of different functions. Therefore, they need to be contained in spaces. The fit-out includes other meeting rooms or offices as well. That is where the compromise starts to—

MR HANSON: You lose the space?

Mr Martin: You lose the space and you lose some of the appreciation, if you like, of the industrial function, as well as the volume.

MS DUNNE: Can I ask about the conservation management plans? I gather there have been two. There was one early in the decade and then one more recently. Do you know about those, Mr Martin?

Mr Martin: Yes, I think I have got copies of them. Peter Freeman did one for the precinct, which included the Kingston powerhouse, plus the Fitters Workshop, I think in 2001 or thereabouts. A more specific and building-related one was done by Duncan Marshall, I think it was in 2011. With Duncan's work, it was something that was far more specific. It was focused on a building and far more expansive. My comments are based on the detail that is presented in Duncan's report rather than Peter Freeman's earlier report.

MS DUNNE: Was that conservation management plan written with Megalo in mind or was it written—

Mr Martin: It is clearly written with Megalo in mind, because there are references to Megalo and the proposed fit-out. One of the concerns that we had is that it seemed to shy away from addressing some of the conservation issues or didn't go into a depth which you might normally do with respect to dealing with some of those points.

THE CHAIR: The committee has got a copy of that.

MS DUNNE: May I have a look at it?

THE CHAIR: Yes, certainly. Ms Porter, did you have something?

MS PORTER: Yes, one more question. Are we saying that a space like an open air bit of space—I am just trying to understand—has some heritage value? Is that what we are saying?

Mr Martin: It is quite clear in the statement of significance and in the conservation policies, leaving the building with a full appreciation of the internal space, which is the principal issue I am concentrating on, is important. Therefore while it can be used for different purposes, the full volume of the space is important to retain.

MS PORTER: So if you put anything in there, you are destroying the space. I am just trying to understand the concept.

Mr Martin: No.

MS PORTER: Forgive me; I am just trying to understand. So if you put 300 people in there—280 I think was the figure we were given that would be a suitable number and no more. So if you put in 280 people and 280 chairs, a stage, musical instruments, heating, cooling—I do not think we need cooling but a heating system of some description—and other things in the space, what effect does that have?

Mr Martin: There are two things: one is the permanent infrastructure, which may involve electrical, it may involve air conditioning or some sort of heating system. There are certainly techniques available to actually provide that so you can provide comfort conditions and a serviceable room—put electrics in and whatever else you may have to in a sympathetic way with very minimum impact on the heritage values. As far as the other transient stuff which comes in for events, that is very short term and can come and go, because it is actually brought in. The function occurs and disappears and then you actually do not affect the fabric and the significance of the building at all.

THE CHAIR: I have a final question. I did ask this in my original question of you, but I just wanted to ask it again. It relates to your involvement in developing the strategy, being a part of that and the concerns that you have raised. How were they acknowledged in terms of developing the strategy? I guess I am just trying to get a sense of your expressing those concerns while the strategy was being developed and how or if they were acknowledged in any way.

Mr Martin: In developing the strategy, we analysed and put together all the background reports that we could in respect to what were the opportunities and constraints on buildings, what were the opportunities and constraints on the site, and synthesized that information. We had this mass of information; what does it all mean? Susan spoke to most of the organisations to establish some understanding of their spatial requirements. I put some areas together and then we looked at what that would mean in respect to new buildings on the site or reuse of existing buildings on site and would it actually work.

So we worked within the context of the conservation and planning principles that were defined. They were principally defined by other people, including the heritage reports that we had access to. In the context of that, the use of the Fitters Workshop as a common open space was more consistent with the heritage guidelines and the documentation we had and then put the new organisations, or the existing organisations in new buildings, was a better way of going and dealing with the strategy.

MS DUNNE: Can I follow up on that?

THE CHAIR: Yes, sure.

MS DUNNE: It says in the citation, “Internal alterations or additions to the powerhouse and the Fitters Workshop will respect the proportions of space and may only be permitted where they can be demonstrated that they will not adversely affect

the heritage significance of the place.” So is that essentially what you are saying there?

Mr Martin: Exactly.

MS DUNNE: That the National Trust’s approach is consistent with that part of the citation?

Mr Martin: Correct.

MS DUNNE: It goes on to say, “Any alterations or additions shall be undertaken in accordance with the conservation management plan approved by the ACT.” That is the 2011 conservation management plan. Is that approved?

Mr Martin: That report has been prepared. I believe it has been endorsed by the ACT Heritage Council; so yes.

MS DUNNE: What you are saying is that the approach suggested by the National Trust is more consistent with the citation?

Mr Martin: Correct.

MS DUNNE: Than the box, albeit a temporary box?

Mr Martin: Exactly right.

THE CHAIR: Wonderful, thank you. Any further questions? Thank you, Mr Martin, for appearing. There will be a transcript of today’s hearing sent to you so you can just check that for accuracy and provide any comments on that. Thank you once again. Thank you for your time.

SWAYN, MR ALASTAIR, Architect, Daryl Jackson Alastair Swayn

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Swayn for appearing before the committee.

Mr Swayn: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I will just do some housekeeping. I know you have been here for most of the hearing, but I will just do the usual housekeeping, particularly the privilege statement, which is on the blue card in front of you to make sure that you have read that and are aware of the information in it.

Mr Swayn: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Wonderful. Before we go to questions from the committee, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Swayn: Yes, just briefly, a bit of my own background. I am a principal of Daryl Jackson Alistair Swayn Architects, who are the design architects for Fitters Workshop. In addition to that, I am a Professorial Fellow at the University of Canberra and in that role I also act as ACT Government Architect one day a week.

I will give some of my professional background. I am not a heritage architect but my practice has been involved in a number of significant heritage projects such as the conversion of the Hotel Canberra into the Hyatt Hotel Canberra, the Conservatory of Music in Sydney—the extension of that for both a high school and also for new music venues within that building. Here back in Canberra I have been involved with the redesign of the administrative building internally, the John Gordon Building. So my approach in approaching a project like this comes from working with heritage architects over quite a long period of time. Therefore, there is a way of addressing some of the issues of adaptive reuse.

A couple of previous speakers made a number of comments. Perhaps I might, just as a matter of fact, correct those facts. The ceiling in the Fitters Workshop, according to the conservation management plan, was in fact installed in 1950. In a discussion with Duncan Marshall about whether it would be a good idea to go back to the original 1916 building, his advice was it had been there for a long time. Therefore, it should remain. So the ceiling is about 1950.

