

**Submission to the Inquiry, by the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees, into the performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) with specific reference to Term of Reference (b): Policies and practices followed by the DPS for the management of the heritage values of Parliament House and its contents**

**Introduction**

The history of attempts since 1988 to put sound processes in place to protect the Design Integrity/Architect's Design Intent/Heritage Values of Parliament House warrants a book.

The history, thus far, has had four stages, each defined by a key document:

1. 'Parliament House. Assessment of Proposals for Significant Works. Draft Guidelines' (1990) – prepared for the Parliament House Construction Authority (PHCA) by Australian Construction Services (ACS - part of the Department of Administrative Services) and authored by Rosemarie Willett, an architect employed by ACS and formerly by Mitchell/Giurgola & Thorp Architects (MGT).
2. 'Parliament House. Design Integrity and the Management of Change. Guidelines' (1995) - prepared for the Joint House Department (JHD) by Rosemarie Willett and Chris Bettle, Project Officer with JHD (1984 – 1998). It constitutes an only slightly revised version of Document 1 (above).
3. 'The Architect's Design Intent for Parliament House, Canberra: Central Reference Document' (2004, but unfinished) – prepared by Pamille Berg, former senior partner of MGT and Coordinator of the Art and Craft Program and commissioned by the Joint House Department (later incorporated into the DPS).
4. 'Parliament House. Heritage Management Framework.' (Draft for comment as at June 2011) – 15 drafts of a 'Heritage Strategy' were written by 'Heritage Management Consultants' for the DPS between 2006 and 2009; the subsequent 2 volumes of the 'Heritage Management Strategy' (including the current 'Draft for Comment') were authored by Tristan Hoffmeister, Assistant Director Strategy and Communications Section, DPS.

A full history would require a detailed examination of at least the following:

- . the shifting character and emphasis of these four documents;
- . successive key terms and their implications ('Assessment of Proposals for Significant Works'; 'Design Integrity'; 'Architect's Design Intent'; 'Heritage');
- . the failure of successive attempts associated with each of the above-listed key documents to set adequate procedures, processes and personnel in place; and

. the well-understood (but ultimately determining) resistance of successive Presiding Officers to make a full and clear commitment to the protection of the Design Integrity/Architect's Design Intent/Heritage Values of Parliament House.

The current very tight deadline for submissions precludes a full history but, given my own involvement in the story of what came to be called Design Integrity, from 1984 to 1998 at JHD (and especially from 1992 to 1998 when it was my full-time focus), and given my continuing interest and concern, I have decided nonetheless to submit some comments however cursory and, regrettably, uncondensed.

I will restrict my comments to just the following three areas:

- A. The history and nature of what I see as 'The Central Dilemma';
- B. The strengths and weaknesses of each of the documents listed above, as demonstrated by the history of their use to date; and
- C. Selected examples of serious lapses in adherence to the following key values (see: 'Parliament House. Design Integrity and the Management of Change. Guidelines', 1995, pp.3 & 4) as evident on my two brief visits to Parliament House on Friday 5 August and Tuesday 9 August 2011:
  - Graphics (or Signage) [part of Furniture]
  - Colour
  - Light
  - Artworks
  - The People's Building.

I will conclude with some brief intimations of what may be needed to ensure that the decisions made by the Parliament since 1974 on behalf of the people of Australia in regard to the: siting; commissioning; construction; and maintenance of Parliament House are not reneged upon in the remaining 177 years of its scheduled 200 year life.

#### **A. The Central Dilemma**

A distinction is often made between Parliament House as a 'working building' and Parliament House as an outstanding piece of architecture, a 'work of art', an 'expression of Australia' or even a design 'icon'. This distinction and the potential conflict inherent in it may have contributed to former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser's reported remark that the creation of the new Parliament House was the worst decision of his Prime Ministership.



### *The Griffin ideas*

The origins of this central dilemma can be traced back to Walter Burley Griffin's original plan for Canberra. Griffin made a clear distinction between his Capitol building intended for the top of Capitol/Capital (formerly Kurrajong) Hill and Parliament House, intended for below the Capitol on Camp (formerly Canberra) Hill (now razed). In other words, the Capitol and the Parliament House (or Houses) were to be two quite distinct and separate buildings with separate, if related, purposes.

Parliament House was to represent, to quote Griffin, 'the actual working mechanism of the Government of the Federation' and it was certainly intended to be well designed – he won the agreement of two of the world's finest architects of the time, Louis Sullivan from Chicago and Otto Wagner from Vienna, to join the panel of judges for the proposed design competition (which, like so many of Griffin's plans for the Capital, never eventuated).

The Capitol building, on the other hand, though in a superior and more 'conspicuous' position, was to have, to quote Griffin again, 'a limited function, either as a general administration structure for popular reception or ceremonials, or for housing archives and commemorating Australian achievements rather than for deliberation or counsel, at any rate representing the sentimental and spiritual head, if not the actual working mechanism of the Government of the Federation'. The Capitol was to be at the centre of the entire Composition of the Capital City and at the apex of that principal triangle which came to be called the Parliamentary Triangle. It has often been referred to as the 'People's Building'.

### *The idea of amalgamating Parliament House and the Capitol*

The Capitol was never built (though the Prince of Wales, in 1921, laid a foundation stone for it, a stone which was ultimately relocated and incorporated into the flagstones of the Queen's Terrace at the new Parliament House). However, when the decision was made by the Parliament in 1974 to build the 'new and permanent' Parliament House on the top of Capital Hill where Griffin's Capitol was to have been, the seed was sown for the notion that perhaps the idea of the permanent Parliament House and Griffin's idea for the Capitol could be somehow amalgamated and incorporated into one and the same building.

In due course, whether explicitly or implicitly, the superb Brief for the design competition for the new Parliament House, prepared by the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC), expressed exactly this notion: both elements were given almost equal weight in the Brief.

Accordingly, the winning entry of Mitchell/Giurgola & Thorp Architects was the one that most adequately and profoundly satisfied this (as it were) double Brief and in the most integrated fashion. The two functions were merged at every level and in every way. They were effectively inseparable. This is the dilemma which today faces the Presiding

Officers and all others with responsibility for managing the building. Given that the decision-making embodied in the building was the result, at every stage, of rigorous democratic and Parliamentary processes, on behalf of the people of Australia, the challenges of this resultant dilemma need to be squarely met. The Presiding Officers and the Department of Parliamentary Services are *responsible* for meeting them.

### *Facing the Central Dilemma*

The fact that in the 2009-10 Annual Report of the Department of Parliamentary Services, Design Integrity takes up just one page (over pp. 49 & 50) out of 190 pages and that this one page addresses only the (I will argue) manifestly self-contradictory 'Design Integrity Index' strongly suggests, regardless of other rhetoric to the contrary, that the challenges of the Central Dilemma are not being squarely met. Senator Faulkner's questions in Senate Estimates reinforce this suggestion.

