

**Architecture and Parliament:
How do buildings help shape parliamentary business?**

Roundtable

Parliament House, Canberra

Friday, 22 August 2008

Summaries and Transcript

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PIPER, Mr Don, Former Secretary, Joint Parliamentary Committee on New Parliament House

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Summary of Main Themes

1. The relationship of the building and its use to the history of:

- previous proposals and plans
- previous experiences in Old Parliament House
- the design brief
- changes, new needs and departures from original intentions.

2. The physical and symbolic location of the building in relation to:

- Capital Hill
- Old Parliament House
- Federation Mall
- Lake Burley Griffin
- the Parliamentary Triangle
- lobbyists housed in National Circuit
- the city of Canberra
- the nation.

3. The significance and/or effects of the building's:

- symbolic meanings
- flexibility
- shape
- separation of public and working spaces
- artworks
- different access points.

4. The building's effects on:

Formal and informal interactions between—

- members of the House and the Senate
- ministers and parliamentarians
- parliamentary staff
- parliamentarians, their constituents and the general public.

Parliamentary procedures.

Young people.

5. Concerns

How experiences of the building are affected by:

- security arrangements
- access from the underground car park
- access as a pedestrian or cyclist
- space in the chambers, members' offices and the overall building
- the placement of art works and significant objects
- the ring roads around the building.

The need to explore new ways of “bringing the outside in”.

Curatorial responsibility for protecting the building against a lack of vision and loss of integrity, while enhancing its resilience, flexibility and dynamic interaction with members, staff and visitors.

Summary of Individual Contributions

Session 1—Looking Back: Hopes & Achievements

Part 1: Five Minute Presentations

1. Don Piper

Former Secretary, Joint Parliamentary Committee on New Parliament House

Transcript lines 145-207

Outline of events, considerations, papers and committees that led to the new Parliament House design brief. Key issues:

- visitors and circulation patterns in the building
- whether or not the Executive should be located in the building
- whether or not the media should be located in the building
- the relationship between the chambers
- security.

Select committee (1965-1970) determined that *within* the building:

- the Executive and media should be separate
- public circulation should be separate from working circulation.

2. Aldo Giurgol

Principal Architect, Parliament House

Transcript lines 208-288

The design brief was special in combining precise detail with opportunities for architectural imagination.

Architects worked with 4 basic principles:

1. understanding the meaning of the building's content "immersed in time"
2. making the building "an open book of the history of the place"
3. developing an indispensable and integrated form
4. relating the building to its urban and natural environment.

These principles led the architects to:

- the Griffin plan
- symmetry, including observing the checks and balance between the two chambers
- "a global vision"
- refusing any kind of massive structure
- locating the building in the centre of a circle connecting south with north and east with west
- the landscape
- the presence of artwork
- the wellbeing of people working in the building—daylight, access to fresh air, opportunities for movement.

3. Ric Thorp

Partner, Francis-Jones Morehen Thorp

Transcript lines 289-352

The building's floor plan reflects the functional requirements in the design brief diagrams showing the relationships between parliamentary departments, officeholders and political groups, etc.

IT requirements were missing but were later integrated without violating the building.

The parliamentary departments have a great responsibility for protecting the building when needs for expansion and change test its resilience. The plan allows for the Executive offices to expand. Human contact between politicians, officers and staffers is important. Technology will allow others to be moved away.

The robustness of parliamentary debate has continued in the shift to the new building.

4. Pamille Berg

Principal, Pamille Berg Consulting

Transcript lines 356-428

Art was conceived as essential to the building—the design brief specified that the building “must carry with it implicit meaning”. It should:

- be a national symbol
- demonstrate the significance of a national Parliament and Executive Government
- respond to the uniquely Australian environment
- allow public access as “a people’s parliament” committed to “open government”
- represent “fellowship and dignity among the citizens”.

Key papers stated that the artwork should:

- reinforce among parliamentarians, staff and visitors “a respect for the individual in society in the midst of a strong sense of fellowship in the whole”
- “constitute a quiet continuous dialogue ... representing a tremendous variety of ways of seeing and understanding”—a reminder of democracy “as a forging of consensus from different points of view”.

5. Ian Harris

Clerk of the House of Representatives

Transcript lines 431-487

Within and beyond Australia, the building has come to symbolise the Australian Parliament.

The new building has led to less face-to-face interaction because of larger chambers, the loss of the non-members bar, and the use of email.

The building has proved adaptable, e.g. in members’ acceptance of the role of the House of Representatives Main Committee room and in accommodating parliamentary secretaries. Having the Executive in the building is important.

Part 2: Panellists' Discussion

Transcript lines 488-804

- Piper:** Committees involved in planning didn't envisage changes to Parliament's operations. They also had no preconceived picture of the new building. After the design was selected, they realised that changes would occur, e.g. because of more space and new technology. They believed that the building could accommodate change. Changes had already occurred, e.g. when the Parliament moved from Melbourne and when members' interaction diminished after they ceased residing in local hotels. The winning design was the only one that met the design brief requirements.
- Evans:** The design reinforced the Parliament's bicameral nature and the cultural, physical and procedural distance between the Houses.
- Harris:** Agreed. But the Members Hall allows mingling on special occasions. The building has led to some procedural changes, e.g. times to move to divisions and quorums, and alternative venues for important events.
- Giurgola:** The building doesn't encourage politicians to mingle with the public and Reps. and Senate members to meet informally but the possibilities are there—it's a matter of will.
- Thorp:** Members meet with the public in local constituency offices. Architects followed the brief diagrams exactly, because they were afraid to deviate from them.
- Guida:** Interesting that the first things to change were those that had brought people out of their offices: closure of the non-members bar; a common place in the library for reading Hansard rushes (ended with individual computers).
- Giurgola:** Also, the original brief had an office near the public entry for parliamentarians to meet, which became the gift shop. This Parliament is unique in having so many members of the public inside the building. A flexible building will remain flexible. Symmetry is out of fashion but, in fact, it helps people know where they are. The building has both flexibility & symmetry.
- Piper:** Members move less around this building because their staff does it for them, e.g. getting bills or library books.
- Evans:** There's a value in putting distance between components that should be distant from each other, e.g. the Executive and the Parliament.
- Fewtrell (Convenor):** The brief specified provision for electronic voting. It seems the Parliament hasn't gone in this direction.
- Evans:** The Senate rejected electronic voting because it wouldn't save time and because voting in the chamber allows for interaction.
- Harris:** Agrees with Evans. Voting in the chamber allows ministers and others to interact informally. The design allows for future cabling.
- Berg:** The previous comments underline the building's ability to make a statement but also to allow for change. Continuing attention is needed to where art works are hung and to updating the collection regularly. Because the art was meant "to poke us in the ribs to say 'Who are we anyway?'" the collection should never be static.
- Macintyre:** Although citizens will see their representatives in local offices, the building should still symbolise openness. The building is isolated—the outside has to be brought inside through events and informal interactions.

Part 3: Audience Comments and Questions

Transcript lines 805-1006

Michael Richards (Historian, Old Parliament House): (1) After the Parliament moved in 1927, parliamentarians stayed in Canberra for the whole term. Hence constituents came to Canberra and, until the 1960s, met their parliamentarians in two small rooms in Kings Hall. Kings Hall remained the place where parliamentarians met lobbyists.

(2) The provisional building was constructed intentionally as a change from Melbourne. After discussion and hearings, it was decided that members should speak from their seat rather than use a rostrum.

(3) Interviewees consistently comment on the lessened interaction in the new building (e.g. “I went from working for the government to working for a minister), although they don’t dwell on it.

His group aims to interview approx. 40 former parliamentarians and others who worked in the old building.

Helen Moore (ANU): Re the theme of aspiration and reality: how is the art in the building actually used?

Berg: A number of layers and meanings—

- at the monumental scale, people recognise symbols, e.g. the Great Veranda coat of arms
- for people who frequent the building, some objects have a macro- and micro-level of recognition, e.g. the Great Hall tapestry and Embroiders’ Guild work, the foyer marquetry panels
- when people are pressured and busy, the work can offer comfort
- when people slow down, they can be “poked in the ribs”
- artists were deliberately selected because they had few or no previous commissions or came from the regions
- collection aimed to recognise diversity of preoccupation and interest.

Harris: Acquisitions used to be funded from gift shop profits. Some works are placed in significant locations; some are permanent fixtures, some rotate in members offices. They do have an impact. Originally, aspirational sayings were compiled and were to be placed around the building, which would be “to the betterment of members, senators and visitors if ... flashed before our consciousness”.

Evans: The recent “culture wars” have been constant in members’ and staff conversations about the art ever since the move to the new building. The art makes the environment stimulating.

Alan Thompson (Head of Parliamentary Services): As a newcomer, he navigated round the building using the art. The acquisition process is now more robust—buying work from Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland. Next week Dennis Nora’s stingrays will be displayed on the ground floor.

Marilyn Higgins (Parliamentary Education Office): 90,000 school children visit the Parliament annually. Teenagers give “an inward gasp of joy” when they enter the building and the Main Committee room. The architecture helps the teachers engage.

Barbara Scholes (Visitor Services 1988-2007): Has “a passion for the building”. Among many special things, the layout works well. People who were initially

negative about the expense have been taken “to another point in their thinking”. The building has provided an opportunity to educate schoolchildren as citizens and future voters. The art works that were formerly just outside the Great Hall were very helpful in telling “the story of our country”; the guides felt they “had lost something” when these works were moved and have found it harder to explain our history and landscape. The building has provided “the greatest time in my working life”.

Session 2—Looking Forward: Future Possibilities

Part 1: Five Minute Presentations

1. *Chris McConville*

History and Planning, University of the Sunshine Coast

Transcript lines 1081-1178

The new Parliament building is now 20 years old, the same age as the Melbourne Royal Exhibition building when the first Parliament met. After the first Parliament left Melbourne, that building was publicly ignored but recently has become an important symbol for Melbourne communal identity. The new Parliament building may also experience “a phase of denigration and neglect”.

Issues:

1. A horizontal barrier separates the working space from the public space, which is compressed at the front (in “sort of public fun fair areas”). But the building also has an “axial pattern with two arcs moving out”. The public could be more engaged with the building if they entered from the front, moved along the axial space compressed in one stream, and left at the back.
2. The artwork is a-political and doesn’t refer to the work of the building. Cf. the political cartoons in the media area.
3. Access isn’t pedestrian-friendly and assumes the car. Entry from the underground car park diminishes appreciation of the building.
4. The architectural literature doesn’t adequately serve the building’s symbolic role. The Australian Institute of Architects register of significant 20th Century buildings fails to bring out its symbolism and spells “Labor” incorrectly. Photos of the building diminish people, placing them in “geometric patterns that work against the symmetry of the building itself”, seemingly representing an alienation from both the building and what happens within it.
5. Public engagement could be fostered by celebrating a 9 May national holiday, Parliament Day.

2. *Chris Beer*

Australian National University

Transcript lines 1180-1235

Citadels as “distinct places of power and privilege” are a key aspect of urban form.

Parliament House is moated, has ramps and ramparts, is fortified and guarded. These aspects are problematic for democratic politics. In the planning process, the building migrated from the lakeshore in the Griffin plan to Capital Hill. The problem is exacerbated by six lanes of motorways. Citadelisation is increasing post 9/11 but seeking security through urban design is probably delusional.