The concrete floor—the original building had a concrete floor and there are some illustrations here which could be tabled for the committee. But there would have been an original concrete floor so that steel wheeled trolleys and the like could be wheeled over it. What is there today, of course, is a new 150 millimetre concrete slab put over the top. No doubt there is a way of simplifying whatever damage the original floor had with plinths and bolt sections and the like. So those are just two facts about the building.

The acoustic advisers made a comment about the School of Music, which my partner designed and I was project architect more recently with Llewellyn Hall. Llewellyn Hall in fact has been designed for acoustic, not natural acoustic performances and not reinforced acoustics.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Swayn: I brought a model along because some of the discussion today has been about the volume.

THE CHAIR: It has.

Mr Swayn: If I tip this up, hopefully you will be able to see some of the volume.

THE CHAIR: Wonderful. That is fantastic, thank you. So that space, that is with the block that is proposed?

Mr Swayn: That is the pod in the middle. The intent—the planning intention which you have seen from the plans is for our entry point to be here, through an existing entry, into a small lobby and exhibition space and offices adjacent to that. At this end is the screen printing workshop and underneath the mezzanine are some rooms for washing the screens out and for recoating them. Then the annexe at the back occupies the lithography workshop and the etching workshop.

In terms of planning, the Fitters Workshop has had something in the order of probably three or four extensions of that nature—two on that side, I think, and a couple here. The blacksmith's shop was originally there. So what you see on the back of the building on that facade is in fact the scars from the whole history of additions that have been made to the building and taken away.

THE CHAIR: I think Colin Stewart mentioned that to us when he—

Mr Swayn: Yes, and in terms of our design approach to the building, we are very keen to leave those scars there, because it is part of the history of the building.

THE CHAIR: Does anyone have questions about?

MR HANSON: I assume it is to scale?

Mr Swayn: Absolutely, yes. I am not sure what scale the drawings you have are, but this has been made by my project architect; so it is to scale. So what you have is this small plant space up the top there. The pod also—there has been some discussions about how one delivers air conditioning in the building. The pod is actually a thick balustrade. The duct work that distributes the air conditioning is actually inside those. So we are trying always to minimise the actual visual impact on the space. There are also some existing louvres on the outside of the building. The fresh air intakes and so on will be connected directly to there.

So again, the actual impact on the exterior of the building is minimal and one of the principles and one of the reasons for doing this—and it is good heritage practice—is actually to leave the interior walls free so that we are not actually interfering with those in the way that we are putting the new work in. As you have said before, this is lightweight construction; so at some point in the future it could be demolished and the building returned to the space that it is at the moment.

MS DUNNE: So when you say “lightweight construction”, what do you mean?

Mr Swayn: It will be lightweight steel and clad in plywood. It is actually perforated plywood, because again there has been some discussion about acoustics. This is acting as a sponge in the centre so that the actual speech acoustics are appropriate for the workshop activity. We have had acoustic advice or help with us all the way along.

MS DUNNE: Can I follow up on that?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MS DUNNE: It is a question I have asked a couple of people. You are obviously the right person to ask. The question has been raised with me, and I think members of the committee, that if you have the back space, the top space there as a workshop space, are you actually going to exacerbate the reverberation? What you are saying is that you have designed it not to do that?

Mr Swayn: Yes. This is actually a fairly quiet space. The screen-printing space—it is done with cloth, it is done with paper. So the actual sound generated by that is very light. Most of the sound in there will be people’s voices. One has to actually try and control the speech and that has been done by adding in this element which, as I say, is perforated and will act as a sponge. I cannot remember precisely the reverberation time but it has been dropped by well over half to get down to what our acoustic consultants regarded—

MR HANSON: So you had acoustic consultants that have done that work and identified a reverb?

Mr Swayn: Yes, they have measured it as it is now and then they have measured it with the pod in the middle and given us confidence that we can use it as a workshop space.

THE CHAIR: You said that the pod has been designed in a way to absorb some of the sound and the reverberation.

Mr Swayn: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Has the decision to put the pod in there been done specifically for a space reason or is it done specifically to actually address those acoustics issues?

Mr Swayn: It is done first of all because we need some accommodation that is enclosed—as office accommodation, as a meeting room. There is a screen washing room and a screen coating room. Those spaces need to be enclosed. It is done for a functional reason. When we actually addressed the function, we also then addressed the question of the acoustics. So it is doing two things. Then conceptually the pod is seen as a sort of sculptural object within the space. In some ways if you went in there and just saw this object in there, it would appear like an art gallery. That is the conceptual idea behind it. There may be some colour in it too, which we haven’t yet developed, again looking at it as an object.

THE CHAIR: Is there anything else to add?

MR HANSON: Yes, in terms of the costs, I am not sure if you are across the cost issues. I am trying to get a vision. My understanding is that it is about \$4 million this whole—

Mr Swayn: 3.6.

MR HANSON: 3.6?

Mr Swayn: Yes.

MR HANSON: Of that 3.6, what is the pod component? So what is the Fitters Workshop side of it and then what is the attachment? What is the division between those two sums?

Mr Swayn: I cannot tell you off the top of my head at the moment.

MR HANSON: Can you provide that?

Mr Swayn: I could provide that as written advice.

MR HANSON: Yes, I am interested because if it is temporary in terms of its nature it could be dismantled and removed. But if you spend \$1 million or whatever the amount is, you would not want necessarily to do that in the shorter term.

Mr Swayn: Yes, I can come back to the committee.

MR HANSON: Yes, that would be very useful for us.

THE CHAIR: That would be great, thank you.

MR HANSON: I suppose the only question I have is whether in your view—or have you got any advice—that that volume would be consistent with the heritage properties. Certainly, it does not take up the whole space, but you would certainly have to say, from what I can see, that it does interfere in a fair way with the sort of volume of the building. Have you got any reports or any advice that says it is consistent with that heritage?

Mr Swayn: Yes, I was interested in Mr Martin's comments about the conservation management plan and saying that the retention of the whole volume is an essential part of it. I cannot find that in the document.

THE CHAIR: I think it was Mr Martin actually saying that was what—

Mr Swayn: Sorry?

THE CHAIR: I think it was Eric Martin actually saying—I stand to be corrected—that that was the view of the National Trust.

Mr Swayn: It might have been the National Trust’s view, but it is certainly not, that I can find, in the conservation management plan. In terms of one of the policies, as it says in the conservation management plan—this is policy 20—“The primary use of the Fitters Workshop will be sympathetic to the industrial engineering character of the building.”