Furthermore, neither Design Integrity nor Heritage Values feature at all in 'Part 1: Secretary's review' which acts as the Introduction to the 2009-10 Annual Report. Clearly, in a department which now comprises the Parliamentary Library and Hansard as well as the former Joint House Department, this part of the former Joint House Department's concerns and responsibilities has taken a back seat.

### *Design Integrity and the Design Integrity Index*

In the first place, the 'Design Integrity Index' appears in the Annual Report as the last of four Indices, recommended, as I recall, by an outside consultant in the 1990s as a succinct reporting indicator. (The other Indices are: Building Condition Index; Landscape Condition Index; and Engineering Systems Condition Index.)

The main point is that a percentage-based Design Integrity Index with a 90% threshold (p.50) contradicts the very notion of 'integrity'. It hardly needs a dictionary definition of 'integrity' (though I will provide one) to realize that 90% integrity is not integrity; 90% intact is not intact. It resembles the idea that one can be a 'little bit pregnant'. (Indeed, in Elizabethan times and earlier, integrity also had the meaning of 'virginity'.) The Oxford English Dictionary definitions of 'integrity' are: 'wholeness, entireness, completeness, chastity, purity'. Further amplification comes in three parts (with historical examples, which I have omitted):

1. The condition of having no part or element taken away or wanting; undivided or unbroken state; material wholeness, completeness, entirety. B. Something undivided; an integral whole.
2. The condition of not being marred or violated; unimpaired or uncorrupted condition; original state; soundness.
3. In moral sense. A. Unimpaired moral state; freedom from moral corruption; innocence, sinlessness. B. Soundness of moral principle; the character of uncorrupted virtue, esp. in relation to truth and fair dealing; uprightness, honesty, sincerity.



It is perhaps little wonder that the concept of 'Heritage', with its shifting relativities, has in due course become more attractive to some than the more absolute and perfectionist concept of 'Integrity'

It is worth noting that, as far as I know, the concept of 'Design Integrity' (so-called) was first used formally in respect of Parliament House in the official history of the Parliament House Construction Authority ('Project Parliament: The Management Experience', AGPS, 1990). It became, in due course, a key term with a history of its own, which included its derisory abbreviation to 'D.I.' by those who came, over time, and for various reasons, to think of it as blocking rather than facilitating reasonable proposals for change. This shift accompanied a growing demoralization, even despair and a corresponding lowered morale around how the building and its precincts and their design, once a source of such pride and excitement, were being understood, valued and protected.

It is good that these doubts and concerns are being brought into the open.

## **B. The strengths and weaknesses of the various key documents**

I will refer to the four documents named in detail on page 1 of this submission as follows:

1. 'Assessment of Proposals' (1990) [A.P.]
2. 'Design Integrity' (1995) [D.I.]
3. 'Architect's Design Intent' (2004) [A.D.I.]
4. 'Heritage Management Framework' (2011) [H.M.F.]

Each document makes its own claim, using its own nomenclature, to be the Central Reference Document (CRD) of a proposed process and set of procedures. The term is used internally in A.P. and D.I. and explicitly in the full title of A.D.I. Each document also makes proposals as to who should use the document and how. (On the other hand, each aspires, I believe, to be intelligible to the general reader.)

### ***1 & 2. 'Assessment of Proposals' (1990) [A.P.] and 'Design Integrity' (1995) [D.I.]***

These two documents are essentially the same document so I will consider them as one (i.e under the title of 'D.I.').

#### ***STRENGTHS***

##### ***i) The key principle of Design Integrity***

This document is clearly based on the discourse of Heritage as it has developed in Australia and elsewhere. It refers to the Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975 (D.I., p.2) and the Burra Charter (D.I., p.10). It uses heritage terms, in particular 'Significance' and 'Values'. These terms are key to the understanding of the document but it is equally

important to realize the (so to speak) self-referential way (i.e. having explicit internal reference to Parliament House and its specific design) in which these 'values' are here used. What they apply to *in Parliament House* is spelt out (see pp. 12 to 22). They are principles but not just general principles with general external reference and, importantly, the *overriding* principle is that of Design Integrity used in a sense that is, again, specific to the building. Design Integrity is described on p.3 (D.I.) as follows:

*'Design Integrity*

Design Integrity (or wholeness) signifies the specific ways in which the architect, in meeting the requirements of the brief, has integrated the design of the building and its precincts into the existing orders of the city and the land. In the same way it signifies the integration of all elements within the design into the larger whole.

'For the purposes of this document, 15 design values have been distinguished as essential, to be safeguarded if integrity is to be maintained.'

The 15 Design Values are spelt out in turn, albeit relatively briefly in only 10 pages (the document as a whole is 91 pages), in ways that are specific to the original design of Parliament House. The document assumes access to other relevant archives and documentation (the A.D.I. document now, of course, represents, after the event, an invaluable such reference resource). This document (D.I.) is intended to be used by suitably qualified and informed persons who can interpret what it has to say in an architectural, design and art context at the highest level.

*ii) Principles*

The overriding strength of this document is that the original author has been able, especially in the 'Primary Statement of Significance' with its 15 Values, in an analytic and highly intelligent way, to describe both the individual and team work of the architects (in cooperation with a huge range of other parties) but to express that work as a set of *principles*.

The text then shows how these principles are demonstrated in a concrete way in each category of the different sets of places of related significance throughout the building and its precincts.

This approach differs from the idea of the 'architect's design intent' with its essentially individualistic departure point as expressed in A.D.I. and, unlike H.M.F., is essentially endogenous rather than exogenous in its terms of reference and in its assessment of value and significance.

From my own experience in Parliament House, when I used the D.I. document myself as an educational tool at *all* levels and when I saw it being used as a tool for decision-making, it was obvious that people simply 'got' it. It commonly created 'ah ha' moments in people when they saw how things were interconnected. Also, and very significantly, it



did not generate the combative stance of designer v owner, architect v engineer, then v now, them v us, 'artistic' v 'practical', ours v yours. It encouraged at all levels a sense of 'ownership' of what had been given to us as workers at Parliament House and as Australian people generally and it inspired people with a wish to protect and share what had been put in our care.

## WEAKNESSES

The weaknesses of D.I. are its brevity – it assumes and needs a far more detailed set of reference documents and information and is seriously weakened by ongoing loss of information when IT and other systems fail to keep records of history and change on all fronts – and the evidence that it is capable of being seriously misused where there is a will to do so or a failure to understand its rationale – to which, of course, presumably any document may be prone including all the documents here discussed. (See below for a case study of how it has been misused in the generation of Document 4 H.M.F.).