3. Andrew Hutson

Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, University of Melbourne

Transcript lines 1237-1344

The planning processes and why the design brief won:

1. The Griffin plan envisaged the permanent Parliament being on “Camp Hill” just behind the provisional building. Retaining the provisional building was always envisaged. The Camp Hill site was problematic in accommodating the Parliament’s axial position in the Parliamentary Triangle and the provisional building.
2. Politicians feared public interpretation of an ostentatious building as aggrandising politicians. Hence the 50 year lag in instituting the design brief competition.
3. A Menzies government commissioned plan shows the Parliament on the Lake Burley Griffin shores and “royal pavilions” on Capital Hill for the Queen to stay in a landscaped setting. Menzies replaced the pavilions with a national centre.
4. A NCDC 1977 plan shows the Parliament on Capital Hill. A cone-shaped building, central flagpole, two wing walls rising towards the middle and the Reps. and Senate chambers suspended in space were a topographical response to the hill and a potentially appropriate image for the parliament building.
5. The brief questioned whether “significance” required “bigness”, referring to the iconic status of Westminster and the Washington Capitol but also to the provisional building’s “grace and simplicity”. The winning design was the only one of the 329 competition entries to balanced importance with humility.

4. James Warden

Director, Donald Horne Institute, University of Canberra

Transcript lines 1346-1447

Good art holds your attention. This building holds our attention and we keep coming back to it.

Metaphors for the building:

- a citadel
- the Vatican—clergy, laity, liturgy and vestments
- the prison—security, locks, bells, surveillance, guards, 3-6 year sentences
- the spacecraft—docking craft, captains coming back & forth from the empire, hermetically sealing against the outside, supply chains into the building
- the castle—the fortress, walled city, moat.

Issues (some demonstrated with slides):

Outside the building—

- Federation Mall—a “lazy space” that could be better developed to link the two buildings; cf. Anzac Parade
- signage
- car park darkness
- garbage bin and bird droppings at the lift
- a more emphatic pedestrian approach could extend to the lake.

Within the building—

- empty display cases in the House of Representatives and the Senate
- a cordoned off abandoned space.
- security at the entrance is like an airport
- Great Hall is empty and dark; tapestry cut off is a mistake
- incoherence around the four cornerstone documents.

In relation to the city—

- building encourages isolation from the city—parliamentarians are delivered to the building and are pleased to leave.

5. David Tait

School of Law, University of Canberra

Transcript lines 1449-1510

Entry to the building from above ground using Federation Mall is a movement through space (cf. Islamic architecture) as distinct from a dramatic confrontation.

Burley Griffin proposed a national stadium on the opposite side of the lake, so that “the roar of the crowd could be heard by their elected representatives”. How can the roar of the crowd be heard in the Parliament? Through—

- convivial drinking holes around the Parliament
- graduation ceremonies (especially significant for students from less democratic countries)
- people discussing important matters in the space in front, e.g. the apology speech, the Van Nguyen vigil
- the historical interrogation that Old Parliament House provides.
- If Australia has an indirect presidential election, the electors should assemble in the State/Territory Parliaments and be video-linked to the national Parliament as the symbolic centre.

6. Tom Duncan

Clerk of the ACT Legislative Assembly

Transcript lines 1512-1599

The Chamber as a Working Space

(1) Optimal size:

- comparing Australia, New Zealand and England, the House of Commons has the smallest space per member and the NT legislature has the largest
- the move to the new Parliament doubled the space in the House of Reps.
- former Speaker Ian Sinclair believed members were too removed from Speaker, Prime Minister and Opposition Leader.

(2) Desks for ministers and shadow ministers?

- 6 out of 9 lower house Australian legislatures, and the Canadian, NZ and Indian legislatures, have ministerial desks
- desks could encourage greater ministerial attendance because ministers could work on papers but also participate in debates as necessary.

(3) Art works: why are there no art works in the chambers?

7. Harry Evans
Clerk of the Senate

Transcript lines 1607-1646

Has the new building stimulated change? After the move, standing orders have been amended more frequently and Westminster has disappeared as a precedent. The public should be surveyed to determine the building's supposed negative effects. Maybe we over-emphasize its democratic defects. Maybe the public see the building as suitable for statespersons who can solve the nation's problems, compared with the rabbit warren of the Old Parliament.

Part 2: Panellists' Discussion

Transcript lines 1647-1815

Beer: The building is in the wrong place but this problem could be addressed.

Guida: The building is disengaged from the city but not from the public—witness the 90,000 school children and the number of visitors in the building and surrounds.

Macintyre (Convenor): Most other Australian parliaments are not separated from the city. But maybe distance is good.

Hutson: Distance is inevitable. Canberra isn't a pedestrian city. The building wasn't located or designed to engage with the city.

Berg: Do experiences of the building stem from unfortunate changes, the brief or the planning? Consider:

- Canberra as a planned city and the Parliament as a major public building—engagement doesn't necessarily require closeness
- examples of original clarity of vision truncated over time—
 - changed entry arrangements to facilitate security
 - the quotes abandoned because parliamentarians decided they couldn't take responsibility for choosing them.
- the art—the intention was never to make the building self-referential; the art seeks to confront big issues such as “Who are we?”
- the brief was for a working building, not a display place; the public areas have been changed to house displays
- the absence of “attendant images” in the chambers deliberately aims to focus attention on discussion and decision-making for the nation's future.

Curatorial care and ideas are essential to prevent ideas to become “more and more truncated and chopped up and marginalised through successive misunderstood things”.

Harris: Access relates to the Australian people, not primarily Canberrans. The building has become a symbol of Parliament's link to the people in most promotional material and Sky channel programs. It's becoming a focal point for national mourning (e.g. the Bali bombings) but also celebrations (e.g. for Olympic athletes).

Part 3: Audience Comments and Questions

Transcript lines 1815-1987

Rocco Weglarz (member of the public): Australians have a romantic self-image of openness and being easy-going but in reality are concerned with security, status and hierarchy. Building briefs reflect ideals but we have to live with our realities. Examples of this tension: grass over the hill but a flagpole on top; lack of access to the grass; cyclists pursued by security guards; playing football games in Federation Mall.

Dr Peter Larmour (ANU): We should consider not just the moat but those camped outside it—the penumbra of buildings housing lobby group heads, peak bodies, accountancy firms. The original problem was representative versus participatory democracy but corporatist relationships with the Parliament need thought.

Richards: The building isn't isolated if we consider how all buildings in the Parliamentary Triangle bring people to Canberra. Federation Mall needs development. Old Parliament House will soon focus more clearly on the history of Australian democracy. When Old Parliament House had to introduce a security entrance, the exit from Kings Hall was preserved so that as you exited on to the front steps “you felt as if you owned the building”—a consideration for this building.

Moore: There's a gender imbalance on the panel. Is the building a masculinist building?

Beer: Agrees. A PhD thesis has dealt with childcare, family relationships and the parliamentary lifestyle.

Marshall: Has the building improved the quality of deliberation?

Evans: The building's generous facilities and large offices with room for staff have made people concentrate more on their role as legislators rather than being “larrikin participants in a street brawl”, although the latter still happens in Question Time.

Harris: Committee meeting facilities allow responsibilities to be undertaken more seriously. The library is magnificently housed and assists members' deliberations.

Thompson: In an otherwise “incredibly successful building”, some unfinished business is to counteract the negative effects of large spaces on camaraderie.

Professor John Uhr closes the meeting with thanks to the audience, the Australian Research Council, Clerks, organisational helpers, panel chairs and panellists.

Edited Transcript of Roundtable

The transcript has been edited to remove infelicities, minor redundancies and inconsequential procedural matters.

Roundtable commenced at 9.05am

5 Introduction

Convenor (Prof. Uhr): It's my honour to welcome you to this event today. It's a special event today because we're meeting on the 20th anniversary of the actual operational beginning of the building. It was not just the formal opening but the beginning of the core business—parliamentary proceedings—20 years ago this day. So it's a happy coincidence for us that we're able to use the year's anniversary and to have picked exactly the right day.

I'm from the Parliamentary Studies Centre in the Crawford School at the Australian National University. The Parliamentary Studies Centre is funded substantially by the Australian Research Council. The reason it's funded by the Australian Research Council is that we have a formal grant through the Council with the Commonwealth Parliament. Harry Evans and Ian Harris, the two clerks, and I approached the Australian Research Council and were successful in getting a grant which helps fund this particular activity and the Centre. The Centre has a three-year project investigating parliamentary strengthening. It's looking at the various processes that the Commonwealth Parliament engages in and the various patterns of change that have taken place in the last 20 years or so to try to identify those changes that have helped strengthen Australian parliamentary democracy. This workshop is a very special part of that investigation. It is an opportunity to look at the way the building itself relates to the capacity of parliamentary democracy to strengthen and deepen Australia's ability to govern itself. So I thank the two clerks for joining us in approaching the Australian Research Council to get this project underway.

My role here in this roundtable is really just to get things going right at the very beginning and then to close it just before lunch. I have two convenors who will be running each of the two panels—Terry Fewtrell and Clem Macintyre. Their task—in Terry's case, leading up to morning tea and, in Clem's case, between morning tea and lunch—will be to introduce our distinguished panellists and to promote an open public dialogue. This is very much a public event. It's public in the sense that the community is involved. It is public in the sense that it's being recorded. The words are being recorded and the video, the image, is being recorded. So I invite you to bear that in mind as you work out the ways in which you want to participate.

I'll close by introducing Terry and Clem, and then I'll hand over to Terry, who'll introduce the first panel. Our task is really to provoke discussion. The way we're going to do that is by inviting the panellists in the first instance to be sprightly and brief in the way that they draw upon their own experience of the way the building has affected the way

parliamentary democracy is conducted in Australia. Terry is exactly the right person to help us open that. He is a former distinguished public servant who worked with the Parliament House Construction Authority. He acted as a kind of liaison and contact person between the users of the building, the people who were building the building and, of course, the government authorities that were funding the whole process. He has a wonderful load of experience. Terry is also a scholar who wrote two very important articles around the time that the building was being opened speculating on who the winners and losers might be out of this process as we moved from our sentimental favourite, the old parliament, to the new business centre. Terry had instant fame as somebody who was able to contribute to the *Australian Journal of Public Administration* a kind of evidence-based analysis of how this new building possibly might work out in practice. Now we have had 20 years to think about that and to revisit that opportunity. He is a management consultant here in Canberra and is available to all of us to help us in our own organisational capacities.

Clem Macintyre is the head of Politics at the University of Adelaide. This is Clem's year. Clem gave the 9 May Senate lecture on the 20th anniversary of the opening of the parliament. That Senate lecture is available on the Senate website, I'm sure. That lecture related to Australian political culture and the political architecture of Australian democracy. It started with Milton. I am not sure where it ended. Well, it's ended here, in a sense, that he is now with us. He's written lots on the relationship between the physical design of deliberative settings, and political culture and the way the Australian parliament works. If he's not sitting next to me at some time this morning, that's because the media are after him and he'll be outside telegraphing his image to the world. I'll now pass over to Terry. We look forward to a wonderful, sprightly discussion.

Session 1—Looking Back: Hopes and Achievements

Convenor (Mr Fewtrell): Thank you very much, John. Welcome, everybody. If I may be permitted a moment, I will say I am absolutely delighted to be here in this building 20 years after its opening and to be participating in an event like this. I hope that we have a productive and interesting morning.

I guess that part of my role this morning is to facilitate the discussion around some of those issues. The first session this morning looks directly at the operations of the parliament as a parliamentary institution, its procedures and so forth, and how this building has had an impact in that way on those things. What things might have been expected to change but perhaps have changed or have not changed? What things might have changed or been impacted that were not expected in any way? So it's around those sorts of issues that perhaps we can focus this first session.