I guess that in this particular case it is both the function and the insertion in there. So in terms of its long-term character, it is maintaining the industrial nature of the building. I mean, it is an arts thing, but still it is an industrial type function.

THE CHAIR: On that issue, one of the things that Eric Martin said too, in terms of those conservation issues, related to the space of the building and actually retaining that space. I appreciate what you say that by having that sort of pod in the mezzanine you can allow people still to see that space, but have those sorts of concerns been taken into account in the design and the heritage factor—that it is a quite unique building in terms of the actual space of it?

Mr Swayn: I mean—

THE CHAIR: Is that something which has been taken into account in what is going to happen to the building?

Mr Swayn: There has been nothing in the conservation management plan which has driven us to preserve that space without anything in it. So in actually developing the design, we have developed it as what I might describe as politely as possible to the building and as referential to the building as possible, so that all the external walls are maintained in their visibility and the actual pod itself is as small as we can make it, such that the screen printing workshop at this end of the building is at the full volume of the building, full height of the building and substantial length of it. It is obviously by its very nature a sort of single space. I mean, there is a space with an object in it.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I will go to Mrs Dunne and then straight to Ms Porter. Did you have a follow up on this?

MS DUNNE: No, there is a whole of different questioning. So go to Mary first, by all means.

THE CHAIR: I might just go to Ms Porter first and then to Mrs Dunne.

MS PORTER: From what I can understand you saying, it is the actual structure itself, the walls, that you are trying to preserve the authenticity of?

Mr Swayn: Yes.

MS PORTER: And the actual inside space, as it were, that we were discussing before was not something that the conservation plan was asking you to take into account?

Mr Swayn: That is correct.

MS PORTER: Okay.

Mr Swayn: In terms of the pod itself, it is very much an object sitting in a space, but in talking with the heritage unit and the Heritage Council they have been very particular about preservation of both the exterior and the interior surfaces and as far as I am concerned that is fine; that is what we should be doing.

MS PORTER: And you were saying that there were several buildings attached to the side of the building previously, so the annexe is not going against what was previously there?

Mr Swayn: No. There was an old rail line here and one on the other side, and the conservation management plan says that these elements, the rail lines, should be acknowledged; indeed there is still a remnant platform at that point. So those are very important parts of how we have developed it. The 1991 Peter Freeman conservation management plan, which only dealt very lightly with the Fitters Workshop, indicated a parallel building through here, which is different to the actual history of the site.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mrs Dunne?

MS DUNNE: While we are on the annexe, how big is the annexe? What proportion of the project is the annexe?

Mr Swayn: This space is about 600 square metres and that is about 400 or 354.

MS DUNNE: And the building itself, the Fitters' Workshop, is some sort of rendered concrete outside?

Mr Swayn: Yes.

MS DUNNE: How different is it proposed that the annexe—

Mr Swayn: The annexe will be in corrugated metal. The intention is to actually express it as an industrial building, as consistent with what would have been there before. There had been a variety of brick and metal sheds before, so the idea of this being still seen as an industrial piece of building is very consciously in the design.

MS DUNNE: So it is very consciously the same. With that sort of gabled roof, it is very consciously an industrial shape.

Mr Swayn: Also it is a question of scale. This building is huge. It is tricky when you sort of try and think, "Okay, we'll put an extension on and let's have it the same height as the existing building." The existing building is about 10 metres high. We do not need that height and also there is a cost in that. But the idea that this building is the primary piece on the site and this element in a different material and a different scale is really playing a subservient role. So this is the piece we are celebrating.

The other thing is that we did try at one stage with a hip roof on this rather than a single skillion roof and again it was mimicking what was here and it did not look right; it just looked out of scale. So having a form which is different again highlights

the speciality of this building; hence the nature of the materials and the form that we have adopted for the—

MS DUNNE: And there are a whole lot of other sheds on the site; the bus depot market is essentially a corrugated iron shed and—

Mr Swayn: Yes, there were. There were metal sheds, a blacksmith's shop here, another shed down there, a toilet block down there—a whole series, a gaggle, of industrial buildings originally.

MS DUNNE: Could I ask: what was your original brief? Was it to fit Megalo into the Fitters or was it, to use the term that Mr Martin used, “feasible alternatives”, given that the whole site was going to be developed?

Mr Swayn: No. It was very specific. We were engaged to put Megalo into this building and then to provide a design to do that.

MS DUNNE: And it was never feasible to put Megalo just into the Fitters?

Mr Swayn: No. The space—I think there had been a previous study which really filled the whole building and we did not feel that was appropriate.

MS DUNNE: To put in an extra floor sort of thing?

Mr Swayn: Yes, putting mezzanine floors on, really covering the whole building. That was before our time, but I thought when I read that that it was insensitive and not appropriate; hence we came back to government with the proposition of what we have got here plus the annexe.

THE CHAIR: So that was the original briefing or the brief that you saw?

Mr Swayn: We had a spatial brief. We went out Megalo and actually made a spatial brief of what they have now and to replicate it here. But that was what we were asked to do.

THE CHAIR: And so when were you engaged to start doing that work?

Mr Swayn: We were engaged in March 2010.

THE CHAIR: When we had the government appear we were asking a few questions about other sorts of things like fittings to show art displays and that sort of thing. Is that something that will also be incorporated in there?

Mr Swayn: Yes, there will be a small art gallery at this end, which will be public, and there will also be public sales there. We have plans for print sales, for example, and the link space here will take opening show parties—that sort of thing—so it will be quite a public facility when it is completed.

MS DUNNE: The link space, with the lowered roof: is that different in materials from the actual annexe?

Mr Swayn: I cannot remember what the floors are, but possibly it is a concrete floor, plasterboard ceiling, it has some storage cupboards, a sink—the sort of place where you might have a small gallery opening and facilities for that.

MS DUNNE: At one stage I thought there was some discussion about having the link building as being somewhat transparent so that you could—

Mr Swayn: It is a little while since I have done the drawings, but certainly this face is fully glazed and the intention there will be fully glazed. So it would look as a transparent element. The solid parts, now that I am thinking about it, are against this wall here.

MS DUNNE: So that you would—

Mr Swayn: You can actually see through it.

MS DUNNE: The drawing we have got has now got loos on the back walls.

THE CHAIR: Toilets, yes.