### 3. '*Architect's Design Intent*' (2004) [A.D.I.]

## STRENGTHS

#### i) *A work of scholarship*

This is a massive (about 1000 pages in 5 volumes, *c.f. D.I. at 190 pages*) and very important document. It is a work of scholarship and is based on, quotes and refers to a great range of primary documents. It is a true history of the design and construction of Parliament House, written not by an outsider but by a senior partner of Mitchell/Giurgola & Thorp Architects, Pamille Berg, who had a profound involvement in the process from the start, not least, but not only, as the coordinator of the Art and Craft Program. It was written in active conjunction with many other people also involved in the massive enterprise, including, above all, the principal Design Architect Romaldo Giurgola.

While Giurgola was always the leader of the team – Ian Fowler, one of the executives of the PHCA, said, in my hearing, that, unlike the case of Joern Utzon and the Sydney Opera House, in the design and construction of Parliament House the architect Aldo Giurgola always sat 'at the head of the table' – the enterprise itself was importantly and quintessentially *cooperative* in its *modus operandi*, as many will attest. Therefore the phrase 'Architect's Design Intent' should be understood to include the input of many others. This, I warrant, is apparent throughout the A.D.I. document.

- ii) My access to this document has been very limited. I had a quick look at a small part of it when it was approaching what was anticipated to be its completion; I saw how badly it was used in the commissioning of a significant change to the building (the change of the former Non-Members Bar to a Children's Creche) though happily no harm was done; and I have been able to read Chapter 21 'The Parliament House Furniture Program Design Intent' which was included (as Attachment Y to the DPS's submission) in the huge block

of documentation (3.5 inches thick) which I received from the Committee on 4 August – for which many thanks. I have read this last with renewed admiration for what I assume to be the quality of the document as a whole.

While MGT might have written something of this kind around 1988 at the time of the completion and handover of the building (as I understand was in fact proposed), in the event the PHCA provided the Parliament with the ACS document ‘Parliament House. Assessment of Proposals for Significant Works. Guidelines’ (1990). Irrespective of the merits of the latter document (which I hold in high regard), it is a wonderful thing that, years down the track, the architects have been given and have taken up the opportunity, at presumably considerable expense to the Parliament, to set down for posterity a full record of their intentions. Money surely well spent.

*iii) Quite distinct from all the other documents*

I assume that A.D.I. too (like A.P., *D.I. and H.M.F.*) sets out a putative set of processes, procedures and necessary personnel to ensure that it will be used correctly. On these or whether they have been instituted I cannot comment given my limited exposure to the document. It should however be obvious that, in itself, it is a quite different document from A.P., D.I. or H.M.F. It is, in essence, a record ‘from the horse’s mouth’. This is its strength. If people – whoever they may be – are interested in the architect’s design intent, here it is in print: a sort of sacred text or ‘Bible’ to go with the building.

*iv) Touchstone for assessment of current status of aspects of the building*

To take Chapter 21 ‘The Parliament House Furniture Program Design Intent’ as only one example, this chapter contains on its last two pages (16 & 17) a scathing account of mismanagement under JHD or DPS (or both) of part of the Furniture Program. One paragraph reads as follows;

‘That decade of ‘scrambling’ of the Architect’s original manufactured furniture designs with second- and third- generation furniture of unknown and unrecorded design provenance is already close to being irretrievable at Parliament House in furniture management, archiving and design integrity terms. Unless extreme care and the detailed knowledge of the original inception and terms of the Program are utilized, subsequent furniture management strategies procured by the Department will result in permanent confusion and the loss of any capacity for contemporary heritage preservation of the original design ideas of the furniture.’

Not only does this passage, interestingly, contain all three concepts of ‘Architect’s Design Intent’, ‘Design Integrity’ and ‘contemporary heritage preservation’ (suggesting that these three orientations are not necessarily incompatible) [for a reference also to ‘intellectual property’ see under], it also constitutes a serious critique of at least a part of the furniture program, which cannot but raise alarm warnings in anyone interested in or responsible for the preservation of Parliament House about the dangers of a casual or less than rigorous approach to any part of the building and its design.



The chapter concludes:

‘Serious and intelligent efforts will be required by the Departments of Parliament House over a lengthy period to recover and restore the intellectual property and the well over \$70 million of heritage value of the Furniture Program for the building.’

## WEAKNESSES

### *i) Document is unfinished*

In the first place, the document is unfinished. The illustrations, self-evidently vital to the document, have not been incorporated into the form of the text which is presently accessible to most people. Furthermore, the finished document, with its illustrations, was intended to be duplicated so that all relevant persons and departments would have immediate access to a physical copy of the document. Apparently this has not occurred.

I understand that the (uncompleted, unillustrated) document has now been put on-line which unfortunately leaves it open to the sort of selective use which is likely only to dilute its effectiveness. (An example of this is presumably what we are in dealing with in the section on the Children’s Creche below.)

### *ii) The size of the document*

The document by its nature is necessarily very large (about 1000 pages, 5 volumes as stated above). This makes it appear to some people cumbersome and unwieldy and therefore dismissable on that basis. The size of the document could, by contrast, be said to accurately reflect the size and complexity of its subject and therefore all the more reason to take it seriously.

Like the building itself (which is of course very large), the document requires people to be employed to be responsible for its use in the protection of the building who have or can develop a both broad and deep knowledge and comprehension of what the document contains and represents. The skilled *interpretation* of such a document is of the essence.

### *iii) Potential for misuse - an example - plus the question of the ongoing use of the remaining original architects*

Of course all documents have the potential for misuse; the problem is in the misuse not necessarily in the document.

In the recent case of the design of a Children's Creche to replace the former Non-Members Bar, I had, by chance, occasion to be privy to what was extracted from the A.D.I. document and given to the designer evidently as a guide to how to proceed.

In practice, as the architect of the crèche told me, he had been, during the design and construction process (which had been already completed when we spoke), in frequent personal contact with Aldo Giurgola and I think other of the original architects and designers of Parliament House. This in fact was how the relevant principles and guidance were conveyed or handed down, negotiated and understood in practical terms. It was evident that the extracts from the A.D.I. had played little or no part in the process.

Furthermore, I was permitted to read the extracts the architect had been given. While each was in itself well written and of high quality, all up what was a paltry selection of extracts lacked coherence and had the appearance of having been, as far as one could tell, selected almost at random. I could hardly believe what I was seeing.

I wondered if perhaps the architect might have been given access to or a copy of the D.I. document. As he had not and indeed had no knowledge that such a document existed, I lent him my copy as I was interested to see how he would perceive it. He read it and, when he returned it, said that, compared with the scraps he had received from the A.D.I. document (this is no reflection on the A.D.I. document), the D.I. document was far more coherent and comprehensible.

In practice as I have said, guidance was received from the original architects in person. This raises the obvious question: What will happen when these persons are no longer available?