In a moment, I'll introduce the panellists for the first session. I'll invite each of the principal panellists for the first session to make a five-minute opening contribution, basically just to present some ideas that might be of interest to people and for further discussion that we can explore later. Then we'll have that discussion. The discussion will involve the people who are the principal panellists—if you like, the people at the top of

80 the table on this occasion—but also those who are panellists for the second session principally. But it will be an open discussion that we can all participate in. At some point in that first session, I'd like also, if we have the opportunity, to invite any comments or questions from other people who are with us this morning. So that's basically the procedure that we'll follow.

85 To introduce the panellists for the first session, I'd like to do this in order of project sequence. Therefore, it's appropriate that we start with the brief for Parliament House and the joint standing committee that prepared and approved that brief. The person who was directly involved in that process and rode that process all the way through was Don Piper. Don is sitting down here on my right. He'd been with the House of
90 Representatives department since 1958 and was Sergeant-at-Arms early in the 1970s. He then became secretary of the Joint Standing Committee on the New Parliament House in 1977. He continued in that role until the building was opened in 1988. The responsibility of that committee was to represent the client for the building—the Parliament. So, Don, welcome this morning.

95 The second panellist I'd like to introduce is Romaldo Giurgola, who is immediately on my right. Romaldo, of course, is associated with this building as its principal architect. Aldo, as we affectionately know him, is originally from Rome. He is a graduate of Rome University. He then moved to the United States and was professor of architecture at the University of Pennsylvania and then at Columbia University. He was
100 then a principal in the architectural firm Mitchell Giurgola. Mitchell Giurgola was the company that became the basis for the submission that was put into the competition for the design of this building. Aldo came to Australia with the project when that proposal was successful and has stayed with Australia and with us for that time. He is now an Australian treasure. We welcome you this morning, Aldo.

105 **Mr Giurgola:** Thank you.

Convenor: To my left is Ric Thorp, who is the other name in the company Mitchell Giurgola Thorp. Ric was an Australian at the time the competition for this building design was launched. He was working in New York with Mitchell Giurgola and was part of the team that put in the bid for the design. This, therefore, led to the development of
110 Mitchell Giurgola Thorp as the company that made the successful submission for the design. Ric was involved in the project all the way through and intimately involved in the building and its design. Since the completion of this project, Ric has been living in Sydney and is managing director of Francis-Jones Morehen Thorp, which is an architectural practice in Sydney. Ric, thank you and welcome.

115 Hal Guida, who is three along from me on the right, is another of the original architects who came from Mitchell Giurgola in the States. He came out to Australia with the project and is another of those who have stayed with us and become Australians. Hal was a leading architect with the project. After the Parliament House project was completed, Hal was the design architect for the ACT Legislative Assembly building,
120 which Mitchell Giurgola Thorp also undertook. He's now a partner in an architectural

firm based here in Canberra—Guida Mosley Brown Architects. They are also involved with a design for the plenary hall chamber for the Hong Kong Legislative Council. They are continuing the involvement with legislative buildings.

125 On my left is Pamille Berg, who also was part of the Mitchell Giurgola team that came to Australia with the project. Pamille has a background in ancient art and archaeology. I guess that's very much part of the lineage of the Mitchell Giurgola company—that they looked at architecture in the context of place and culture. That's been a distinctive aspect of their work. Pamille was principally responsible for the art program for Parliament House here and has continued in her role. Again, she's another
130 one of the architects who came and stayed and is now running her own public art consulting company, Pamille Berg Consulting, here in Canberra. Welcome, Pamille.

Our final panellist for this first session is Ian Harris, who is the Clerk of the House of Representatives. If you like, he's the recipient of all the work that other people have done up to this point. Ian is second along on my right. Ian has been with the House
135 of Representatives since 1972. He has been the Clerk of the House since 1997. In the 1980s, Ian was involved with the project at the development stages and particularly with the art program. He had some involvement with that. From 2003 to 2006, he was president of the International Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments. Ian, welcome very much to you.

140 They are our panellists for this first session. I would now like to invite in that order of introduction each of them to make some opening comments that we might like to consider as part of the discussion. Don, I'll lead with you.

Mr Piper: Thank you, Terry.

Convenor: We have five minutes each. I'll give you a little wave at four minutes.

145 **Mr Piper:** I'll try to keep to that. Thank you for the invitation to attend. As I said to Terry at the start, I wasn't too sure how enthusiastic I'd be about this, but as time has gone by, I think my enthusiasm has increased. I'm really looking forward to today.

The design brief was mentioned. Terry has a set there in front of him. You can see physically that it is a very substantial document. It was preceded in the competition
150 process by a somewhat smaller, abbreviated document—the first stage competition documents, which were, if I hold up copies, somewhat smaller. But it is that document, the initial Stage One competition brief, and the subsequent brief to the winning architects, which really set out the requirements—the functional requirements, the spatial requirements—for this building. How those documents were arrived at is a very
155 important question, I think. What involvement did Parliamentarians and the Parliament have in that process of preparing the documents? They are two important issues.

The old building, of course, had been running out of space from the 1950s onwards. In fact, at the end of the Second World War, additional office accommodation

160 was built for Old Parliament House. But the building had become inadequate. People in
the parliament had been considering for many years what to do about the issue and, of
course, building up momentum towards a decision to build the new building. As early as
1957, the Presiding Officers at the time, the Speaker of the House and the President of the
Senate, issued a paper called 'The Case for a Permanent Building: 1957'. In that, they
165 covered some of the ground in relation to the functional requirements and spatial needs
for the parliament in a new building. They also touched on some of the key issues, which
I know will be discussed today, particularly such as how to deal with visitors in the
building and circulation patterns in the building, whether the executive should be in the
building or not—that is, whether or not the ministry and all their accommodation should
be in a parliamentary building—and whether the media should be in the building and, if
170 so, to what extent.

Nothing much was, I suppose, formally done about that within the Houses after
that paper was presented. But subsequently in 1965, the then President of the Senate, Sir
Alastair McMullin, prepared and issued a paper called 'Observations on the Permanent
Parliament House'. He took [up] those major points about spatial requirements; layout;
175 relationship between the two chambers in a new building; whether the building should be
in a sense balanced; whether it should be a fairly low rise building or a high rise building;
the place for the executive ministry in the new building and the media in a new building;
and how to deal with visitors. They are very important points, which had been on the
minds of all parliamentarians for a long, long time, and rather thorny issues.

180 Parliament House in Canberra was rather a peculiar animal, I suppose, in the
Westminster context. By default, in a sense, when Parliament moved from Melbourne to
Canberra, the town was so small, there were very few public buildings and very few
official buildings. Parliament House and two major office blocks were really all that was
here. With the way our Parliament operates and ministers being members of both Houses
185 and needing to attend in the chambers and attend at divisions, they tended to congregate,
of course, in Parliament House with staff that could be fitted in. Of course, the Prime
Minister had a suite in the Old Parliament House, and eventually the cabinet room was
moved from West Block, I think, to the Old Parliament House. At that time, really the
scene was set for, you would have to say, the executive being in the building.

190 The major document which set the pattern for the design briefs was a report of a
joint select committee. That select committee functioned from 1965 and reported in 1970.
It was made up of the Presiding Officers, who chaired it, members and senators, ministers
and representatives of the Opposition executive. That committee did an overseas tour
during the course of its inquiry. It gathered all the information together. The report in
195 1970 set down not only what they saw then as the spatial requirements for the new
building but the issues of the media, the executive, public circulation and security. That
report recommended that the executive be accommodated within the parliamentary
building, probably in a separate block, wing or section. It said the same about the media.
It offered up a view that there should be separate circulation for the public in the building
200 as distinct from the working circulation patterns in the building. It is on that 1970
report—quite a substantial document—that the design brief was prepared.

I'll just make one more point. I think that the subsequent joint standing committee on the New Parliament House, which functioned from 1976 through to 1988, picked up those recommendations, adopted them and ensured that they were built into the initial design competition documents and the subsequent brief. All through that process, the joint standing committee, which represented the Parliament, made conscious decisions about some of the issues which we are going to discuss today.

Mr Giurgola: Thank you. I think it's proper that we start by mentioning and having here the brief for the competition. Really that brief has been fundamental to the result that we had in the time and the process of making the building. It's not an ordinary brief. It's very particular. It's not because it's a big, two-volume brief but because the content of that brief is very exceptional. We have to remember that things like that happen very rarely. A brief of this type is perhaps the last of a certain age. Nowadays, we have a very bureaucratic kind of brief received in our office all the time. But with this one we have been able to open the door to all possible imagination for the final result. It goes into extreme, precise details but at the same time it opens the door for an architect to intervene in the right way. So I think it's quite proper that it has been illustrated in that way.

Conceptually, we depended on that brief very much. Before I go further, I'd like to mention Paul Reid, who left us not too long ago. He was instrumental in organising that brief through the NCDC. It's quite an important recollection that we have of the people who worked on that particular issue.

As we started to think about this brief, we developed certain concepts. The concepts, of course, were somehow guided by four basic principles. One was the evidence and the response of the form, let us say, that one can imagine immediately as one mentions something about the content of the building. Really the physical occupation was to investigate and to understand the meaning of the content of this building. That is something that shapes everything. The result has been, in the end, a building that has to have a character for a long time. It has to be immersed in time, let us say, rather than be the result of the moment or following up a fashion of the particular moment, even in terms of the distribution and the functionality of it.

The other is the sense of the content that makes a building an open book of the history of this place. I'll cut this short without getting involved in the symbolic aspects of it and so on. The other one is the concern we had in developing a form indispensable and all integrated in the end. The other principle is the one of the relationship with the urban environment as well as the natural environment. We had very little knowledge of Australia when we were working in New York. Mostly it was based on the history of Australia by Manning Clark and then *Voss* by Patrick White. Those are the two things that helped the most, in a sense, to add to the first contact with the place.

In that sense, the form that started to percolate in terms of the first principle that I mentioned was the Griffin plan and the location. Obviously that called for an understanding of the principle of symmetry. Symmetry was imagined by the checks and balance of the two chambers. Above all, it was by the Griffin plan. So that was a very

important lesson in architecture—how you're part of an environment in an urban centre
 245 which is about not just making sympathetic one building to another but making it part of
 a global kind of vision of the place.

Of course, the other was the relationship with the natural site. We refused, out of
 the input that we had from this other element, to impose anything, to make a show of
 anything in that sort of preposterous way—the idea of the old dome or the presence of a
 250 large massive structure and so on. Rather it was something that was capable in the circle
 we had as a site—to connect the south with the north and the east with the west all the
 time and to be at the centre of that crossing. That was another factor that was important.
 The landscape complemented the building and the natural site, the natural environment.
 This is what we call landscape. This is a building within a landscape. I come from Italy.
 255 One of the most precious aspects of Italy is the landscape. It is the combination through
 time of building and vegetation around it. So it is the balance of those things that always
 makes the thing durable and not the contrast and the assertion and the arrogance of
 imposing a thing on the landscape.

The other one of great importance, once we connected the sense of this form of
 the total thing, was the presence of the artwork. Architecture always remains an
 260 abstraction, in a sense. But here was a place that belonged to the people. It was for the
 people and by the people, to paraphrase. But the artwork added a very important
 integrating factor into the building. To our surprise, frankly, we found Australia a rich
 place in the production of art, not in terms of great masterpieces but in terms of the
 texture that involved this society in making things. So this was a very important
 265 committee that we had there. Pamille was instrumental in working there. It was a very
 crucial kind of element that gave the character that we have in this building, for good or
 bad.

Finally, the other principle was a concern for the wellbeing of people working
 here. This seems a matter of fact for making a building, but it is not so simple. We see
 270 people nowadays working in towers, for instance, where the way of life is horrible. Eight
 hours a day are spent without windows and without contact with daylight and with
 continuous fluorescent illumination. It's really not a very enhancing place for the health
 of people. I worked for a long time, actually, with Sir Leslie Martin of Cambridge on the
 notion of the value of the end result of office buildings. This, after all, is part of the
 275 symbolic element; it's an office building. It's an office building of three or four storeys at
 the most.