MS DUNNE: So I am just wondering where we are up to.

Mr Swayn: I beg the committee's pardon, but there have been a few iterations of the link.

MS DUNNE: I suppose that raises the question. There is a DA which is out and approved. How do the drawings that the committee has reflect the DA?

Mr Swayn: I expect those will be the DA drawings, but—

MS DUNNE: Okay. So that means that they are—

Mr Swayn: I can come back to the committee and advise.

MS DUNNE: Yes.

THE CHAIR: As Mrs Dunne said, the drawings we have got have bathrooms being in that sort of link space. In terms of other things like the heating, amenities and toilets, are you having an input into where they will be placed?

Mr Swayn: Yes. There are two systems, and this is again to minimise the impact on the building.

THE CHAIR: That is what I was going to ask, if it was being designed to impact heritage—

Mr Swayn: Yes, there is one system housed here, which services this area. It is a little plant room up the top of the pod.

THE CHAIR: That is the plant room, yes.

Mr Swayn: As I said before, the balustrading here is actually a distribution system for it, so there are little jet diffusers in there. At this end of the building there is another plant room which services this building, and the boilers are down there. So some pipe work goes from there to here underground and then up into here.

THE CHAIR: All right. Do you have—and I appreciate if you do not—any idea of the costs of doing that work?

Mr Swayn: Again I would have to come back and advise you, with a breakdown.

THE CHAIR: Yes. I appreciate that.

MS DUNNE: Pod is a much better word than my usage, box, and I do apologise for box; I had not thought of pod. How tall is the pod to the top of the plant room?

Mr Swayn: We would be looking, on the balustrade there, at about four metres—

MS DUNNE: And then to the top of the plant room?

Mr Swayn: just over four metres, and then probably about 7½ to eight metres to the top of the box. The spring height here, I think from memory, is about 10.

MS DUNNE: Sorry—the?

Mr Swayn: The spring height for the roof here is about 10 metres.

MS DUNNE: And the top of the gable is?

Mr Swayn: Another two or three metres on top of that.

MS DUNNE: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Any further questions?

MR HANSON: If there are no further questions, I do have some questions about the model and how it is made, which is nothing to do with this inquiry. Do you have a program that then that cuts automatically or is it done by hand?

Mr Swayn: It is done by the loving hand of my project architect, Ms Kim, who has taken great joy in doing it.

MR HANSON: It is really, really useful, because it has brought it to life for us, so we can understand it better.

THE CHAIR: It is actually; it is very useful.

Mr Swayn: Yes. We had to do this when we were explaining the project to Megalo at the annual general meeting. It is the simplest way, because drawings can be a bit

misleading.

MR HANSON: It is very talented too.

THE CHAIR: As there are no further questions, thank you, Mr Swayn, for appearing today. We appreciate you bringing in the model and explaining it to us. As the other committee members have said, it is been very useful to see that and to see it in a more concrete form. A transcript will be sent to you of the hearing today, so you can just check that for accuracy.

Mr Swayn: Thank you.

Meeting adjourned from 3.18 to 3.43 pm.

LONDON, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR NIGEL, Research Fellow, Australian National University

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Professor Lendon, for appearing before the committee's inquiry into the future use of the Fitters Workshop at Kingston. I draw your attention to the privilege statement which is on the blue card in front of you. Are you aware of that and the information in that?

Prof Lendon: Yes, I am.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Before we go to questions, I would like to invite you to make an opening statement if you would like to.

Prof Lendon: Thank you very much. Let me introduce myself and my perspective, which sort of covers a lifetime of experience in the visual arts. I am an artist. I work as a curator, I write as a critic and I work as a historian at the Australian National University. So I have a broad experience in the visual arts and crafts, including gallery experience at every level. Currently my discipline, I suppose, is visual anthropology. I am writing a book about Afghanistan. Since 1988 I have held senior administrative positions at the school of art at the ANU, and I have been widely involved in the arts in Canberra.

I would like to reiterate the main points of my submission, which are on the final page, and then I would like to comment on the concept of a multi-user space, as it has been proposed and elaborated in subsequent submissions to the original stage of the inquiry.

I would say from what I have heard today that the assertion of the unique and special acoustics of the building which triggered this whole process, including this inquiry, is still to be seen as problematic for most of the proposed users; that is, those nominated by those who opposed the Megalo plans.

I also expressed in my submission the critical view of the consequences of this lobby group pressure which has led to this inquiry, which is in my view effectively a miscarriage of due process.

Today I would like to take the opportunity to counter the move that has emerged since the first round of submissions; that is, to suggest that a compromise is possible in the form of a multipurpose space for the Fitters Workshop.

I make four points: we have heard that any modification to the space will alter the acoustics to an unknown extent. People talk about curating the space to suit different acoustical needs, and that has problems, I would say, of both a material and a financial dimension.

Secondly, the unplanned budgetary implications of this new proposal will be significant, and the lack of budgetary provision will probably, I would say, kill both ideas anyway. That is what I described in my submission as the cost of not proceeding with the Megalo plan. It will ultimately, I would suggest, deny both groups their desired outcomes.

Thirdly, it is not supported by the visual arts organisations cited by the proponents either in principle or in terms of the implied financial support that is suggested would be necessary.

Fourthly, a multipurpose space will compromise the functions proposed by the Megalo plan, with no additional funding budgeted for alternative or stand-alone accommodation for the functions which are currently designed to be included in the Fitters Workshop.

I would like to reiterate one more thing, and that is the independence of my perspective. I have no conflicts of interest or secret associations with anybody in this argument. I have looked at it from a distance, as it were, and without close associations with any of the different voices that you have been listening to. But I would say that I have read Megalo's first and second submissions, in particular with respect to this art box compromise proposal. I would say that I can find no errors, exaggerations or misrepresentations in the positions that they have consistently put forward.

I could not say that about some of the other submissions I have read. I have been overseas for the last three weeks, so I have not been party to the publicity that has been emerging over the last few weeks, and I have not read all the submissions, because, as you know, some of the submissions are still coming in.

In conclusion, I would just like to reiterate that, in my sense, your terms of reference—that is, what is the best use of the Fitters Workshop—are best fitted by the Megalo proposal. I am very willing to answer any questions you might have.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. The first question I have is one we have asked other people about. You make the point in your submission about the functions of Megalo being more closely aligned with, I guess, the original functions of the Fitters Workshop in terms of it being a suitable use for the building.