All in all, this represents, in my view, both a serious misuse of the remarkable document and resource that the 'Architect's Design Intent' document is and should remain, but also demonstrates that, while resort to the remaining original architects is, of course, not in itself unreasonable, it has an obvious use-by date and may even impede the development and establishment of satisfactory ongoing procedures, a process in which those very remaining architects and designers might be more profitably engaged.

#### *iv) Attitudes*

The accent, broadly speaking, on individual intent (explicit in the title) as opposed to the accent on principles (at once general and specific) in the D.I. document lays the A.D.I. document open – at least among would-be or unconscious philistines – to a certain 'Jack's as good as his Master' response which is not too hard to find, perhaps even part of the 'national character'. The very fact that the A.D.I. document expresses explicitly the opinions of an individual or group of individuals can excite a response such as: 'That's *your* opinion. So what?' or 'That's *your* opinion. This is *my* opinion.' And so forth. [See also the concluding paragraph of the STRENGTHS section for Documents 1 and 2. These same dichotomies are pertinent here too.]



This is no small matter in a country famous for its improvisatory ‘add on’, ‘make do’, ‘nothing sacred’, ‘bush carpenter’/‘bush mechanic’ character – on which, incidentally, the Old (or rather ‘provisional’) Parliament House prided itself! How such attitudes in respect of the very different animal which is the new House might be discouraged could be worthy of consideration.

#### ***4. Draft ‘Heritage Management Framework’ (2011)***

This again represents another quite different approach, in particular an attempt to broaden the terms of reference and, in determining Value, to set Parliament House in a wider context where different overriding considerations might apply.

#### **STRENGTHS**

##### *i) Outside point of reference and the suggestion of greater flexibility*

The appeal of the ‘Heritage’ approach is fairly obvious. The conceptual framework is already established elsewhere and has its own legitimacy. The way that things elsewhere are categorized as eligible or not for heritage consideration, listing or registration presents a possible model for how one might categorise different parts (or contents) of Parliament House. This is exactly how the document in fact proceeds. About 15 out of its 44 pages take this tack. It also uses such relatively loose terms as ‘look and feel’ or ‘palette and design language’. Although it says, for example on page 25, ‘advice should be sought’ (it does not say from where or from whom or what weight this advice might be given), it also recommends that ‘change should be evolutionary not revolutionary’: perhaps a reassuring notion to some. One can easily see how such a series of approaches – regardless of how well they might be applied - would appeal to those impatient of a more prescriptive approach. Its combination of external reference and the suggestion, internally, of an easier-going regime (which might also save some money) could win supporters but not ensure good results.

#### **WEAKNESSES**

##### *i) Quality of some Heritage work*

An earlier tilt at the Heritage approach is represented by Attachment Z to the DPS’s submission to the Inquiry: ‘Australian Heritage Council Assessment for the Nomination of Parliament House to the National Heritage List – 2005’. This document perhaps demonstrates the danger of having been written by someone outside the process of the design and construction of the place and therefore evidently unfamiliar with the relative validity of different printed materials available in the public domain.

This document may well have been superseded but a quick read of it does not inspire confidence. The text includes errors of fact. Here are some random examples:

### Smallwares

Under the heading 'Artworks, Craft and Furniture' (which already compounds distinct categories as they were originally conceived) is the following sentence:

'Smallwares including silverware, stainless ware, linen, glassware, tableware and serving items contribute to the making of the place.'

Anyone remotely familiar with the place let alone anyone who had read the D.I. document (p.18) would know that the smallwares program proposed by the Architects had not been carried either by the time that the D.I. document was published in 1995 or since.

### Gardens and Landscaping

The document also makes the mistake of quoting – without attribution – from secondary sources which mis-state the Architect's intention. An example under the heading 'Gardens and Landscaping' is the sentence:

'The design of the gardens and landscaping aimed at *simplicity and harmony*'  
[My emphasis. C.B.]

This phrase, as I recall, comes originally from a leaflet put out by the gardeners for garden tours conducted during Floriade. It became a recurrent phrase but, as well as being fairly meaningless (Would one aim at 'complexity and disharmony'?), there is no evidence that this is what the design aimed at. It is a subsequent invention,

### Walter Burley Griffin

Similarly, references to Griffin under "Aesthetic characteristics' and beyond are diffuse and misleading (though, one might add, that is hardly uncommon in Canberra).

### Muddling of terms

Terms such as 'symbolic', 'representing' 'suggesting', 'relating' are muddled and used in loose and imprecise ways.

### The 'historical progression' through the building

There is gross simplification of complex ideas such as the idea of a historical progression through the building so that one might suppose, from this document, that the mosaic in the Forecourt is saying that Aboriginal people are a thing of the past whereas the idea was, very importantly, *double* in its import, namely that Aboriginal inhabitants predated European settlement but that they also have a continuing and permanent presence i.e. it is about then *and* now, at one and the same time. To get this so wrong is a serious blemish on a so-called Heritage document and is also an unthinking slur on the Architects. The fact that the double nature of the historical progression through the building is widely misrepresented and often not known does not make its perpetuation here any better.



### Public Foyer

The statement under 'Public Foyer' that the 'array of 48 marble-clad columns .... are intended to symbolize a eucalypt forest' is simply wrong, though again widely believed. Anyone interested might track down Pamille Berg's account of the origins of this myth.

### Stucco lustro

Under 'Senate Chamber':

'The columns and upper parts of the walls of the chamber are coated with stucco lustro.'

While the walls of the Members Hall and of the House of Representatives Chamber *are* 'coated with stucco lustro', I am almost certain that the walls of the Senate Chamber are not and are, by contrast, coated in white paint.

And so on !

Again, the quality of this sort of 'Heritage' work does not inspire confidence when one is dealing with somewhere like Parliament House.

### *ii) Misuse of the D.I. document*

The most serious weakness of the H.M.F. document is its misuse of the Categories of Significance (a key part of the D.I. document), under another name, as an ordering device in the H.M.F. document but in disregard of the primary and overriding principle of Design Integrity as set out in the D.I. document.

While the original author of the D.I. document does write (p.5) that the Categories 'have been formed by grouping *in hierarchical order* [My emphasis.C.B.] design elements and places of related significance within the building and landscaping', the way that these 16 Categories have been transferred (word for word) into the H.M.F.'s so-called 'Components' and the way that these Components have then been ordered and categorized, to the exclusion of, rather than in support, of the principle of Design Integrity, is truly disturbing to anyone concerned with preservation of the building.

Over 11 pages, the H.M.F. document uses the 16 Categories of Significance, renamed as 'Components', to classify all areas of the building according to three 'levels' of so-called 'tolerance for change': 'Low', 'Moderate' and 'High'.

This represents a complete distortion of the Design Integrity documents (A.P. and D.I.) where the 16 Categories of Significance are used in conjunction with the 15 Design Values (as they are relevant to each Category or Group of Places) in pursuit of the protection of Design Integrity as a whole and not as a means to decide what is important and what is not, let alone what has a low, medium or high 'tolerance for change'.