We welcomed the idea stated in the brief of thinking horizontally about this
 building very much in effect. In fact, this building through time resulted in a very
 effective instrument somehow for the wellbeing of people working as they are. The fact
 280 is that they can benefit by light. They have open courts for lunch. They have the
 possibility of movement during the day. At the beginning they always complained that
 they had to walk too much. Now they always thank me when I see them in the corridor.
 They say, 'How wonderful it is. We can walk. We can interrupt the eight hours a day
 sitting'. So socially also that result is an extremely important factor.

285 With these premises, let us say, that are fundamental in the design of this building, we can think of what kind of changes may occur. Of course, episodes in the course of life of this building will occur. There is the question of security. But we'll talk in the debate, I think, about that.

Mr Thorp: Terry, thank you. Good morning. Let me say that I do appreciate the opportunity to revisit the building in the context of this roundtable. I thought I'd just make some observations about looking back on the project and noting in particular the title of the roundtable, which is 'Architecture and Parliament: How do Buildings Help Shape Parliamentary Business?' I thought I might reverse that and say, well, how did parliamentary business in fact help shape this parliament building? I go immediately, 290 Don, to your opening comments about the brief. I think one can never get away from the fact that the quality of that brief was absolutely everything to the success of the project. Aldo has spoken about the architectural interpretation, the coming together of issues of the building and the land and aspirations, social issues and things like that. However, the functional aspect represented through the brief was totally fundamental. I thought I'd just 295 make a couple of observations about that. 300

I recall that in both the initial first stage brief—the smaller coloured book—and then the thicker Stage Two brief there are a series of functional diagrams that set out to explain the relationships between parliamentary departments, between officeholders and between political groups et cetera. If you make a big three-dimensional diagram of each of those relationship diagrams, you end up with something that is very, very complex and difficult to unpick. I remember that, working on the design at both first and second 305 stages, we sort of concluded that it was impossible to unpick this diagram. I think many people have recognised that the floor plan of the parliament is literally a transposition of those relationship diagrams. There are some departures, yes. I seem to remember that we did not quite know where Hansard belonged—the Senate or the House. But the Senate 310 being smaller, it got Hansard. That diagram, I guess, remains in my mind every time I look at this building because it was the answer.

I think the other interesting aspect of the brief is that the brief was written, as you said, starting in the early 1970s and concluding probably about 1978, I think. In that time, 315 there was also a design for the building done by NCDC, which was the demonstration that Parliament could go on Capital Hill. It's worth sometimes going back thinking about the history of this building and looking at the work that was done by whoever did that. I think Paul Reid, as you mentioned him, Aldo, was involved with that.

The one thing missing from the brief, in fact, was the recognition that we were heading into an information technology revolution and a digital or computer age. I 320 wonder myself, had the brief been written 12 years later, how it would have varied. What I think is remarkable—and I take off my hat and compliment all of those who have been involved since the building was completed in 1988—is that this building has integrated information technology so successfully that, quite frankly, walking around at the 20th 325 anniversary functions, I did not see any gross violation of the building in accommodating computer server rooms and everything else. I'm currently working on a large project for

the Commonwealth here in Canberra. I would say that 20 to 30 per cent of the brief is preoccupied with IT issues and provisions. It's just remarkable that this building somehow has absorbed those things without any apparent pain.

330 Finally, I want to make one other observation, and that is about the ongoing
resilience of the building and the parliamentary departments that I believe are here, in one
sense, to protect it, to look after it. It's a very special responsibility that the departments
have. How will the building expand and accommodate future changes? No doubt those
335 changes are going to come. To build extensions or anything on top of the House offices,
the Senate offices and the executive offices would, I suspect, be a very retrograde thing to
do. Bob Hawke increased the size of both the House and the Senate back in 1983, I think
it was. We put most of those extensions or the proposed extensions into the building then.
The exception was the executive office. That still has the capacity in our master plan, you
will recall, Aldo, for extensions. But I think what will happen is that the people who'll
340 end up being decanted, so to speak, from Capital Hill will be those who don't really need
to be here, because an IT connection means they can move away.

The important thing about who should be here is the human contact between the
politicians, the officers, the staffers and all of those things. In fact, the lineage from the
old parliament to this one, I think, is a very straight line. Many times working on the
345 project, we talked about how the new building was going to greatly improve the
performance of politicians in the chambers. They were all going to say 'please' and
'thank you'. I'm not sure what else we expected. But I think there's a healthy robustness
to parliamentary debate, as I see it reflected in the media. I don't come here and watch
sessions, I must admit. I think it's wonderful that it carries on in this new building as it
350 did before. New traditions associated with moving to Capital Hill are combining with old
traditions from being further down the hill, for a new institution that hopefully has a long
life. They are just some observations.

Mr Guida: I think Aldo and Ric have stated very well both the origins and current
concerns. I think the discussion perhaps would benefit by five more minutes of my not
355 speaking.

Ms Berg: In these very brief comments this morning, I wish to introduce several key
points about the hopes for this building, since 'hopes' has been an essential word in the
planning of this roundtable—the hopes for this building in relation to the presence of art,
both in the form of the parliament's design brief given to the architects as well as in the
360 design team's own words recorded during the design and construction of the building.
I've intentionally pulled out a few quotes from the brief you have seen. None of us knew
what we were going to say this morning in terms of each other yet every single person
has referred to the fundamental quality and vision of that brief. I thought it was important
for those of you who have never read it or come in contact with it to have just a few of
365 those words ringing in your ears as we begin this roundtable.

First, the presence of art within Parliament House was not an accidental addition
or decoration at the end of the project. Rather, from the inception of the international

architectural design team competition for new Parliament House, the design team conceived the architectural ideas in relation to the concept of how art would function as an essential part of the building. The concept of art as a virtually inseparable element of public architecture in the Western tradition was accepted without question by the team members, who understood architecture in its timeless tradition of each functional and stylistic element carrying inseparable connotations and meanings within its contemporary reuse. This was not an element of intellectual affectation in the architect's work. Rather it is essential to remember that the April 1979 brief for the two-stage design competition specified that, from the outset, competitors should address the fact that the building must carry with it implicit meaning. The subsequent 1980 brief to the architect was explicit about those requirements, as in the following excerpts, and I quote:

Parliament House must be more than a functional building. It should become a major national symbol, in the way that the spires of Westminster or Washington's Capitol dome have become known to people all over the world. Strength and originality of image will determine the extent to which the building becomes associated in people's minds with national politics.

The quote goes on:

It is important that the building reflect the significance of the national Parliament and Executive Government in the Australian political and social context. The extent to which the building asserts this significance is related to questions of scale and monumentality. Careful consideration should be given to the implications of the scale and monumentality of the design.

It goes on:

The building and site treatment should respond to those qualities of environment which are uniquely Australian—climate, landscape, vegetation and quality of light.

And it continues:

The philosophy which the building expresses, and its popular success, will depend in part on the extent to which public access and involvement is encouraged by the design. Parliament House should not appear remote and inaccessible. Access to both the site and the building should be facilitated. Within the building, connotations of a 'people's Parliament' and 'open government' will be established if people can penetrate the building and observe its operation.

The design team's second stage design competition report in 1980 responded to these issues directly, noting in part with the following words:

The form of the Parliament thus expresses a sense of fellowship and dignity among the citizens... Through the building's humane accommodation of daily work, and the visual evidence of the commitment of the Government and the dimension of the Commonwealth, the Parliament expresses the belief that this fellowship and dignity is not accessorial, but must be conceived of as fundamental to democratic life.

What the presence of art, craft and artisanship was intended to do in support of these ideas in the building was articulated in a number of key papers which the architect submitted for formal approval through the early years of the building's design and construction. In these brief comments, we can only make a few references to the detailed intent, planning and execution of the approved conceptual basis for the commissioned works of art and the rotational collection throughout the building. In his 1982 paper submitted to Sir Billy Snedden as Speaker of the House, Aldo Giurgola summarised these ideas by saying:

... it is not an abstract notion of democracy that will be performed here, but rather its tangible process. Art, architecture, and craftsmanship should be intentional, supporting and stimulating

415 elements toward producing in Members and visitors an ever-renewing sense of identity in that fellowship which is fundamental to democratic life.

This notion of reinforcing among all members, staff and visitors a respect for the individual in society in the midst of a strong sense of fellowship in the whole was a quiet but unmistakable aspect of what art was meant to do in the building as well as the intent that art was essential for the conveying of content for the purpose of inspiration. In a paper sent to the joint standing committee in 1986, we stated:

420 ... these works of art will constitute a quiet continuous dialogue in the new building, a subtle 'speaking out' by works of art representing a tremendous variety of ways of seeing and understanding. By this means, the Art/Craft Program for the building will constitute a direct reminder of the meaning and strength of democracy as a forging of consensus from differing points of view for all who visit and work within the building.

425 There is much, much more which can be said about the intent, the hope and the reality over 20 years of the presence of art in Parliament House. I look forward to our roundtable discussion about these ideas this morning.

430 **Convenor:** Thanks, Pamille. I'd now like to move to Ian. You've had that great deposit of aspiration and intent. Would you like to make some comments?

Mr Harris: Thanks, Terry. In the beginning, I'd like to recognise amongst our distinguished participants in the roundtable today a former President of the Senate, Margaret Reid; former Deputy Clerk of the Senate, Anne Lynch; and the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services, Alan Thompson.

435 Aldo, in his description, mentioned the need for symmetry. It reminds me of a story that I think is sourced in Herodotus and, if not Herodotus, some other famous Australian historian, who said that the ancient Persians used to discuss everything twice. Once would be with a belly full of mead so that their decisions would have zeal. The next morning they woke up with a hangover and revisited them again so that their deliberations would have discretion. I would not like to carry further any comparisons with the House of Representatives and the Senate.

445 Certainly I will go on to say that this building, the picture of which is on the back wall of this committee room, has come to symbolise the Australian Parliament both within and outside Australia. I've particularly become aware of it in the international scene, where people immediately know Australia when they see the New Parliament House. We've adopted the chamber benches as the house logo for all of our ongoing presentations.

450 There are some differences. We had a member in the old parliament who distinguished himself by trying to clamber across some benches on one occasion to make an oral discussion a physical discussion. The same member distinguished himself by saying in rather more crude terms that if he wanted to sound like a backside, he would pass wind himself. But I've also seen face-to-face confrontations in this building. I think of one member, particularly before he went off to join Mac Bank. One of the big changes, of course, was the closure of the non-members bar. It's one that led Mungo MacCallum

455 to lament that journalists of today were not worth a bumper. They'd rather go for a run
around the lake than have a few beers. Of course, for Mungo, a few beers meant quite a
few beers.

Ric also referred to the information technology revolution. If I recall correctly, in
the original design brief the computer was one big room in the basement—the computer
460 room. If only we knew. I also read somewhere this morning the saying that if you give 10
million monkeys a keyboard, they'll end up producing the works of Shakespeare. I think
the internet has disproved that. Certainly we had a tele-lift system in the old building,
which was revolutionary at the time. But email has sort of made that not a consideration.

There have been procedural and machinery changes. Some are significant. The
465 thing I would like to stress through all this is that the building has proved itself to be
adaptable. The adaptability of the building is the most significant thing, to my mind, in
unforeseen challenges back in the design and construction stage. The Main Committee of
the House of Representatives, which is located two doors down, is a second chamber, if
you like, of the House of Representatives that processes a lot of business. It was not
470 welcomed by all members. One of our former speakers, Speaker Sinclair, thought that
everything had to take place on the floor of the chamber to be parliamentary. But when
he came to the Main Committee, which was designed by the original architects, he found
that it was possible to lock eyes and to have an exchange of personalities. He was a great
convert to the concept.