Prof Lendon: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Why is it that this is the most suitable building for Megalo to go in? What is it about this building that makes it suitable for Megalo but for no other use?

Prof Lendon: If you had no budgetary problems, you could build a building of any kind to suit the functions of Megalo, but this is something that has evolved over more than 10 years of representation. Through many stages of consideration by government and by government agencies, this has evolved and emerged as the frontrunner all through those processes.

The fact that we are now revisiting some of those decisions I think is extremely problematic in terms of due process. I have not made that point explicitly in terms of its heritage value. It is a building that has an industrial past, and Megalo represents a wide range of arts processes which are probably closest to its industrial heritage than any of the other activities that are proposed for it. So if you turn that question around, doing nothing with the space or singing in the space has no connection with its heritage past. The question is not my argument, but that is my answer to your question.

THE CHAIR: Okay. I just asked because that was a point that you raised in your submission.

Prof Lendon: In my statement then I said I think it is the best use of—

THE CHAIR: Yes, and that is why I was trying to draw that out. You also mentioned the acoustic issues. I do not know if you were here to hear what the experts said.

Prof Lendon: Yes, I heard—

THE CHAIR: The point they made was that making modifications is not necessarily a bad thing. They said that, even though you might have to make some modifications, it was inaccurate to say that it was necessarily a bad thing.

Prof Lendon: No. I said it was problematic. We heard them talk about the need to curate the space and to be able to vary it in a number of different ways to suit the needs of different users—different users in the music world. Then again, if you are thinking of it as a multipurpose space, there is a whole different form of curation that goes on with preparing a space for exhibitions. I think that is problematic, because it is extraordinarily expensive and it is unfunded. You have got both capital expenditure to consider, which is not costed in the Megalo plan, and you have got all of these administrative and support systems, which are not costed anywhere either. For those reasons Megalo is still the best fit because (a) the budget is there and (b) the institution is there.

THE CHAIR: You said about the acoustics. Alastair Swain also said that there will have to be modifications made for the acoustics to incorporate Megalo as well. I am just trying to get a sense of what you see as being the difference between having to spend money to modify the acoustics there and having to do it for another purpose?

Prof Lendon: The Megalo purpose is funded and the other one is not; the other one is an addition. If you are not going to do this with Megalo and send them somewhere else, you have got to somehow fit that to the budget that exists. And then you have got an empty building with nothing in it and you have got to find a budget for capital expenditure and maintenance of that building. That seems to me the biggest difference.

THE CHAIR: When the department officials appeared they did seem to flag that there were some plans to have a community use purpose and also to have other buildings constructed, so that is obviously something that is figuring into their thinking, their overall plans, I guess, for that precinct.

Prof Lendon: I would suggest that that would cause another two years of loss of Megalo's activities. They have spent a long time preparing for this stage. They are ready to call the movers right now and, because of this situation of the inquiry and the delays that have occurred there, they have missed almost two years of their programming. They have missed the centennial. All of those things that were actually in the plan originally now will not happen. If you are going to suggest that there are other buildings in which you could then start the planning process again and fit them somewhere else, could you do it for less than two years? I do not think so. That is a

remarkable effect on an institution, an organisation, that is up and running. Other organisations do not have the infrastructure, do not have the funding, either capital funding or other funding, to do what they say they want to do. So it is a sort of stalemate, isn't it?

MR HANSON: And that would be the end of Megalo then?

Prof Lendon: That would be almost a death blow to Megalo. Megalo would still get their ongoing funding—I do not know what the situation is for rental in their present accommodation—but they would start again. You are asking an institution to start a planning process all over again and two years hence we might have Alastair Swain coming in and saying, “Now I have been commissioned to do a design for another building which we weren't thinking of originally,” and you have to go through all of that again, with all of the cost to the organisation, to the individuals and financial costs—huge costs, let alone delay in not doing anything with this project.

MR HANSON: You said that the acoustics are subjectively asserted, unquantifiable and of unspecified character. Do you stick by that now that you have seen the acoustic reports that were commissioned?

Prof Lendon: I was not terribly impressed today by some of the expert opinion. Some of the expert opinion thought the ceiling was five years old whereas we have heard that it is actually much older—

THE CHAIR: I think that is actually irrelevant to the acoustics.

MR HANSON: The ceiling lining.

Prof Lendon: Yes, ceiling lining.

MR HANSON: They said the ceiling was replaced in 1950, but the ceiling lining, I think, was more recent. I do not know.

Prof Lendon: If you do not know, I do not know. It is not in the papers, anyway.

MR HANSON: That is what it seemed. One of the comments in your submission is:

I have never seen such a blatant affront to due process in relation to cultural development, let alone democratic principles, which is based on such flimsy and subjective evidence, and as a consequence of such opportunistic and sectarian influences.

Could you explain what that means?

Prof Lendon: Yes, I can explain what that means. Megalo as an organisation have been completely transparent and abiding by all the requirements of government since 2000 when they put in their first expression of interest. The other groups and organisations did not discover that they actually wanted this building until late in 2008. By that stage, Megalo had been through all of the requirements and due processes of government with their proposals, their business plans, their draft plans and ideas

et cetera, right up to the point where we see the architect's plans today.

I think the fact that people retrospectively want to change government decisions and processes to go back and redo those processes because of the discovery of accidental acoustics, which people have acknowledged are really only significant for a very small proportion of the music world, is an extraordinary sort of manipulation of public opinion to suit what is in effect a very small and what today has been described as “a boundary” of the musical world. That, for me, and the fact that we are where we are here now, is an extraordinary misuse of due process.

THE CHAIR: To be fair, it was actually in 2007, as I understand it, when there was some awareness of or issues raised about the acoustics of the building. We asked the minister today, because there is a brief which actually talks about the use of the site. It still mentions other uses of the site at that time and that Megalo would be one of them. Just on that, it probably was not actually retrospective; it was something that was sort of discovered in 2007 and then the government were made aware of that. We did ask the minister about what then occurred in terms of looking into that—

Prof Lendon: With respect, Madam Chair, my understanding is that the first musical performance was in late 2008 and it was not really discovered that this was a facility that was desirable until early 2009. You may want to check that but, if that is the case, then my order of events is right and yours is wrong.

MRS DUNNE: What you are saying, Professor Lendon, is that you think that the whole process, including this inquiry that you are before today, is an inappropriate exercise of the democratic process?

Prof Lendon: I do have criticisms of the conduct of this inquiry, yes.

MRS DUNNE: Would you like to elaborate?