In the H.M.F. document, huge areas (about half) of the building, as set out in the 'yet to be finalised' maps, are accorded a level of 'medium' tolerance for change, setting up a potential for all manner of possible changes within a very loose application of such terms as 'palette' and 'language'. Meanwhile, areas accorded a 'high tolerance' for change appear to have become areas where pretty much anything goes.

The clear difference between the D.I. document and the H.M.F. document can be seen if one compares how they each treat the Carparking and Plants Rooms (Category 16 out of the 16 Categories in the D.I. document), which the H.M.F. classifies as having a 'high tolerance for change'. To conclude, as the H.M.F. document could be said effectively to do, from the fact that only 4 of the 15 Design Values in the I.D. document are asterisked as 'relevant' in this case, that this signifies and legitimizes an attribution of 'high tolerance for change' in the H.M.F. document is to fail to see that most or all of the other 11 Design Values that might apply (e.g. National Symbolism, Landform, Landscaping, Artworks and Crafts, Furniture) are *obviously* not 'relevant' while Order, Quality Assurance, Colour and Light, which do have asterisks against them to indicate relevance, are not inconsiderable values which it is important to respect.

The very idea that such a system of 'levels of tolerance for change' could be used to protect Design Integrity is again a contradiction in terms. It amounts to the abandonment of Design Integrity as a principle entirely and effectively discards any serious adherence to the Architect's Design Intent in all its rich and discerning interconnectedness, where *all* aspects, regardless of their place in the overall Order and regardless of their individual character, are valued parts of the whole.

*iii) The conflict between the particular autonomy of the Presiding Officers and those regimes of determination whose authority is external to the Parliament*

The recurrent unwillingness of the Presiding Officers to accede in particular to external standards of 'Heritage', generally contingent on various forms of external listing or registration, represents a serious weakness in the Heritage approach. An account of this unwillingness is set out in the DPS submission to the Inquiry, commencing with a reference to a departmental file note from July 1995 and continuing through Attachments Z to AH to the present day. The reasons for the unwillingness are clear but, again, the efforts to proceed down a 'Heritage' path regardless hardly provide much guarantee for the protection of Parliament House and its design given, in addition, the relative looseness of the Heritage approach in any case.

The situation is grave and Senator Faulkner and others have done well to question it.



### C. Lapses from adherence to key values

The following selected observations were made on two recent visits to Parliament House on Friday 31 July 2011 and Tuesday 4 August 2011.

*Signage* (included in the Value 'Furniture' in the D.I. documents)

The system of graphics or signage for Parliament House as designed by Emery Vincent & Associates is a) simple and b) global (see the large-format 'Graphic Style Manual').

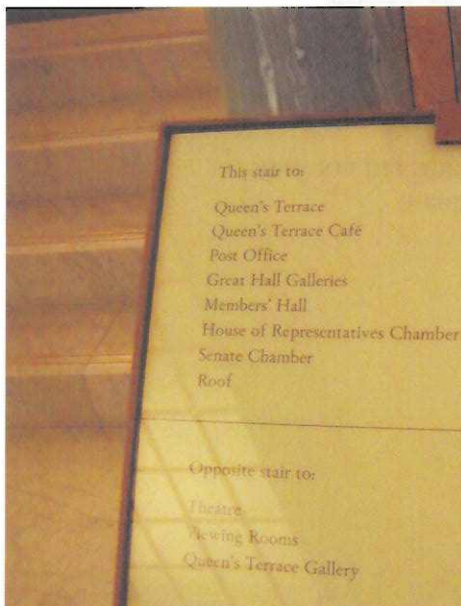
The *major signs* employ the specially designed Parliament Letter Forms which exist in upper case only. They manifest in various ways: as 3-dimensional metal letters; incised in stone or concrete; inlaid; and acid-etched on glass. They can also be printed.



Parliament Letter Forms

*All other signs* employ a single font 'Claude' which, like the Parliament Letter Forms, has a timeless, classical quality so that, as far as possible, the signage will not date. Signs are generally square. Except in the basement proper where black is used, Claude is printed in a particular shade of grey (with a specific Pantone Matching System number) and *generally* in normal upper and lower case rather than in continuous upper case. Text is generally left-justified and 'bold' is rarely used.

NB. The Claude font, like the Parliament Letter Forms, is available on Parliament House IT systems or was as at March 1998 because I myself organized it.



'Claude' font

The general and intentional effect is that signage is, so to speak, 'quiet' and visually recessive but in practice legible and effective provided it is not 'shouted down' by other more assertive, 'louder' signs.

Accordingly, as originally intended, artworks, the architecture itself and all the carefully coordinated aspects of, for example, light, colour, vegetation, space, form speak to the observer, worker and visitor alike, in their own right rather than being shouted down or competed with by aggressive, intrusive or didactic signs or by the introduction of other more dominant media.

Unfortunately, the overall effect can be quickly lost resulting in a visual and communicative cacophony, as the following examples show.



#### Public car park

- . wrong font
- . black not grey
- . all capitals
- . not left-justified
- . red arrow
- . non=standard arrow (see below)



#### Queen's Terrace Café

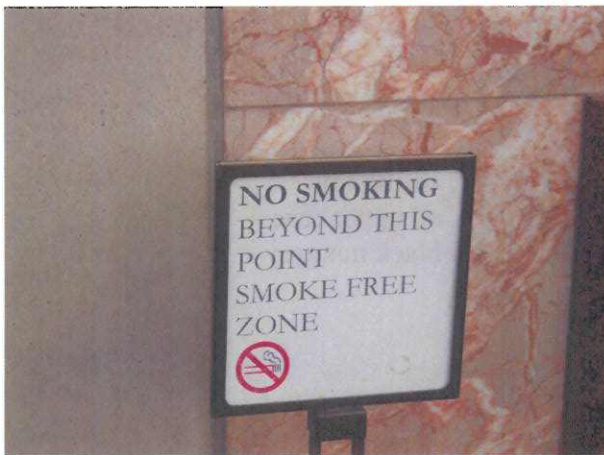
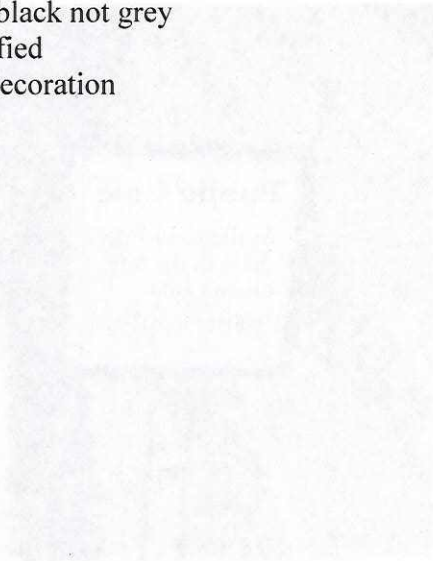
- . wrong font
- . all uppercase
- . not left-justified
- . wrong colour: red not grey
- . sign not square