475 Another change has been parliamentary secretaries, those people who are neither
fish nor fowl. Again, we've had consultations with the architects about making provision
for them. It leads me to make just a brief comment on the ministry's presence in the
building. I think in fact that there are two reasons why this magnificent building was
constructed. The first is the magnificent vision and the design of the building, without
480 which I think possibly we would not have got to first base. The second is that the
executive have something to gain by being in the building. A previous Prime Minister
issued a directive to ministers to get out and go to the refreshment rooms to mix with the
common members more. He also directed members to get out and circulate more. We
have to accept that the ministry under our system is part of the Parliament. They are that
485 linking buckle. The fact is that the isolation would have been much, much more increased
had the ministry been located outside the building. So I guess this is just another chance
to say to the architects and the constructors, thank you very much.

Convenor: Thank you, Ian. Now we've had those contributions from our principal
panellists, I'd like to invite some broader discussion of any of the aspects raised. Perhaps
490 I'll lead off. Don, in relation to the actual procedures of the Parliament, was it really
envisaged that there would be a significant impact on how they would operate, or was it
really a matter of saying, 'This is the way the parliament functions. Therefore, the
building needs to accommodate that, and not change it directly'?

Mr Piper: Clearly, the joint select committee which carried out an inquiry and
495 prepared the report, which was issued in 1970, and subsequently the joint standing

committee, both were concerned to ensure that the accommodation and the layout of the building were going to provide an efficient way for the Parliament to operate with the procedures at the time. I don't think that either committee—and certainly not the joint standing committee, with which I was involved—was envisaging any real change in the way the two Houses operated themselves, or the way in which they related to each other. The committee was concerned that basically the sort of arrangements which existed in the existing building—which I guess were largely based on the Melbourne Parliament House in which Parliament operated for the first 26 or 27 years; they were sort of comfortable relationship arrangements—would exist in a new building.

The committees did not have a picture of the new building in their mind, obviously. They didn't know what the designers would come up with. I think both committees, and certainly the joint standing committee as a whole—particularly once the design process had concluded and the winning design had been selected—and members individually recognised that Parliament would operate differently in a new building and in this new building. Members having their own accommodation and an ability to have staff, the same being for ministers, would make quite a difference.

The coming technology, which has been mentioned, which came with a rush as the building was being constructed and Parliament was occupying it, would change the way in which members and senators operated, change the way in which the ministry operated and the change the way the press operated. A common theme through the committee when they discussed these issues was, 'Okay, there will be change, but parliament and parliamentarians can handle that. The process develops all the time'.

Imagine the change for the Parliament when it moved from Melbourne in 1927. None of us here are old enough to remember how traumatic that must have been for the Commonwealth Parliament at the time. But it was changing. The way in which the Houses operated and members operated in particular was changing in the old building anyway. As accommodation was added, that changed the way things worked. Originally members had no accommodation in the old building. They lived in the party rooms or the chamber. That was all there was.

I have a minor point not related to the building. I will not take too much longer to say this. When I joined the House of Representatives Department in 1958, the situation for members and senators was that they worked in Parliament House. Basically, when Parliament was sitting, all of them lived at either the Hotel Kurrajong or the Hotel Canberra. After a day in Parliament, they walked home together at night with their own colleagues or members from another party. They had breakfast in the morning in the dining rooms at the two hotels and walked up to Parliament House. There was a constant dialogue and relationship. Wars that were being fought in one chamber during the day were perhaps soothed over on the way home at night or at breakfast in the morning. Parliament was already changing in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when members started having accommodation away from Parliament House. So that sort of separation was feeding in at the time. But the Parliament and the parliamentarians adjusted to that.

I think the institution has a lot of resilience. It adjusts all the time. I'll repeat the point that members recognised that when a new building was selected and was occupied, things would change. They couldn't predict the way in which that would happen, but they
 540 knew that it would happen.

I will make one point to finish, which I should have made earlier. It's really just repeating a statement that was made when the Mitchell Giurgola Thorp team design was selected for the new building. If that design had not been submitted, it's very doubtful whether we would have this new building today. It was the only design that met the
 545 requirements of the brief and, from the Parliament's point of view, the only design which met the functional and spatial requirements of the brief needed at the time and which provided the ability for expansion and growth—words that were also mentioned throughout the brief. We would have to understand that it has already proven its flexibility and its adaptability for the two Houses.

Convenor: I'm interested in just exploring a little further the impact of change on the proceedings, if you like, of the Parliament or the operations of the Parliament and specifically the chambers. Ian and Harry, do you have comments in relation to that?
 550

Mr Evans: Well, when I first saw the design of the building, I said to the team that was working on selecting the design, 'It is a very bicameral building'. This greatly
 555 disturbed particularly Gareth Evans, who was on the selection team. He suddenly had the thought that they were building something into this building that they did not particularly want to build into it. But by having separate wings for the two houses, by having that distance in between them, I think it has reinforced the bicameral character of the place and the difference in culture that prevails between the two houses.

Convenor: But the actual operations of the Senate chamber and that as a workplace, if you like?
 560

Mr Evans: Well, as I say, it has increased the distance between them. When the Senate comes to think about changing its procedures, it looks at its own situation. It devises procedures that suit its own situation. I think that has been reinforced by the very
 565 bicameral nature of the building.

Convenor: So a distance is—

Mr Evans: I think the architects understood the bicameral character of the Australian parliament better than Australians did themselves. Aldo has referred to his Italian background. I think the senators of the ancient Roman republic were speaking to Aldo
 570 through that culture of his country. He understood, and the architects understood—Aldo himself referred to the checks and balances of the system—better than some Australians did. The building has reinforced that tendency of the two chambers to go their own way.

Convenor: So the distance is real but also metaphorical, in a sense?

Mr Evans: Yes. I think so.

575 **Convenor:** Ian, did you have any comments on that?

Mr Harris: Thanks, Terry. Yes, I think that is true. By the same token, I think Members Hall is still there and it is still used in a way, where there is some mingling of members, particularly on opening day, let us say, and for reunions of former members. I think the building again also showed its great adaptability. We had to change some
580 procedures. For example, the times for divisions and quorums had to be extended to allow people to come from the further reaches. But I've proved that it is possible to be in the Main Committee two doors away and, when the bells start ringing, still get down into the clerk's seat well within four minutes.

Convenor: Aldo proved that years ago.

585 **Mr Harris:** So that worked well. It also gave us potential, for example, if ever we wanted to adjust opening arrangements so that the opening did not take place in the Senate chamber but took place in an alternative location. In fact, it gave us that opportunity. The Queen opened the building on 9 May, the same day as Clem's lecture, which was 20 years later. It was probably no accident but also was one reason why many
590 of us had to go to the written version. It shows that the Queen opened the building in the Great Hall. I think the vision was there. There were certain mini-revolutionary things, such as the meditation room, which still remains a mystery to many, fortunately, but, for those who need to use it, is there for that purpose.

Convenor: I would just like to pick up on Harry's comments about the bicameral
595 nature of the design and how we would reinforce that, in a way. Did you have any comment to come back on that, Aldo?

Mr Giurgola: No. I heard also some talk of having one unique system, which would change very much the situation. There has been talk about [that] occasionally. But I do not know. That will change. I don't want to say how to do that, but I think it is even
600 possible in this building. I will not reveal how. I'm not sympathetic to the idea personally myself.

Anyway, one thing I am interested in, and I hear about it many times—maybe it is a romantic kind of reaction to the old thing, because in the old parliament everybody could meet each other very easily—is the mingling between the parliamentarian and the
605 public. It was very easily obtained. One was on top of the other practically, as small as it was. One of the problems that we have here, apparently, is that the parliamentarians do not get spontaneously in contact with the public very often. The entry to the House and to the Senate does not allow the public to move, as before into King's Hall, all together. But I think that is something that, again, is a matter of culture. If the parliamentarians once in
610 a while enter via the public entry like everybody else, they will meet their constituents there very easily. I think they never do, really. The building could offer this opportunity very simply. It is not very complicated. But that is one of the criticisms that I've heard for

some time. It would be very possible to do that. The Members Hall was created really for the possibility of informal meeting between the two chambers. But that doesn't happen
615 very often. The building offers the possibility of doing that.

So, in part, obviously this building offers the advantage of privacy. Of that, one can take advantage immediately because it's very convenient. But the other possibility is a matter of developing the will to do that, really. A certain thing has to be done there. I mean that it's not just a building to stimulate continuously the doing of things in a certain
620 way.

Convenor: Does anybody else have any comment?

Mr Thorp: I'll make two comments. One is just on the point of senators and members meeting with the public. In one sense, it doesn't make sense because, I guess, in 1927 when Parliament moved to Canberra, the ability to get from Melbourne or Sydney
625 or Brisbane to Canberra quickly did not exist. Maybe constituents would come to parliament to try and influence their representative or whatever. It seems to me that in the world we live in, all senators and members in fact expect to meet with their constituents in their local area. It would be quite unusual for me to come and lobby my member for Wentworth in Canberra, I guess. I would more likely show up at his place down the road
630 from where I live. But I think that's the system, is it not? It's sort of a bit of an anomaly that the politicians are going to meet their constituents. Yes, they should probably be available; I don't know.

The other thing I want to comment on in relation to the distance between chambers, or whatever it was, is that if you go to the diagrams in the brief that's on the
635 table, in fact you will see that Aldo and I and the rest of the team totally squibbed on the issue of redesigning the two chambers. We followed the diagram exactly, if you remember, Aldo. We were terrified that if we departed from what was in those diagrams, we would be strung up and quartered, whatever, or not win. So, again, I think the whole discussion about whether there's a change in the way business is conducted in the
640 chambers is a little bit like saying, 'Well, what we really should reflect is that the brief specified it a certain way based on the experience up to then'. I don't think physically the actual layout of the chambers has changed things. It's bigger, but the diagrams were bigger, Don.

Convenor: I'll come to you in a minute. Hal, do you have a comment on this?

Mr Guida: I was just going to say that it's interesting to think that the first three
645 things that were changed, if you will, in the parliament after it opened were the things that brought people out of their offices to move through the building. The non-members bar was closed, and that was always an attraction for members and non-members. Hansard always had the rushes of the evening that members had to go and read them.
650 They had to walk from their office to the Hansard. We had a special requirement in the brief and a special place in the building where they checked the rushes to make sure that they were correct. The members had a specific reading area in the library. Once the

655 computer went on the desk, that was changed and eliminated. So things that brought members and their staff out to intermix and talk, discuss, whatever, bump into each other, were changed because of the technology that Ric described earlier. I think that has had as much of an impact, from a sense of observation from the architects who continue to be involved here and make these changes. We see that impact of the computer on the desk being the most significant.

Convenor: Aldo, you were going to say something?

660 **Mr Giurgola:** The brief, for instance, was talking of an office being placed near the public entry of the building for the parliamentarian to meet. Do you remember that there were the offices?

Convenor: Yes.

665 **Mr Giurgola:** That was changed into a shop. The T-shirt was more important than the office for the parliamentarian in that position.

Convenor: I'll clarify that. I think what you're saying is where Aussies is at the moment?

Mr Giurgola: Yes.

670 **Convenor:** Originally in the brief there were to be some meeting rooms there for members and senators to actually meet their constituents.

Mr Giurgola: That's right.

Convenor: But that was deleted halfway through or early on in the process.