Prof Lendon: Yes, I would. There is the fact that you called for submissions and you kept receiving submissions until yesterday. Certain people work to a deadline and submitted by the first deadline, and now submissions are still being loaded on the website as of yesterday. I think that is extraordinary. Could I add one more thing: when in January I wrote to the chair of this committee to ask for an explanation of those circumstances, I got no reply. If that is due process, I do not think it is functioning very well.

MRS DUNNE: So do you object to the inquiry?

Prof Lendon: Would you like me to table the letter I wrote to you, Madam Chair?

THE CHAIR: Sure. Just on that, it is actually the process for committees that we do put a deadline. The reason we had put a deadline—I think it is worth providing an explanation for that—was that we had intended to hold hearings earlier, but then what happened was that we wanted to get those acoustics reports before we actually held hearings. What we typically do with committees, because this is one which is generating a lot of interest, is to keep accepting submissions; all committees do that.

MRS DUNNE: It is pretty standard practice in my committee as well.

THE CHAIR: It is a very standard practice; all committees do that, particularly with something like this, which is quite topical. I know that the secretary had mentioned that you had emailed, and we were quite happy to get further information from you, which I know we did not—

Prof Lendon: No-one responded to my letter.

THE CHAIR: We will check that, because I believe the secretary did say that there was a response sent to the email. I will undertake to check that. But that is a typical process that we follow with committees, and we have allowed people to put in further information, because it is topical. That is how committees typically operate.

Prof Lendon: With respect, Madam Chair, it is not the advertised process that you are following. In the advertised—

THE CHAIR: No. Just to be fair, a deadline was put in, as I said, and the reason the deadline was put in was that we had intended to hold hearings earlier. We were not able to get those acoustics reports, and we do accept submissions from people as they keep coming in. As Mrs Dunne has said, all committees operate in that way, particularly when it is something like this which is generating a lot of community interest. We have had people actually contacting us over a time, and we consider anything that is sent in, and accept any extra information from people.

Prof Lendon: My point is that it is not what you said on the website when you invited submissions.

THE CHAIR: Yes, and the point I was just making then was that we had put a deadline on there because we had wanted to hold hearings earlier, but that is not what occurred. We will check about the email to you. It was my understanding that an email had been sent to you, so I apologise if that did not occur.

MR HANSON: Other than the fact that the time period for submissions was extended, do you have any other concerns with the conduct of this committee?

Prof Lendon: No.

MR HANSON: So that is it?

Prof Lendon: I have concerns about the circumstances which caused the committee to be formed in the first place, but that is a political issue.

MR HANSON: All right. I do not have any questions.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, do you have any questions?

MS PORTER: No.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne, any questions?

MRS DUNNE: Yes, I have got a couple of questions. What is the basis of the statement in your submission that a multipurpose space would be closed most of the time? You make the statement in your submission on the first page:

By contrast, a performance or multi-purpose space will be closed most of the time.

What is the basis of that? Is it on the basis of your experience? Is it an assertion? What is it?

Prof Lendon: It is looking at the facts as they exist before us: that there is no budget to run a multipurpose space. If a multipurpose space exists, it will exist on a voluntary basis and people will open and close the doors as they can and therefore, unless you have got a budget, I cannot see it being a functioning space.

MRS DUNNE: You also say that expenditure of \$3.8 million on a new building “makes absolutely no sense” and that a smaller and more limited venue would be the result.” What is the basis of that comment?

Prof Lendon: I did ask in that submission for the committee to inquire as to what the cost of a stand-alone facility would be. I do not know whether the committee has done that.

MRS DUNNE: Okay. I get the impression that you are pretty cranky about the whole process. How would you see that this matter would be resolved?

Prof Lendon: I think the matter is resolved by the best use of the Fitters Workshop being recognised as being Megalo print workshop.

MRS DUNNE: Irrespective of the fact that the way it is currently configured it is not big enough for Fitters—the Fitters is not big enough for Megalo?

Prof Lendon: The plan that we have seen is satisfactory to them.

MRS DUNNE: But it is not the Fitters Workshop; it is the Fitters and some.

Prof Lendon: I take that point. That is a distinction I had not thought of. Yes, the proposal as we have seen. But that is a subtlety I had not really engaged with. I do not think anyone has ever proposed that just the Fitters Workshop is going to contain the whole of Megalo.

MRS DUNNE: I think it was the original plan.

Prof Lendon: Then I am only dealing with the plans that we have got in front of us now.

MRS DUNNE: And you say at A2 that the heritage value of the building is much more closely aligned with the workshop functions of Megalo than any of the alternative uses proposed. I presume from that that what you are saying is that the

industrial nature of the Fitters and its history are more closely aligned with the sort of industrial art form as I have sort of described—

Prof Lendon: That is how I responded to the chair, yes.

THE CHAIR: Any further questions? Mr Hanson?

MR HANSON: No, thanks.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter?

MS PORTER: I am fine, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Professor Lendon, for appearing today. I will just say that there was an email sent to you on 17 January. We can provide you with a copy of that if you wish.

Prof Lendon: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for appearing. A transcript of the hearing will be sent to you for you to return with any corrections.

HUMPHRIES, MR GRAHAM, Director, Cox Architecture

THE CHAIR: I welcome Mr Humphries to this inquiry into the Fitters Workshop today. You will see the blue privilege card on the table in front of you. I just want to make sure you are aware of that.

Mr Humphries: Yes, thank you.

THE CHAIR: A point I should have made to other witnesses today is that the hearings are also being broadcast on the internet.

Before we go to questions, Mr Humphries, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Humphries: I would, thank you very much. By way of introducing myself, I am a practising architect in Canberra and a national director of the Cox Architecture group. I have chaired the Institute of Architects awards, national awards jury. I have been a member of the previous Chief Minister's public art committee and I sponsored one of the Canberra International Music Festival's concerts in the Fitters Workshop last year.

I would like to make the following observations regarding the use of Fitters Workshop and its relationship to the larger Kingston foreshore cultural precinct. It is clear that the Fitters Workshop is neither big enough to house all Megalo's activities nor does it provide a particularly natural fit for the technical, environmental and working spaces required by their activities. But if it was the only option offered to Megalo, along with the appropriate funding budget, it is not surprising they felt it was a good outcome and enthusiastically endorsed it.

