SUBMISSION 21

OUR ALBERT HALL

Friends of the Albert Hall Inc.
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19 March 2009

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
Department of House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

Friends of the Albert Hall Inc welcomes the opportunity to make a Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry on the Immigration Bridge Australia Proposal as announced by the Joint Committee on 26 February 2009.

As our primary Submission, we attach a letter dated 21 May 2008, sent to the Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories Inquiry into the NCA.

In conjunction with the attached letter, we emphasize our deep concern that the proposed bridge would inevitably impact adversely on the heritage values of the Albert Hall and the Albert Hall Heritage Precinct, specifically:

- the water and landscape vistas to and from the Albert Hall, its verandas and landscaped grounds;
- the bulk and intrusion of the bridge pylons (with stairs, lift, wheelchair access, high enough to give the bridge clearance and safety for recreational and commercial vessels);
- the loss of a well-used public amenity through the alienation of the access area for the bridge; and
- the direct pathway link and traffic lights complex in line with King Edward Terrace.

We also make the following requests of the Committee.

We request that the Committee seek a response to further information it sought from proponents of the Immigration Bridge Australia at the Committee hearing on 6 May 2008 and make the response public.

We ask that the Committee seek advice from the NCA why the NCA has not acceded to the Committee's recommendation, contained in the Joint Committee's Report on the Inquiry into the NCA, dated July 2008, that controversial "Draft Amendment 53, Albert Hall Precinct, not proceed and that proposed changes to traffic conditions south of the Lake on Commonwealth Avenue Bridge also not proceed".

Finally, on behalf of our membership and the 3364 people who signed a community petition lodged in the Federal Parliament in 2007 seeking immediate withdrawal of DA53, we appeal to the Committee to again reiterate a strong Committee view that DA53 should be immediately withdrawn.

This Submission has been authorised by the Committee of Friends of the Albert Hall Inc.

Contact details for further information about Friends of the Albert Hall Inc and this Submission are:
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Yours sincerely

Di Johnstone
Secretary
Friends of the Albert Hall Inc

OUR ALBERT HALL

SUBMISSION 25.3

Friends of the Albert Hall Inc.
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21 May 2008

Senator Kate Lundy
Chair
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
Department of House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Lundy

Following testimony to the Joint Committee by Immigration Bridge Australia (IBA) which revealed new information about Draft Amendment 53, Friends of the Albert Hall Inc would like to bring to the attention of the Joint Committee our further concerns about the NCA's lack of consultation with the community about important aspects of DA53. We have delayed sending this letter to you until the Hansard transcript for the hearing on 6 May was available.

The issue

2. At the Inquiry hearing on 6 May 2008, IBA representatives outlined the proposal for the Bridge and IBA discussions with the NCA over a period since 2005. IBA indicated there had been a commitment by the ACT Government, "subject to the Bridge being built", to cede to the Commonwealth 2,000 square metres "at the proposed southern landing site of the Bridge", in the DA53 Precinct. According to the IBA website this land "has been given as an in-kind contribution by the ACT Government to the project, so one planning authority (the NCA) would be involved in the building approvals process". IBA representatives indicated the area would not include parking as this was "the responsibility of the NCA". Presumably, IBA expect parking to be located elsewhere in the DA53 area.

3. In their evidence, the IBA also indicated they had been advised by the NCA there would be no need for a draft amendment to the National Capital Plan, as the West Basin Amendment "has already been put through", and that IBA would simply need a development application. As Amendment 61 covers the northern lake shore, it appears from the testimony the NCA expected the passing of DA53 to cover IBA-related development in the southern onshore area.

4. IBA documents indicate significant promotion of the Bridge and a number of commitments to it including at a high political level and by the ACT Government. There was reference in the testimony to consultation by the NCA with a Lake Users Group. However, and despite the impact of the Bridge in the DA53 Precinct, there has not yet been an open and transparent consultation process by the NCA about southern onshore elements of this significant planning proposal including onshore land and facilities for the Bridge, and from the evidence of the hearing, none is anticipated until the proposal is far advanced, i.e. at the development application stage.