675 **Mr Giurgola:** That's right, yes. So there was an intention in the design brief to have this place of connection. It was rather informal, I would say. It's no longer there. I feel that's important, the informal aspect. This is before being in an office with the parliamentarian. This is a place for the people to come. They come very spontaneously. They like to move around. The great thing is that it's the only parliament in the world where you can see the public in large numbers inside. Frankly, we visited so many. There are always some militant police outside. You have to stop. You have to have a permit to go anywhere. It's a fantastic thing. Anything that can promote the informality of meeting, 680 of connection. We're moving into a different culture, which is a culture that seeks transparency in the Parliament. The worst thing that could happen is that if you find that it's an isolated thing.

685 The design and sequence of rooms is important, in my mind, because it gives identity to certain functions. The moment that you start to have a very flexible place, it will be flexible forever. There will be change. Any manager who comes the next year will change everything, as happened for the restaurant. There's this kind of problem with

architecture nowadays. Buildings last very few years because there's the possibility of
changing. They're so flexible. The change has to be accommodated into the identity of a
690 certain place. Otherwise, you don't have a building. You have a sort of object that serves
as shelter that was made for some functional use for a few years.

I think the success of this building in terms of permanency is precisely the identity
of the various places. Symmetry is a bad word today. Everything is asymmetrical.
Obviously both have their own place. Symmetry is something that doesn't exist in nature,
695 for instance. But we pretend that it does not exist. All of a sudden we are more
comfortable with asymmetry. But at the same time it has this great advantage of telling
[us] exactly where things are. For the public, that's extremely important. Imagine the
people who come here. It's like if you go into a house and you don't know where the
various rooms are. You have to have indications of that. Instead, here they have it very
700 clearly. People who come from, you know, Mongolia come here and know exactly what
is happening over here.

Mr Piper: Terry, I want to make one brief point. I think it needs to be recognised.
We've talked about how technology changes and the way in which the institution and the
individuals in the institution can operate in the building. We need to recognise, in respect
705 of members and senators moving around the building, that now in this building they're
able to have two, three or four staff members working with them in their office in the
building. That didn't happen in the old building. So if a member wanted a bill from the
Table Office in the Senate or the Bills and Papers Office or they wanted a book from the
library, the member or senator walked through the building to get it. That doesn't happen
710 any more. Members have staff, and their staff will do a lot of the building movements
that the members and senators won't do. That's another factor why we might have this
problem of less contact, less interface and less collision between members and senators in
the building.

Mr Evans: What I'm trying to suggest is that there is some value in putting distance
715 between the different components of this building. If an auditor is working out of the
same office as the company the auditor is auditing, you would get nervous about it. You
would say, 'The auditor is checking those people and shouldn't be living in their
pockets'. The parliament is supposed to be a check on the executive. There's some value
in having the executive in its own bunker and putting a bit of distance between them and
720 not having them living in each other's pockets, where you can stitch up deals and pass
money in brown paper envelopes and so on. A certain amount of distance between the
different functional components is valuable. I think this building should be praised for
putting a bit of distance between functions that should be distant.

Convenor: Just before we leave the chambers, we were talking about technology. I
725 know during the course of the project that there was some interest in it both from the
Parliament and, of course, from the design side. There was a requirement that there be a
provision for electronic voting in the chambers. A fair bit of work was done in designing
how that could happen, in terms of how it could be integrated into the chambers.
Technology has moved along in a lot of other areas. That's one direction that perhaps the

730 chambers have not moved towards, that I'm aware of. In some cases, this building sort of
took the Parliament certain ways. In other senses, it provided the opportunity for things to
happen. I suppose that is one opportunity that the Parliament seemingly has decided not
to take.

Mr Evans: That's a funny one, actually. It has been considered in the Senate and
735 rejected. One of the reasons it was rejected is that there's no advantage in time saving.
The notion that you save a lot of time is a fallacy unless you're going to have people
voting outside the chambers, and that would never be trusted. But the other thing people
say is, 'Well, when you have a division, it's an opportunity for people to come into the
chamber and run into each other'. Because they are just sitting there while their votes are
740 counted, they can converse and so on. It's an occasion for interaction. So it goes against
what we've been saying about the building putting distance between people.

Convenor: Ian, did you have a comment?

Mr Harris: Thanks, Terry. Yes, we are similar. But I must say that we should
acknowledge the foresight of the designers and the implementers, because I understand
745 the cabling is there to be activated at some future stage if the decision is taken. So it
would not be a huge additional expense. But our Procedure Committee has looked at the
proposal on a number of occasions, including quite recently. As Harry suggests, maybe
an additional consideration is that the House of Representatives is still too small to gain
any big achievements by having electronic voting. But the real clincher, I think, is the
750 way that ministers and others engage. Nobody votes from a pre-allotted place under the
current arrangements, so members can lobby ministers. They can talk to each other. They
can exchange views. I think it's the informal—

Convenor: The dynamic?

Mr Harris: The dynamic of that. Plus the fact that it's also said to cool proceedings
755 down when they get a little overheated.

Ms Berg: I think one of the things that's come out of the comments that everyone has
made this morning is this sense—to follow what Harry was saying—of check and
balance, of the ability of this place to say something very strongly about who we are,
what we must be, what our future is and yet at the same time to have those voices change
760 radically—that is, the flexibility of how the institution changes. I think that's one of the
things. I'm just thinking about all of the comments of everyone. Aldo has a sense of the
clarity of the structure of the building. Ric has a sense of the clarity of the functional
aspects of the building. Don has said things about the fundamentals.

I think also one thing that's fundamental and needs continuing attention in this
765 place is the sense about the works of art that one finds hung in the nodes of the office
buildings and hung in the crossing points. Many of those works have been there for a
long time. They do change. But also what we need to continue to do in the life of this
building is to continue the acquisition of those works on a very regular basis. Those

770 works were there not just to be elegant and beautiful and stylish and to give a sense to
 visitors that we have a culture. They were works that were meant to be there to speak to
 us and to poke us in the ribs to say, ‘Who are we anyway?’ in all of these multiple ways.
 So I think one part of the schema of the buildings which is so important is that there are
 those locations. Hopefully the traditions of the last 20 years will maintain them as the
 775 places where works by living artists are continuing to poke us in the ribs and change. But
 at the same time we, as part of that check and balance, need to make sure that we
 continue to say, ‘It’s not good enough to have a static collection or an almost static
 collection’. We need to continue to make sure that those works are new works. Over time
 that gives that sense of where we’re going and who we have become now, as opposed to
 even who we were 20 years ago.

780 **Convenor:** I’m conscious that there may be others on the table here who might like
 to offer a comment on some of the things that we’ve discussed. I’m also aware of the
 time and possibly engaging with some other comments from people.

Dr Macintyre: Some of the themes that we’ve heard about already we will pick up in
 the second half of the session today. I particularly come back to something that’s almost
 785 perhaps the key theme that’s coming out of the day so far—this idea of interaction and
 engagement and the intermingling that Aldo was talking about. I was interested in Ric’s
 comments about the sense that the engagement with your MP or senator should be back
 at your constituency or the local centre or something like that. I wouldn’t argue with that
 for a moment. But I think there are perhaps two things worth considering in that context.
 790 One is the symbolism of the interaction. I think that you’re quite right; most people from
 remote Australia are not necessarily going to come to Canberra to do their lobbying. But
 the building should be open to the citizens of Australia. This is the place where our state
 affairs are conducted. Symbolically that engagement, I think, is really important. I’m not
 saying that he was dismissing that. I think that needs to be brought very much to the fore.

795 The other is something that works the other way. I think it does the MPs and the
 senators a lot of good actually, if not physically get out of the building, to have the
 outside of the building come in. I’m conscious that we’re relatively remote here in
 Canberra. There’s a ring road around the outside. You can spend your whole life, I
 suspect, in this building working—arriving very early and leaving very late—and not
 800 actually engage with much of outside Australia. I think it’s good for our democratic
 considerations if the outside is brought in in whatever way. So the informal meetings,
 whether in the Great Hall or whether we try and think about some of the spaces and using
 them more creatively to generate the informal interactions—the collisions, I think you
 were mentioning—those things would be worth spending a bit of time thinking about.

805 **Convenor:** Thanks, Clem. Is there anybody in the audience who would like to offer a
 particular comment or question, please?

Mr Richards: I’m from Old Parliament House. I want to make a couple of
 comments. The first is about history. Whilst it’s true that the constituents perhaps found it
 a bit more difficult to come here from 1927 on, remember also that members and senators

810 were here for the whole term. So there was actually a reason for them to come here. John
Smith Murdoch provided two small rooms in King's Hall which were specifically for
constituents to meet with their MPs. So I was very interested to hear that there had been
that requirement early in the brief for the new building. Those two rooms were lost in the
1960s at about the same time as the Post Office moved down to the floor below in the old
815 building. I think that reflects the change whereby MPs got offices around that time. But
King's Hall still continued to be the principal place where you would meet with
lobbyists. In the oral history interviews we've done, that's very apparent. That's because
the offices that MPs had, when they got them, were far too small to accommodate more
than one MP and maybe one or two staff.

820 Another historical comment is that, rather than being a translation of Melbourne
to Canberra in 1927, I think there was a very clear determination by the Parliament of the
day to build a much better Parliament House than the one that they had been borrowing
for the first quarter of a century. The 1923 hearings of the joint standing committee on
the construction of our Parliament House, the Old Parliament House, are particularly
825 fascinating because Murdoch was grilled not only by MPs and senators, but expert
witnesses were called from all around the country and from the state parliaments. The
building that resulted from that was quite different from what Murdoch had proposed in
1923. For example, there was a particularly interesting debate about the shape of the
chambers and the adoption of the horseshoe. There'd been a proposal that there should be
830 a rostrum system adopted. They'd looked to the French Chamber of Deputies. It was
decided in the end that this was not very British, that the British tradition of a
representative assembly required you to stand in your place and that it would do for
theatrical foreigners—and I am almost quoting Billy Hughes in evidence to that
committee—but it was not the way we would do it in this country. So it's a particularly
835 interesting report.

The other observation I want to make is that, in the oral history interviews we've
conducted so far, I'd have to say this theme of interaction is the other thing that
constantly comes out. People say, 'I went from working for the government to working
for a minister'. But having said that, it's not something that most of our interviewees
840 dwell on. Most would suggest there was a fairly straightforward transition. Some
people—Jim Killen comes to mind—who'd not served in the new building were very
upset about the thought of the new chambers. They didn't like the look of the new
chambers.

At Old Parliament House we're conducting interviews now with parliamentarians
845 as well as the people who worked in the building in various other roles. We have a very
ambitious program of interviewing hopefully up to about 40 former parliamentarians a
year until we can catch up, because they are beginning to die at a terrifying rate. This is
one of our major interests. So in three or four years I hope we can actually say much
more about the experience of parliamentarians who made the transition. But at this stage
850 it's not something that is registering very largely.

Convenor: Thank you very much, Michael. I'm confronted by the time here, which says it's just after half past 10. We have five more minutes. Are there any other contributions?

855 **Dr Moore:** I'm from the ANU. I'm very struck in this conversation by the sort of dichotomy between aspiration and reality, and symbols and hopes and what might actually be happening. Particularly in relation to the art, I'd like to ask a question. There is huge aspirational and symbolic meaning around the art. I'd like to know how the art actually gets looked at in this building. How is it used? I'm really conscious, even just coming in this morning, that we rushed past the most beautiful pieces of work. People
860 here are very busy. So how is that art actually used?

Convenor: Pamille, would you like to make a comment? Then, perhaps, I might ask Ian and Harry.