The apparent focus on finding a responsible tenant for the Fitters Workshop seems to have prevented any serious alternative option for Megalo being investigated. At the time it was offered there was no detailed master plan for the Kingston foreshore cultural precinct to help put the Fitters Workshop into a solid visionary planning context along with identifying opportunities for developing the precinct with additional arts and cultural facilities.

Whilst this master planning is now occurring, the decision to shoehorn part of Megalo's functional requirements into the Fitters Workshop and to construct an additional new building to the east clearly has not taken into account the overall context and future development of the precinct, nor how best Megalo's valuable presence—and I stress that—in the Kingston foreshore area can contribute to the overall precinct.

The May + Russell report, which precedes Jackson and Swain's design work, appears to have two aims: the first is to provide a scoping study and an assessment of Megalo's current facilities, and the second is to look at the options for relocating Megalo into the Fitters Workshop. At no stage does there appear to be any serious consideration to relocating Megalo to a complete new purpose-built facility within the Kingston foreshore cultural precinct. This is despite the May + Russell report suggesting it should be considered as an option due to the constraints inherent in trying to use the Fitters Workshop. If it has not already been, I would certainly like to

make sure that the May + Russell report is tabled and I draw the committee's attention to part 2, section 3.03 in particular.

Whilst I am not privy to the design brief which informed Jackson and Swayn's work on the project, it does appear their brief was based on the assumption that Fitters Workshop would be used and they needed to do the best they could to maximise the use of the Fitters Workshop for Megalo. There are no other design studies for a stand-alone solution against which the efficiency or effectiveness of the Jackson-Swayn solution could be realistically tested.

The May + Russell report does briefly mention that a stand-alone solution could be built for \$4.1 million, providing a larger facility as well as much more flexibility. Given the heritage and other constraints of the Fitters Workshop, my intuition tells me the inefficiency and restrictions of trying to use the Fitters Workshop for part of Megalo's activities, other than exhibition and display perhaps, would make the alternative of a complete new purpose-designed building in the Kingston foreshore cultural precinct a realistic option. This should be investigated as a matter of priority within the context of the master planning for the precinct.

It is not clear in the current plans what impact the mechanical systems might have on the building and where the main heating and cooling plant is proposed. Effectively concealing these facilities is normally a challenge and in this situation it will no doubt be even more difficult.

I believe both the May + Russell report and the Jackson-Swayn design work are very high quality but are both clearly restricted in their scope and opportunity to provide thorough advice on all the options for a solution which would not only best suit Megalo but also contribute towards a long-term vision for the Kingston foreshore precinct and find the best long-term flexible use for the remarkable interior of the Fitters Workshop.

Colin Stewart has spoken eloquently to this committee about the importance of the big picture. I am aware the process of developing a master plan for the Kingston foreshore cultural precinct is in progress. However, to be effective it must include a proper analysis of the best options for both Megalo and the Fitters Workshop, something I understand was off limits for the current master planning exercise.

This big picture overview is important to keep in sight as the detailed circumstances of the present and future participating organisations can change over time, but any investment now in the precinct must be based on solid, long-term planning principles which can provide a solid structure for the future as well as detailed flexibility to cater for changing circumstances.

So what of the Fitters Workshop? There have been many submissions to this committee supporting the continued use of the Fitters Workshop for some types of music performances. It is clear that the unusual characteristics of the workshop's interior space offer something unique and are worth retaining. To date, there has been no study similar to the May + Russell study to properly investigate what would be involved in maintaining the Fitters Workshop as a multi-use space, including musical performances and other uses, and to understand both the cost and the potential

impacts on the building for such a use.

A business case in support of retaining the facility as a multi-use performance exhibition facility is also required. Clearly, appropriate toilet facilities as well as green room functions would be required, and the opportunity to provide up-to-date toilet facilities for both the bus depot markets as well as the Fitters Workshop audiences should be considered.

The KVDL report already tabled with the committee suggests a number of items such as movable seating, lighting et cetera which would be required inside while other requirements such as toilets, green room, ticket space, storage et cetera, could be provided external to the building.

The delay in finalising the master plan for the area does provide an opportunity for the information gathered by this committee to inform the master planning process and to provide an informed view of all the options and opportunities available. Inevitably, if the Fitters Workshop is converted to another use, the chance of having a unique, flexible performance and exhibition space in the Kingston foreshore precinct will be lost. It is important, however, that the final decision on the use of the Fitters Workshop should be informed by the master planning process and not excluded from that process. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Humphries. The first question I have is in terms of your involvement with this issue. Obviously, being an architect, it is something which you have had an interest in. Are the comments you have made from being an observer of this issue? What has been your involvement with it?

Mr Humphries: My personal involvement in the Kingston foreshore historically is very little. I am currently involved in a number of buildings being built down on the foreshore itself. My practice has been involved in some of that planning process and it is involved as a sub-consultant in the master planning process. I personally am not involved in that, but my practice is.

THE CHAIR: You have mentioned the master planning process. Obviously Colin Stewart, when he appeared, talked about the master plan process that had started happening back in, I think, 1997. Is that something you were aware of?

Mr Humphries: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Were the uses that that proposed something that you had followed or were aware of?

Mr Humphries: That master plan, which was the winning master plan for the Kingston foreshore, always identified this area as a special cultural precinct. However, there was very little detail and no agreed detailed master plan for what that cultural precinct component of the Kingston foreshore would actually have happen in it and how it would happen. Certainly, the overall structure of how that area was defined in terms of roads and access, yes; but as for the detailed master planning of where buildings could go, how high those buildings should be, what the potential use of those buildings might be, how they are serviced, how their audiences get there and

what have you—that is all a process that needs to happen in order to understand what, in addition to the powerhouse and the Fitters Workshop, could happen down there.

THE CHAIR: One of the issues that have been raised at the hearings has been the budgetary impacts if we were to propose to have a multi-use facility; also that there is money allocated for Megalo: what would then happen to that, how would the Fitters Workshop be managed and all those issues that will come with it. Do you see that as being an issue?

Mr Humphries: It is not my area of expertise, to be honest. Clearly you cannot do anything without money. What I am suggesting is that the master plan needs to identify spending priorities in the Kingston foreshore in order to build a long-term cultural precinct that is going to work, and that clearly the need and the willingness to spend money to relocate Megalo would be an incredibly valuable contribution to the cultural precinct. But it is like adding value; we have got to be careful that that money is spent in a way that has ongoing benefits and does not actually stifle other development from occurring that could be both compatible and supportive of other groups to reinforce the cultural precinct.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: So your view really is that so far we have put the cart before the horse in that we have said, “This is a piece of the puzzle,” without looking at the whole picture?