5. Of particular concern to The Friends, and we would expect to the Canberra community interested in the future of the DA53 Precinct, is the commitment, undisclosed until now, that 2,000 square metres of land within the Precinct would be made available for the Bridge and associated facilities. This significant area would affect the "amenity" of the Precinct – including heritage values, vistas, green areas, access, community enjoyment and use of the Precinct. There is also the issue of Bridge-related parking and access in and through the DA53 Precinct.

Role of the NCA

6. The Friends notes with great concern that although the NCA engaged in discussions with IBA since 2005, including a meeting about the design concept on 20 March 2007 during the NCA's public consultation process on DA53, the NCA has not made information public about specific onshore Bridge requirements in the DA53 area or about land to be ceded by the ACT government for this purpose.

7. DA53 (para 1.1.6) referred to the proposed Bridge and broadly to its intended location (drawings and graphics in DA53 have it at a slightly different location to that in the IBA evidence). An NCA Fact Sheet on DA53 (NCA website) indicates that "Land adjacent to Lake Burley Griffin would be retained for public access and any future pedestrian bridge to the Acton Peninsula" and the "Land will also be set aside for a possible high-span pedestrian bridge to the Acton Peninsula". However the NCA has not revealed in any material on DA53, of which we are aware, the proposal to alienate 2,000 square metres for Bridge facilities or addressed the use of this and surrounding areas to service the Bridge (such as for parking), the impacts of proposed Bridge development in the rest of the Precinct or opportunities for public views to be heard about this. Neither was this information addressed at the NCA's public consultation sessions on DA53 or, from our records, at the presentation given by Ms Annabelle Pegrum at the public meeting on 24 May 2007. We note that proposed changes to DA53 in the NCA announcement of 2 April 2007 suggesting land to the north of Albert Hall could be a "public lakeside park (open space)" made no reference to a planned alienation of 2,000 square metres of land for Bridge facilities. We do not know whether this area of land was included in the heritage study of the DA53 Precinct.

8. We note too that the NCA's proposal for uplift of "designated areas" does not refer to the 2,000 square metres, though presumably the intention was for this to become "national land". Or under the NCA proposal would this land be returned to the ACT government?

9. We note that when referring on 21 April 2008 to stakeholder consultations, Ms Annabelle Pegrum did not mention, although they clearly were, that the IBA were one of the key stakeholders consulted in the formulation of DA53.

Our views

10. The Friends greatly respects the importance of celebrating Australia's Immigration experience. The first Australian citizenship ceremony was held in Albert Hall, followed by 20 years of citizenship ceremonies and national citizenship conventions. This significant aspect of Australia's immigration history was celebrated with an historic commemorative citizenship ceremony in Albert Hall during the celebrations of Albert Hall's 80th birthday, organised by The Friends in conjunction with the National Trust of Australia (ACT). Friends of the Albert Hall wish to make absolutely clear that it does not have a formed view about and is not seeking to contest the proposal for an Immigration Bridge.

11. However, The Friends is concerned about the less than transparent plans for development of an onshore area associated with the Immigration Bridge separately to its Precinct. In our view planning for the entire DA53 Precinct, including any proposed onshore land, infrastructure and associated facilities such as parking areas, must be undertaken in an integrated way.

Our request

12. We welcome your intention as Chair to ask the NCA for a supplementary submission providing full disclosure of the formal advice and approval processes initiated by the NCA and the details of the planned land swap of 2,000 square metres with the ACT Government. We draw to the attention of the Joint Committee that the development of the 2,000 square metres of land, and any facilities that might be on or associated with it, has not been a part of public consultations on Draft Amendment 53. This is yet another reason why we ask the Joint Committee to recommend that DA53 should be immediately withdrawn.

13. We also ask the Joint Committee to investigate the behaviour of the NCA in this regard as it would appear to us that there has been a deliberate policy by the NCA to conceal from the Canberra community discussions and agreements reached over the alienation of a significant area of land in the DA53 Precinct. We particularly note that a highly relevant NCA meeting with the IBA took place two days before an NCA public consultation session on DA53 (22 March 2007) at which public session the NCA should have provided all relevant material on DA53, and it would appear to us the NCA did not do so.

Yours sincerely

Di Johnstone
Secretary
Friends of the Albert Hall Inc