Ms Berg: I'll comment using my own experience of having worked within the building, often late at night while writing a six-volume study for several years. I had the
865 capacity to walk down to the staff cafeteria at eight o'clock and wander back when the lights were on and very few people were around. I think there are a whole series of levels in the way in which art functions here. In the public areas, art has a series of layers and meanings and ways in which people can have a sense of what it is. At the monumental scale they have a quick recognition of what it may be. An example is the Great Veranda
870 coat of arms. As you walk in the door, you understand what that is at a certain level because it appears, the coat of arms, on every government building which is doing official government business.

Those members of the public or occasionally a staff member who love a work, who stop and look again and again, have another series of layers of meaning. That was
875 intended to occur with everything like the marquetry panels in the foyer, the tapestry in the Great Hall and the presence of the Embroiderers' Guild work up in the gallery. It was as if there was the macro- and the micro-scale of recognition. We also intended that, knowing that people would be busy, frantic, frenetic and pressured here, the work would be present and there would be times when it gave comfort. There would be other times
880 when people slowed down to realise that they were being poked in the ribs. So there are a series of levels about the presence of the works in the private areas as opposed to the public areas and what they did.

There are additional layers we don't have time to talk about this morning in terms of both the commissioned works and the loose works in this collection. Intentionally, we
885 hardly engaged anyone who had ever had a public commission in Australia. These were not name artists. That was intentional on a series of levels to demonstrate the wealth of emerging and mid-career live artists, not big names promoted by galleries. So there's another layer available here, of understanding that these are people from the regions as much as possible. These are people from among our midst, not people who have been put
890 on pedestals. The works themselves reflect that diversity of preoccupation and interest. If I stop at that level in terms of our hope and dream about what would happen and the way

that art could be interacted with both personally and privately, and publicly and symbolically, then it's really about handing back to people like Ian, who in fact have lived here and have seen whether people have ignored it and not been touched or whether on a series of levels it has a function.

Mr Harris: I'd like to pick up on that. It's a good question. Thank you. Pamille mentioned earlier ongoing acquisitions. At one stage—Mr Thompson would be in a better position to answer this—acquisitions used to be funded from profits from the parliament shop. I know that there were storage and curatorial considerations in relation to keeping the growth of the acquisitions going. The artworks are placed in places like near the Tom Roberts. The federation banners are placed there. Some of them are permanent fixtures, such as in the Main Committee room in the central part of the building, which is different from the room in which the Main Committee of the House of Representatives meets.

But I have to say that I think they do have an impact. They are also available to senators and members to use in their offices on a rotational basis. So some of them don't actually come into public view, but they have, I suppose, a beneficial effect on the members. The one thing that I've been disappointed with—and I've mentioned this to Pamille previously—is that, with the help of Professor Manning Clark, we compiled a series of aspirational sayings that were meant to be put in key places around the building. I don't think that has happened. I think it would be to the betterment of members and senators and staff and visitors if occasionally we had some of those aspirations flashed before our consciousness.

Convenor: Harry, would you like to add anything to this question of art appreciation?

Mr Evans: Well, some time ago there was an outbreak of an ideological dispute—a branch of the culture wars broke out—about the artworks. You had members saying it was all postmodernist garbage and it was all part of the leftist plot to introduce moral relativism and poison our culture with the moral relativism and the nihilism of the postmodernist leftist et cetera. That was interesting because that was only the public outbreak of it. The same thing had been going on for years, ever since we moved to the building. The same thing has been going on now. It goes on amongst the staff as well as the members. There's a constant dispute about, 'That's a piece of garbage and I don't like that, but I do like the thing that is up in that'. And it's a constant subject of conversation around the place between the members and the staff—whether the art is any good and whether it all ought to be shipped over the lake to the art gallery and so on. It gives people something to talk about anyway. It means that their environment is stimulating anyway. So I suppose Pamille will say, 'That's what art is all about'.

Ms Berg: Absolutely. That's why it is here.

Mr Thompson: I will say a few things. I'm head of parliamentary services but very new in the building. I've only been here three months. I do have some interesting perspectives on the art. I suppose number one, just to recount my own personal journey

around this building, I've been using the works of art a lot to navigate by. Think of them that way. Just for the first few weeks that's actually quite important. Number two, and harking back to some comments by Pamille a little earlier, the good news is that the acquisition process has started up a little more robustly now. We got some advice from Betty Churcher about two years ago. Now there's a process of acquisitions primarily focusing on Western Australia and the Northern Territory and northern Queensland, because that's where the collection is, if you like, deficient. There's an absence of a lot of work from there. Interestingly, next week, hopefully early in the week, we'll have a fascinating sculpture coming on display down on the ground floor from Dennis Nona, who's a noted Torres Strait Islander artist. This is a pair of stingrays. It's a fabulous piece.

In terms of the real purpose of the art, which is clearly not to navigate around the building—at least I don't think so; maybe that was the intention of the architects early on—it does seem to me to have two primary roles. One is to give some relevance to each of the members here. They have the opportunity to select some works of art. As I understand it, they are mostly focusing on works that have some relevance to their electorate, which I think is good. For the remainder, both in the fully public areas and the other areas, it's to give a sense of space and history to the building. In large measure, I think that works quite well. The ironic one near my office is the big blue one, which has 'Promises, Promises' on it. I don't know whether that's meant to hold us to some account or not. But at least there's a new program of acquisitions happening.

Convenor: I've been given a slight extension of time. I'll just invite one further comment from the group. Before we leave the art, I'm advised that the coolamon that was presented as part of the sorry motion is on public display. Whereabouts is it, Ian?

Mr Thompson: I think it's on display. It would be in Members Hall on level one. It is there, yes.

Convenor: Thank you.

Ms Higgins: I'm from the Parliamentary Education Office. I just wanted to mention the 90,000 schoolchildren who come to Parliament House every year. I've only been here six months doing project work. But when I do teach, there's always an inward gasp of joy and sort of transcendence, even from the 16-year-old nonchalant teenagers, who don't want to look terribly interested. They really do get lifted up by walking in, especially to that Main Committee room, with the big ceiling and the big painting. The architecture too is really helpful to the teacher, who's trying to engage. So it's a wonderful thing and they do take that inward breath. You hear that silence for a moment.

Convenor: Thank you very much. Lucky last. There's always the next session.

Ms Scholes: Good morning, everyone. Thank you very much for all the wonderful things that we've been able to listen to from the panel already this morning. I have a passion for this building. I came here to the guide service in July 1988 and I worked with

Visitor Services until April 2007. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to come along here this morning. I just wanted to say that there are so many things linked with this building, I think, that are very special. First of all, it's the layout of the building. It works so well. In the early days we were not conducting tours here. We were looking after about
 975 12,000 people a day, just showing them around and talking to them and introducing the Australian citizens to their Parliament House. Lots of comment, of course, over all of the years about the design—'Should we have spent all that money?' We were always delighted to tell them what else their money would have purchased, but how important it was to have a parliament house such as this available in this country now, keeping us at
 980 the appropriate level internationally from the parliamentary point of view and for our democracy.

Of those Australian citizens who were a little negative about the building in those early days, I'd like to think that we've been able to take them to another point in their thinking. Schoolchildren have come through, as the previous speaker mentioned. We
 985 were seeing 100,000 school children a year. I think it's been a most wonderful opportunity in that educative way to provide that education program for the citizens of this country and the future voters. Sometimes, yes, our hormonally challenged teenagers were not quite realising how important their visit was. Going to the snow was much more important, particularly for those dreadful Queenslanders, of which I was one.

But, anyway, the art, I think, has played a very significant role here. I think, as a member of Visitor Services, we were sad to see the changes in the art in the front of the building upstairs on the first floor on the walls just outside the Great Hall. The original artwork that was placed there told a story of our country. That was very important to the guide service in the explanations that we gave to the public who took part in our tours or
 995 who were visiting the building in general. When that decision was taken, I think we felt we had lost something greatly there. Having the Aboriginal artwork on both sides above the foyer and then moving into the Arthur Boyd and the other distinguished artists whose work was positioned in that area, we felt that we were not able to do the same lead-in and explanation of our history and our landscape. This building is so linked with the
 1000 landscape. So it would be wonderful if someone could perhaps give some thought to that again and bring back that story through the art.

I think no matter what you do in this building, you have to have a passion for it. If you don't have the passion, you perhaps need to think about being somewhere else. So thank you very much for the opportunity to speak this morning. Thank you to the
 1005 architects for giving an opportunity to me and many others who are working in this most fabulous place to have just the greatest time of my working life. Thank you very much.

Convenor: Thank you, Barbara. I think we need to call a halt to this session. Before we break, I'd like to thank the panellists here this morning in this session. I invite you also to thank them.

1010

Proceedings suspended from 10.46 am to 11.09 am

Session 2—Looking Forward: Future Possibilities

Convenor (Dr Macintyre): It's my pleasure to welcome you back to the second half of this session today. The format for the second session will be very similar to the first. I'm going to invite five-minute contributions from the members of the panel, who have moved to the top of the table. Again, any thoughts and comments from other panellists would be welcome. We'd be very keen to hear views from the public as well, of course.

I want to start this session first of all with some thanks. I'll just very quickly take a moment in particular to say thanks to the architects, to the design team, to the project managers and to all the people who conceived and built the building. The fact that we're gathered here today is an indication of the place that this building has begun to take in Australian political consciousness. It's clearly a very significant building. It goes without saying, obviously, that we would not be sitting here having a session like this if it had not been for the creative efforts of the team who put it together. So while I have the floor, as it were, I just want to put on the record my sense of admiration at the achievement that they were able to sustain.

I'll introduce my team. I'll introduce them in the order that I'm going to invite them to speak. I hope as I go that the rationale for that will become clear too. I'll start with Chris McConville, who is two seats to my left. Chris is currently teaching at the University of the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. He's worked in environmental planning with a focus on historic building conservation. He worked for a time also as an electorate officer for one of the independent members of the House of Representatives in the 1990s. He's had various roles over many years in radio. He's authored several books on Australian history. He is currently editing a collection of papers on the history of horseracing and gambling titled *A global racecourse*, which will be published later this year. It is Chris's reflections as a commentator as well as his experiences as a staffer, I think, that should make his contribution today valuable.

Chris Beer, one seat further to my left, is currently working as an urban planner, in Canberra I think. He's told me that his recently completed PhD has now been examined and approved, so congratulations. That was a thesis examining the political geographies of Canberra as the national capital city within the territorial space of Australia as a nation state. It had particular references to the geographies or the relationship of the Commonwealth bureaucracy, lobbying and certain national cultural institutions, including the National Portrait Gallery and the National Library. Generally his research interests lie at the intersection of the political ideas of community, democracy and urbanisation.

Our third speaker will be Andrew Hutson, who is two seats to my left. Andrew is an academic who researches and teaches in the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne. Andrew has a longstanding research interest in the background and influences on the design and the procurement of the New Parliament House in Canberra. He's written a number of papers on the process and the outcome of the 1979 competition for the design of this Parliament House. He's looked at both the

1055 thrust of the competition brief and the attitude of the judging panel with regard to the type
of design that would be successful in the context of the political and urban context of
Canberra. He's currently working on an ARC Discovery project which is titled 'A special
talent for technological innovation: Analysing the other public function of the Australian
Parliament House'.

1060 James Warden, immediately to my left, is from the University of Canberra. He is
director of the newly established Donald Horne Institute for Cultural Heritage. He was a
political studies fellow here in this Parliament House in 1994, where he wrote *A bunyip
democracy: The parliament and Australian political identity*. It's a book I certainly
looked at extensively when I was beginning to think about this. James is also a former
curator at the National Museum.

1065 David Tait, three seats to my right, is a social scientist who leads three research
projects on justice environments, how courts are organised and how people experience
these spaces. Like parliaments, the issues that he's looking at involve balancing security
and access, transparency and privacy, flexibility and stability. He works in the Faculty of
Law at the University of Canberra.