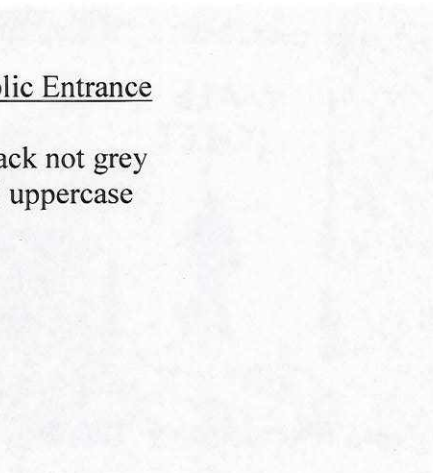
### Schools area

- . wrong font, black not grey
- . not left-justified
- . extraneous decoration
- . not square



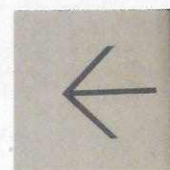
### Public Entrance

- . black not grey
- . all uppercase

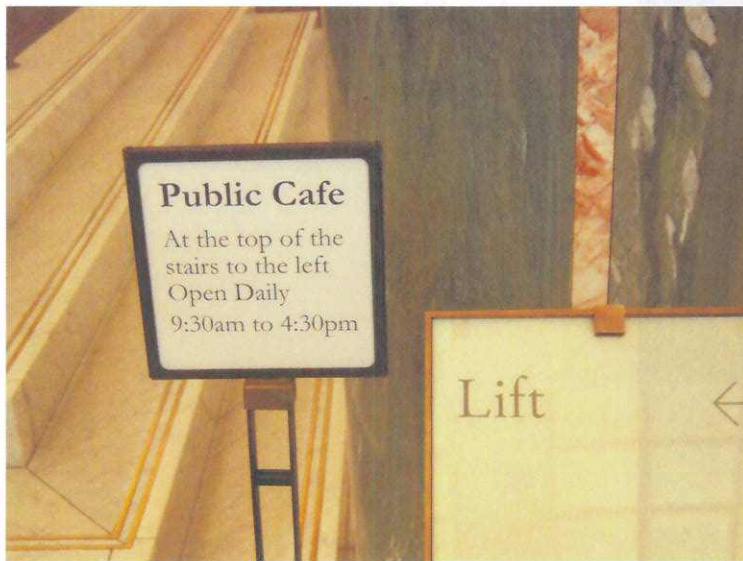


### Public Exit

- . non-standard arrow
- . texta-colour (this texta arrow has been there for at least 12 years!)
- . NB Correct font



- . correct arrow



### Public Foyer

L.

- . black not grey
- . use of 'bold'
- . correct font

R.

- . correct font
- . correct grey
- . correct arrow (see above)

NB Black (L) and Grey (R) clash



### Public carpark

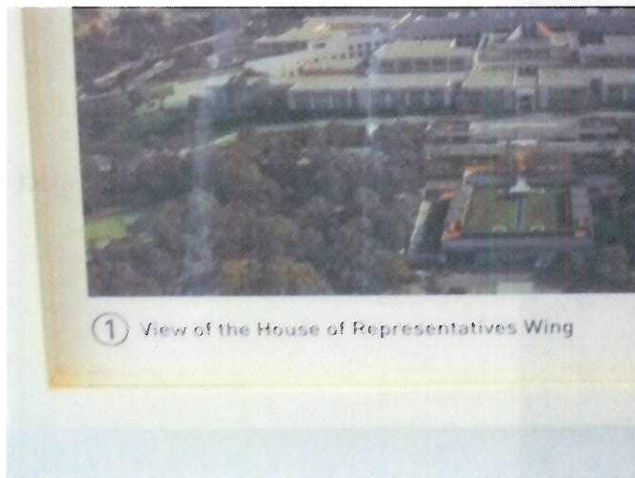
- . wrong font
- . all upper case
- . black not grey



### Public carpark

- . ditto





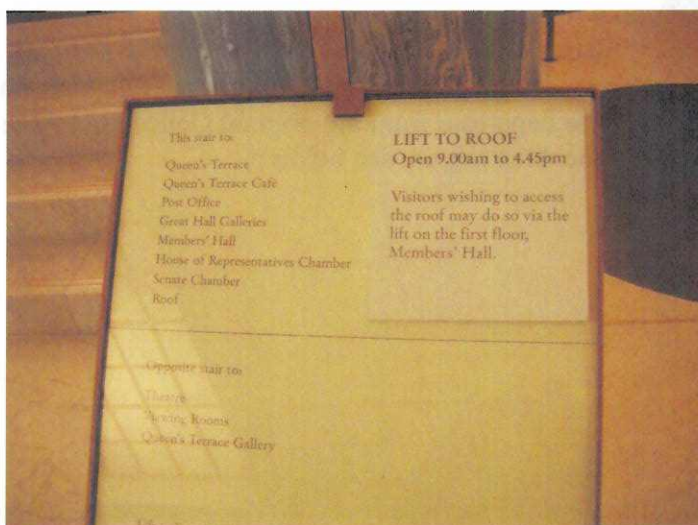
### Schools area

- . wrong font (on main display, especially for school children, about the design of building)



### Viewing Room 1

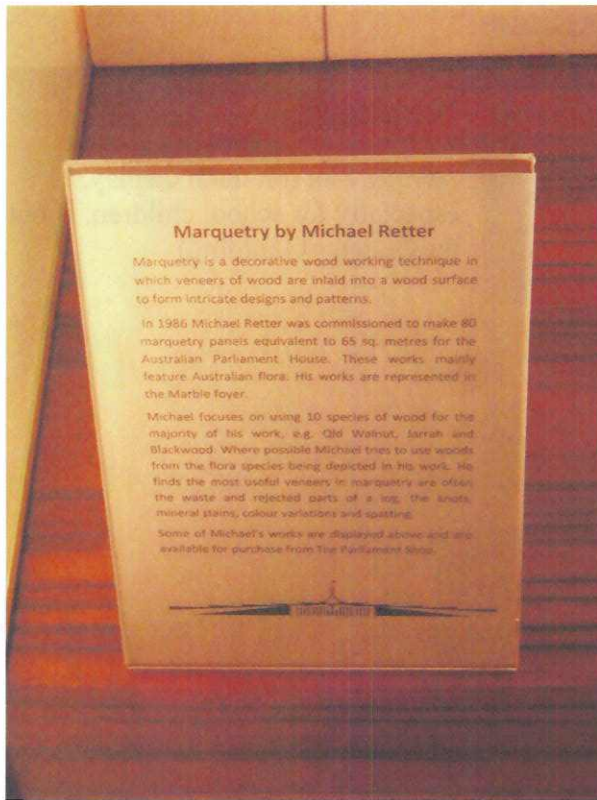
- . wrong font (on a notice about a film on the design of the building)
- . black not grey
- . not square