Mr Humphries: That is right. With due respect to Megalo, they have an urgent need. But I think the greater good also needs to be considered. The last speaker spoke about urgency and time being just as important as money. It all matters, but in principle it is a great shame that we did not do the master planning to inform the selection of an appropriate facility for Megalo and to make sure that that money was spent constructively to reinforce the larger precinct idea.

MR HANSON: A point on the bus depot markets: they do not have adequate toilets at the moment?

Mr Humphries: Again, they could certainly do with an upgrade in their support facilities.

MR HANSON: I suppose if you did a master planning process you would identify—

Mr Humphries: That would come out in that.

MR HANSON: ablutions, not just for Megalo or the bus depot but for all the other facilities that might share that space.

Mr Humphries: That is right. It needs to be done as a whole so that you can understand how best and most efficiently to create it.

MR HANSON: And get the synergies out of it. All right.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: So how long do you anticipate it might take to do the actual master plan process? As we heard before, Megalo are now in a sort of holding pattern and unable to progress with a number of their plans and apparently not able to now participate in the way they thought they were going to participate—in particular in the centenary, I think we heard.

Mr Humphries: Yes.

MS PORTER: How long do you think that this process might take? You are saying that we need an overall picture before we can actually fit the bits of the jigsaw in. That includes the use of the Fitters as well. So it would remain empty as well whilst all this was going on; is that what you are saying? Is that what I am hearing you say—that nothing would be happening in the Fitters at all during that time of actual planning?

Mr Humphries: As Mr Hanson just said, it is a matter of the cart before the horse. If you have the big picture objective in mind and understand what you are trying to achieve in the long term—the individual decisions that you have to make along the way, such as how is the Fitters Workshop going to be used—it is much better to make sure that those individual decisions all contribute to the whole.

In terms of your question about time, I cannot answer that off the top of my head. But, knowing that the master planning has been happening, and I understand it is on hold until this hearing is over, we are probably talking weeks, not months.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Are you aware of the content of the Conroy report?

Mr Humphries: I am aware of the Conroy report. I have not read it in great detail, but I am aware of it, yes.

MRS DUNNE: The Conroy report says that if we develop the Kingston foreshore area as an arts precinct there will need to be some exhibition spaces et cetera for whomever you might invite or whoever might come to the place. Would you see that the Fitters could meet that demand and that the other people who might come, including Megalo, might be in purpose-built buildings?

Mr Humphries: Definitely.

MRS DUNNE: I was taken by something that Mr Martin said. He said—I think I wrote it down accurately—that prudent and feasible alternatives need to be looked at given the development of the whole site.

Mr Humphries: That is right.

MRS DUNNE: I think what you are saying is that we have looked at some of it but have not looked at the whole site because we have never really looked at Fitters as a

blank sheet; we have looked at Fitters with the view that Megalo would go there. What I am hearing from you is that you do not think that was a satisfactory process.

Mr Humphries: If you are only worried about the Fitters Workshop and that is all you want to look at, you make decisions as you see fit. But my point is that the Fitters Workshop is a vital component of a significantly larger area in Kingston which has been identified as a cultural precinct that has anticipated more than just two or perhaps three activities going on there; that it needs a healthy population of arts activities to be able to happen down there in order for it to be viable.

So it is that context of trying to see how the long-term viability of the precinct as a whole is going to work—much like you plan a town or a city. Why do you put your housing here? Why do you put your sewerage works over there? You have got to do some initial planning and have a concept of how the whole thing is going to work as a cohesive whole. At this stage it is a shame that the other options that might exist for how that precinct is developed have not actually been looked at.

MRS DUNNE: As a cohesive whole.

Mr Humphries: That is right.

MRS DUNNE: Given your experience as an architect could you envisage perhaps building a stand-alone facility that is at least equivalent to that proposed for Megalo, for the money?

Mr Humphries: At this time the only information that I have, without actually understanding in full Megalo's detailed requirements for their building or a building, I can simply look at May + Russell's report and they have quoted that a stand-alone building could be built for around \$4.1 million.

THE CHAIR: What year was the May + Russell report?

Mr Humphries: October 2009.

THE CHAIR: Sorry; I interrupted you then, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: I think that probably covers it.

THE CHAIR: When the 1997 master plan looked into what were going to be some of the uses and identified it as potentially being that sort of multi-arts use site, there was not anything definite put in about what the major uses would be?

Mr Humphries: There were some suggestions. As with most master plans, they tend to be and have to be living documents. I have mentioned in the submission about the need to cater for change. For instance, that original master plan anticipated that the bus depot might disappear and that a purpose-built marketplace could be built in the area. Time has passed. There has been a different judgement passed on the bus depot; it has been seen fit that it should stay and be reinforced as one of the original buildings in the area and celebrated as one of the original buildings. So in that regard there has been a significant shift in what that original master plan might have seen the

more detailed planning to be in the cultural precinct.

But in all this planning methodology it has got different layers of grain. We are down to some very fine grain when we are looking at the planning that Alastair Swayn was talking about inside the actual Fitters Workshop—very fine grain planning. We have got the big picture, we have got the detail; but nobody really knows at this stage what the vision is for the cultural precinct and what is going to follow after Megalo establish themselves in the foreshore precinct.

THE CHAIR: An issue that has been raised in a couple of submissions is concern that there are a number of groups who are interested in going in there and whether or not there is the space to accommodate everybody in there and to have, like you have talked about, a thriving area; you need to have a number of businesses in there to make it viable. Obviously this is from an outside perspective, but do you see that as being an issue—that there actually might not be enough space to accommodate all the groups who might want to go in there?

Mr Humphries: I seem to recall the Conroy report attempts to identify an area of building that would satisfy the current perceived demands for activities in that precinct. Certainly the footprint that was mentioned in that report nowhere near fills the major spaces there. I think, again, the cultural precinct is going to take a long time to develop. Like any other activity spaces, commercial spaces or even the Kingston foreshore itself, it is going to take time before it gets to that critical mass where it naturally re-creates itself and has a natural life of its own without artificial financing or support to keep it going. Again, that is not really my area of expertise. I would rely on the Conroy report to answer that question really.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. As there no further questions, thank you very much. We do appreciate you taking the time to come in and address the committee today. It is appreciated. A transcript of today's hearing will be sent to you for you to check for accuracy.

Mr Humphries: Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 4.31 pm.