### Public Foyer

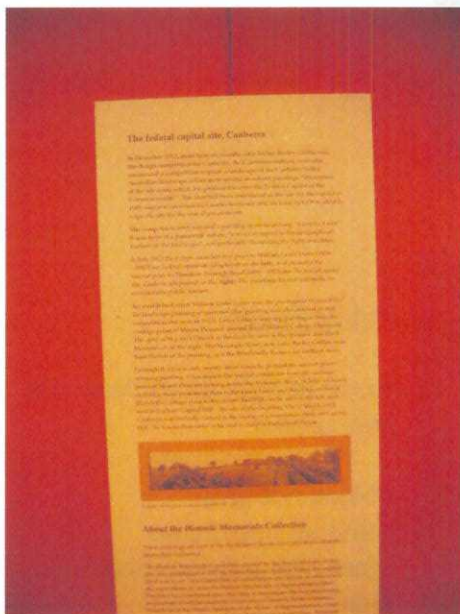
Insert at right discordant with sign proper

- . black not grey
- . title all upper case
- . jars with left-justified main sign



### In Parliament Shop window

- . wrong font (on a sign about an aspect of the design of the building)
- . black not grey
- . not left-justified



### Public Foyer – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Gallery at S.

Enormous block of didactic prose in an area that used to be a key area of the Art Program now taken over for didactic purposes

- . black not grey
- . correct font and left-justified (but overall part of a major departure from the original Conceptual Base of the Art Program see below)



## ii) Colour

The so-called 'colour cross' with its connection with aspects of the Australian landscape (gumtree leaves and blossoms, wattle and colours of the sky – blue, grey, white) and with the traditional colours of the Chambers establishes the following order:

- . House of Representatives Wing – green
- . Senate Wing – red and pink
- . centre of the building between the curved walls – blue, grey, white (with a small number of accents in yellow, orange and gold).

### Queen's Terrace Café chairs

This is just one instance of departure from the above order.

The chairs in the Queen's Terrace Café were originally upholstered in a fabric with a blue, grey and white pattern as befits the colour scheme of the central part of the building.



The chair pictured is one of many which have clearly been reupholstered at, presumably, some expense.

The colour chosen for the new upholstery is *green*. Who made this decision and who authorized it? The colour system for Parliament House is not really that hard to grasp but it is *integral* to the design of the building.

### *iii) Light*

The approved lighting scheme for Parliament House was designed by an American consultant who was one of the world's great lighting designers.

In a letter to the Joint Standing Committee on the new Parliament House (a copy of which was placed by me on JHD Lighting files in the 1990s), the architects expressed the view that the lighting – natural and artificial - was the most important single aspect of the interior design of the building. (The artificial exterior lighting, now severely compromised, is correspondingly important, as an expression of the building in its public aspects and as a part of the night lighting of the city as a whole.)

The use of natural light was a core value of the building. The artificial lighting was complex in terms of fittings, positioning and types of light sources. A primary concern was achieving a balance between natural and artificial light (an achievement now seriously eroded). There were numerous other individual concerns which included: appropriate workplace lighting, visibility and protection of artworks, flattering light for human skin tones at social gatherings (such as in the Great Hall), expression of the building at night, compatibility with televising in the Chambers, etc.

The scale and complexity of the artificial lighting design and in particular the many different kinds of light sources stipulated for use (180 or something of that order, though my memory may be faulty) prompted Liberal Member of the House of Representatives Bronwyn Bishop in, I think, Senate Estimates, comparatively soon after the opening of the building, to express ridicule: she said that, had Parliament House been a 18<sup>th</sup> rather than the 20<sup>th</sup> century building, the lighting itself would be considered a 'folly'.

Shortly after this, two senior officers, an engineer and an accountant, travelled the world specifically to see how other public building managers were managing their lighting. Energy use and cost were becoming central considerations worldwide.

On the officers' return, with the enthusiastic cooperation of JHD technical staff, major changes to artificial lighting were made throughout the building. These were proudly reported in the Department's Annual Reports.

There have been much vaunted savings but it is from this time that the lighting of the building both inside and out has deteriorated in terms of the central place of lighting in the original design.

The night lighting of the exterior of the building is frankly a disgrace. It has all the class of an impoverished third-world railway station.

The interior is not much better. Numerous examples could be given. I will give just one.



### Public Foyer – southern first floor Gallery



The light sources pictured were originally recessed in their fittings. As they are now, they effectively obtrude beyond the fittings and glare in your eyes as you look up from below so that the lights are the main thing that you see. Visually they override everything else. [The effect of these changed light sources in terms of proper visibility (as in the colour spectrum of the light itself) and the protection of art works from Ultra Violet rays is also worthy of consideration.]

#### *iv) Artworks*

The departures from the original ideas set out in the key document 'Conceptual Basis of the Art Program' particularly in respect of moveable works in the Public Areas are now extreme. These departures, now of long standing, seem to have become almost institutionalized.

### The first floor public areas, the Art Program and the idea of the People's Building

The public sitting areas to either side of the Great Hall on the first floor have largely lost their intended purpose. They are now occupied and dominated by exhibitions, frequently, and on the Senate side exclusively, of an educational kind and often to do with the Parliament as an institution, exhibitions such as the decommissioned Old Parliament House might originally have been expected to house in its intended role as a constitutional museum. The cerebral nature and the design of many of these exhibitions (especially the colours and graphic style of the current 'Have Your Say' exhibition) are at odds with the intended sensual experience of both the architecture and the art program while their physical bulk blocks vistas and diminishes the sense that these are spaces – and originally *substantial* spaces - for the people themselves to take occupation, even possession of when they visit their Parliament - for them to sit, chat, let their children run about or play on the rugs, take in the ambience at leisure, etc.

The primary suggestion of the Art Program for the use of moveable and light sensitive artworks in these areas was to display, along the inner walls of these spaces, on both sides

of the building, selections from the Historical Photographic Collection from the Latrobe Library in Melbourne which was the gift of the State of Victoria to the new Parliament House. These would typically show Australian people of all kinds in a variety of Australian landscapes and other settings. Landscape being a central idea in the design of the building, here, in an important addition, were pictures of actual people, like those occupying these dedicated public areas, out there *in* the landscape. This was a significant demonstration of this Parliament House as the People's Building.

Sadly this wonderful idea has been realized only once – and then only briefly but to warm popular acclaim - since the building opened in 1988.

### Rugs in the Public Areas



The rug pictured is one of four designed, I recall, by Louise Dumbrell for the public areas to east and west of the Great Hall at the first floor level. The rugs are intended to be surrounded on two or more sides by the leather lounges and chairs specially chosen for these areas.



In these picture, not only is the one (and one only) rug on display displaced from the furniture square but it is actually now positioned across the general walkway so that visitors are walking across it continually throughout the day. As a result the edge of the rug and the near corner in particular are visibly damaged. Who is responsible for this?



### Moveable artworks in the Public Foyer at the first floor Gallery level



There is no time to give what is happening here the attention it deserves. Suffice to say that, again, the departure from the Conceptual Basis of the Art Program in respect of moveable works in these areas is almost complete, with a new focus (perhaps in 'Heritage' mode) on the Historic Memorials Collection.

The themes of Historical Progression along the north/south axis and the primary statement of Landscape as the central theme of the design of the building (but not labeled as such) along the east/west gallery outside the Great Hall and also visible from the floor of the Public Foyer (the original realization of which is happily preserved in the film 'Open House') have been all but abandoned.

One could perhaps be forgiven for thinking that the choice to display the two large oil paintings, from, I think, 1910, of the chosen site for the Federal Capital City before it was built or even named (previously hung to great effect in the corridor near the Prime Minister's office and, before that again, hung high up to either side of the main entrance to the provisional Parliament House, where they looked, and could, perhaps, again look, very fine) might contain, however unconsciously, a reference to the here generally displaced idea of Landscape but also a hint of nostalgia for the quip that Canberra was just a 'a good sheep station spoiled' and the widely held belief that Parliament should have stayed in Melbourne or at the very best (or worst) moved to Sydney and left the Limestone Plains untouched..

### The People's Building?

On my two recent visits to the public areas of the building, there were no public tours whatever on the first day and only one, which I missed, on the second. I was advised that there was insufficient staff and the focus, understandably in the circumstances, was on ensuring that visiting schoolchildren got a tour.

This is extraordinary given that many people may visit Parliament House only once in their lives and represents a major falling off from former times.

It is not surprising, from occasional conversations over the past year, that I have found among Guides, widely held in high regard, and among others whom I know who are still employed in the building, especially tradesmen with a special love and respect for the place, that morale is low not just because of the staffing situation but also because everything they care about in regard to the building as a whole, as a showplace and as a place to work is felt to be increasingly in jeopardy.

## **Conclusion**

### *1. Pride in the place*

From the time that the building opened in May 1988, visitors on their first visit to the new Parliament House, who may have approached it with (sadly, not uncommon) cynicism about politics, politicians, public expense and Canberra in general, have had, instead, a profound experience as the result of seeing it for themselves. For Australians, at any rate, the building and its surrounds clearly - I have observed it many times - inspire an uplifting sense of pride, a sense that this place is 'about us', while the sheer scale, quality, richness and beauty of the place affirm a deep sense of what we are capable of as a people. Visitors from overseas have a comparable experience, characterized by admiration.

This truth, I wish to assert, is what we should build on. In our tourist publicity, for example, we should proclaim, promote and celebrate this place as one of the wonders of the country, alongside Uluru, the Great Barrier Reef, the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House. Incredibly, in much tourism information even about Canberra, the wonder that is Parliament House (the realization, one might say, at least in part, of Griffin's idea for the Capitol) is fearfully all but and sometimes completely ignored in favour of wineries, eateries, museums and galleries - anything, it seems, but the dreaded Parliament House! This surely panders to the cynicism referred to in the paragraph above.

Now, as my submission sadly indicates, those very qualities that, together, make or made the building so attractive can each, little by little, be eroded or whittled away so that, over time, the meanings, the interconnections, the effects, many of them subtle, that are the essence of the place are lost without anyone much noticing that they have gone. The danger can be read in the comparable distortions and displacements that have happened over time to Griffin's design for Canberra, again despite rhetoric to the contrary. Be warned: the equivalent of the huge ASIO building on Constitution Avenue (in Griffin's central park, the central space where all the cultural institutions were intended to be, between Griffin's intended busy main street, Capital Terrace - now Constitution Avenue - and the lake) is but a decision away!



It is not just the physical and technical condition of the place that counts. Above all it is what it means and what it says, as *expressed* in its fabric - things it is often more difficult to discern and define, to remember, protect and preserve.

To quote from the revised 'D.I.' (1995) document (p.6):

*'A cautionary note: Slow accumulative change can have as powerful an effect on design integrity as dramatic obvious change. Careful consideration of Design Value 5 Order (which is always given a design asterisk) will prevent the chipping away at design integrity which will result from a "blinker" approach.'*

## 2. *The four documents*

I hope that my discussion, above, of the strengths and weaknesses of the four main documents relevant to this discussion, each of which aspires or may have aspired to be the primary so-called 'Central Reference Document', demonstrates that their individual strengths are not necessarily mutually exclusive while their weaknesses are not necessarily inherent in their texts but rather in how these texts are used. Their different orientations are in fact their conjoined strength, which will not be able to be drawn upon or well used if they are conceived of as being in competition with one another, even though that may be how the story has played out thus far.

## 3. *Management and commitment*

What regime is put in place to deal with this whole matter, what personnel are employed and at what level, plus the level of commitment to the regime from the Presiding Officers and from the Parliament as a whole are of the essence.

As described on page 1 of 'Parliament House. Design Integrity and Management of Change. Guidelines' (1995), early in the piece, in November 1989, the House of Representatives 'passed a resolution to establish a Parliament House Advisory Panel, to advise the Presiding Officers on proposals for change'. It was in anticipation of the appointment of this Advisory Panel that the original document 'Parliament House. Assessment of Proposals for Significant Works. Draft Guidelines' (1991) was written. However, as the 1995 document goes on to say, the 'motion [passed in the House of Representatives] to appoint the Panel was never debated in the Senate and so lapsed'.

This failure and the associated frustration have, unfortunately, characterized the fate of all subsequent proposals of the kind, though none have been as ambitious as that first proposal which intended to get its authority, appropriately enough, from the Parliament itself. Each document contains its own proposal for how its concerns should be managed. The latest, the 'Heritage Management Framework', proposes a 'Parliament House Heritage Advisory Board' of representatives of all three Parliamentary Departments including the Secretary of DPS, assisted by advice and possible nominated officers from

the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and from the National Capital Authority.

Perhaps, however, the solution needs to be a political rather than a managerial solution.

## CODA

In making this submission, I hope that those who will determine the regime to foster and protect the combined Design Integrity/Architect's Design Intent/Heritage Values of Parliament House for at least the next 177 years will be as least as bold in their decision-making and as committed in their use of all the resources available to them (including, in this case, all the documents discussed above) as the decision-makers, the architects and all the other makers who together created this extraordinary place in the first place - from the labourers on the construction site to the jeweler who designed the stainless steel Coat-of-Arms on top of the marble façade.

P.C.BETTLE (Chris Bettle)

15 August 2011