1070 Tom Duncan, who is one seat further to my right, is at the moment Clerk of the
Legislative Assembly for the ACT. He's held that position since 2003. Prior to that, he
was Deputy Clerk and Sergeant-at-Arms from 1990. In 2000, he had a year's secondment
to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. As we were saying earlier, it's a very
different experience, I think—the New South Wales Legislative Assembly versus the
ACT one. But he's also worked in the Old Parliament House and worked in this building
when he worked in the Department of the House of Representatives.

1075 Harry Evans, the last of our speakers, immediately to my right, with respect to all
of the other distinguished people gathered at the top of this table, probably needs least
introduction. Harry has been Clerk of the Senate since 1988.

Mr Evans: Coincidence.

1080 **Convenor:** Yes. 1988 was a significant year, obviously, in the process of the move
from the old to the new. Chris, I'll start with you.

1085 **Dr McConville:** I have to say that I'm not one of the people who has a passion for
the building, even though I worked in it. I guess I would approach it in a fairly
dispassionate fashion. It was really a place to work and get through the paperwork before
you went to the, sadly vanished, non-members bar. My daughter is one of those
Queenslanders who came here and wanted to go to the snow and thought that the school
tour from a Queensland primary school would have been much better organised if it had
consisted of two days at the snow, a drive past Parliament House and then on to the
Dubbo plains zoo and then the Warwick McDonald's.

I think what I'll do is start off by talking very quickly about Australia's first
1090 parliamentary space, which is the old Royal Exhibition Building now in Melbourne,
which is on the World Heritage list. In some ways, it has certain parallels with this
building, with some central motif on top of it. It's generally a two- and three-storey
structure, organised into wings and with a symmetrical floor plan. It's a building that was
knocked about and largely dismissed from public consciousness once parliament left it. It
1095 became referred to by the 1940s and the 1950s as the white elephant of Carlton Gardens.
In a way, it has since been resurrected and become an important symbol for communal
identity in Melbourne and a significant representation of Australian architecture, in that it
is listed on the World Heritage list. It has only done that, I think, because the building has
by and large had a history of political significance in its, I guess, early phase and then a
1100 history of denigration and disrespect in its later history. I think of one issue that people
have been alluding to about public responses to this building. I think the building is a bit
too new to have gone through that phase of denigration and disrespect from which it can
recover and become embedded in popular consciousness. When parliament met in the old
Exhibition Building in Melbourne, that building was only 20 years old, as this building is
1105 20 years old. I think it took half a century for it to be dismissed as an important place and
then to be recovered and appreciated in all its depth. I guess that's probably part of the
history which might await this building in the future.

I'll quickly go through some of the issues I see in relation to the relationship of
this building to popular culture and the broader political awareness of the Australian
1110 community. It might lead to a deeper political awareness than my daughter at present has.
First of all, I'll talk about this boundary between the public space and the private space of
the members and the people who work here. I think of one thing that happens, to my
mind, when working here and looking at the space. Occasionally when I was sick of
sitting in the office doing paperwork, I'd walk through the public areas just to have some
1115 sort of human contact. The public spaces seemed to me to be compressed by this sort of
horizontal barrier across the building. My reading of the building was that it was a very
sort of contiguous space—that the space went ahead of you in this sort of axial pattern
with these two arcs moving out, whereas the public access was sort of compressed and
pushed to the side by the Members Hall sitting there in the chambers. It seemed to me
1120 that if we want to think about engaging the public more with the building, then we should
enable the public, to use the word that was used by somebody else earlier, to penetrate the
building in this sort of axial fashion. They would come in at the front and move out at the
back, even if that was just compressed in one avenue through the space. That would
engage people with the workings of the structure and the dimensions of it that I don't
1125 think you get just as a casual public visitor. I know there are security concerns with that.
But I think that would also lead to some sort of better understanding of the architectural
principles around which the entire building is constructed, not just the sort of public fun
fare areas that people tend to move in and out of at the front of the building.

Secondly, in the building's relationship to the artwork, we've heard that the art is
1130 embedded in the building. That's a critical part of the way the building presents. In some
of the things I have read, it presents Australia to the Members of Parliament. One of the
things that always struck me working here was how apolitical the art was for a political

institution. The artwork which seemed to have more political impact, and at least understand that Australian politics was quite rough and could be controversial at times, 1135 was up in the media area. I don't know whether that's still there—the cartoons and other sort of photographs that were on the walls in the media wing of the building. They seemed to bring much more of a flavour of what the building was about, to me at any rate, than the magnificent works down there at the front, whether they are, to use the tautology that Harry alluded to, postmodern garbage or not. They don't seem to have that 1140 sort of reference back to the political function of the entire building.

I'll move very quickly out from the building itself to its relationship to the urban context or the urban form that was alluded to earlier. I set out this morning to walk to the building. Everybody told me that was a bit silly. When it started raining and Clem gave me a Cabcharge, I realised that it probably was. But I think one of the difficulties of this 1145 building is that it is not friendly to pedestrians. It is a city-beautiful urban design. We're constantly trying to move to an urban form in Australia that's less dependent on the motor car and is denser and relates more to pedestrian movement and pushbikes et cetera. I think the building really needs to engage more with people as pedestrians. The fact, even just coming in a car, that you drive up towards this building and all of a sudden you 1150 go down to the underground car park and come up into it I think really diminishes one's appreciation of the building in its urban context. I think that really takes away from what Griffin might have expected this space to present itself to the broader public of Canberra and then of Australia.

Prof. Uhr: Some people have driven straight through.

1155 **Dr McConville:** Well, they have, yes. But we're not encouraging that. Finally, and very quickly, the building is a symbol and an icon. I'm not really sure that the building has actually, present company excepted, been well-served by the architects and architectural critics who've written about it. People can read, if they like, the entry into the Australian Institute of Architects register of significant 20th century buildings. I 1160 thought the very least that entry might have done would be to have spelt 'Labor', as in the Australian Labor Party, correctly. It might have brought out some of the more significant symbolic aspects of the building. I then went to the Flickr database of photographs and keyed in Parliament House in Canberra. I think I got 4,000 entries. Most of those photos, to me, are really quite dehumanising. They play on the sort of geometric purity of the 1165 externalities of the building. They always seem to diminish people. People's bodies in those photographs are always positioned in sort of geometric patterns that work against the symmetry of the building itself. So I think if those things are representative of the way the building operates as a symbol and as an image for the Australians who visit it and take those photos, I'm not sure that they're taking away from it some sense of a 1170 personal and communal engagement with the politics that goes on in here. In fact, those photographs to me represent some degree of alienation from the building itself and what goes on inside it.

I began by talking about the Exhibition Building. The first Parliament opened on 9 May 1901. And 9 May 1927 was when the second Parliament House opened. I guess,

1175 given the sort of problematic that surrounds Australia Day, 26 January, which is expressed in that recent Telstra advertisement, a possible way of engaging the broader public with this building might be to have a Parliament Day on 9 May declared a national public holiday.

Convenor: Thank you, Chris.

1180 **Dr Beer:** I'll start by taking a slightly different perspective from some of the previous speakers, although the other Chris did allude to something I'd like to deal with here. If I were to entitle this talk, I'd describe it as 'The city in the citadel'. I'm looking here, in the case of Parliament House, from the perspective of a planning practitioner interested in Parliament House from the sub-discipline of urban design. I'm also
1185 interested, I guess, in the outside of politics rather than the inside of politics, which we have heard so much about this morning.

As Chris mentioned, the relationship of Parliament House to the city is an absolutely crucial dimension of its being a political phenomenon. Unfortunately, I think we see Parliament House, if not as the citadel, certainly as a citadelisation in its place
1190 within Australian politics. Citadels have quite a history within urban theory. Lewis Mumford, a major urban theorist, noted that citadels were a key aspect of urban form, along with the temple, the market and the village. He discusses them as distinct places of privilege and power within cities. It doesn't take much of a stretch of the imagination to see this Parliament House as a citadel. It is obviously moated by six lanes of motorways.
1195 It has ramps and ramparts. It's fortified and guarded. Security is obviously a necessity. But the degree to which this takes place is obviously a more debateable question.

Within the theory, the citadel as an urban phenomenon is generally seen as, if not incompatible, certainly potentially problematic with democratic politics, aside for, perhaps, moments of emergency, such as invasions or civil unrest or whatever. I think
1200 this is the case, whether your democratic politics are representative or more directly participatory. Thus, generally, at the level of abstraction, I'd suggest that insofar as parliamentarianism in Australia is democratic, a citadel is an inappropriate form of housing for its home.

Within the theory, Spiro Kostof, in his classic book *The city assembled*, discusses
1205 the spaces where states meet the people. He writes:

The presumption is always there that the less removed the sovereign district within the fabric of a town, the less isolated behind a system of defences, the more benign or consensual a regime.

Similarly, Lewis Mumford, in his classic *The city in history*, writes:

The citadel still stands for both the absolutisms and the irrationalities of its earliest exemplars.

1210 I'm not suggesting that Parliament House in Australia lies towards the imperial, anti-democratic extremes of early citadels. But certainly there's a danger, insofar as its urban relationships reflect, I guess, this continuing tradition of a citadel within a city.

1215 So how did we get to the citadel? Romaldo Giurgola mentioned earlier that Peter Reid wrote an excellent book on the history of Canberra, in which he discusses the movement of Parliament House originally from the lakeshore slowly up and eventually to Capital Hill, not in accordance with Griffin's plans for the city. But eventually the elected representatives decided that Parliament House was to be on top of Capital Hill, and so we have it.

1220 In terms of seeing Parliament House as a citadel, the urban planners have certainly exacerbated the problem. As I mentioned, the six lanes of motorways, which were created actually before Parliament House was known to be on top of Capital Hill, are perhaps the key dimension of the citadelisation, in addition to other practices. I'm also therefore interested in how we might achieve decitadelisation. I'm not at all advocating making Parliament House vulnerable to what may be pejoratively known as the mob or the multitude but rather increasing its capacity for use outside politics. How might this happen? I have no answers. One general, broad idea would be somehow bringing the city to Capital Hill. Covering the motorways or urban intensification around Parliament House are possible ways of doing this.

1230 In more contemporary urban theory, authors such as Peter Marcuse have noted that citadelisation is generally in the ascendancy in cities around the world in the post 9/11 period. This is neither inevitable nor necessarily desirable. I quote General George S. Patton. He is on the record as saying, perhaps channelling Gramsci, that 'fixed fortifications are monuments to man's stupidity'. Insofar as we try to seek security through urban design and processes of civilisation, these are probably ultimately delusions.

Convenor: Thank you, Chris.

Dr Hutson: *[Presentation included slides, which are not available on this website]*
I'm in the wrong group, judging by the titles here. This morning's earlier group was looking back and this group is discussing looking forward. I'm going to look forward by looking back at the competition processes and some of the political contexts for why the current building we are occupying was selected as the winner. Don Piper mentioned earlier that it was inferred that Romaldo's and Ric's scheme for this project in the competition was probably the only one that could win in terms of workability. I gather that's what you were referring to. I'd take that a bit further. I would say it's probably the only one that could win with regard to symbolism, because there was a vexed context of competing pressures regarding what would be an appropriate building for the top of Capital Hill. Chris just alluded to the Griffin plan for Canberra, which did not envisage having the parliament building on top of Capital Hill. Instead there was more of a public building proposed of various guises. He also alluded to the march of the parliament building from the lakeside up towards Capital Hill.

This line here, if you can see that, is the 1973 NCDC proposal or a discussion generator for Parliament House behind the provisional Parliament House, on what was called Camp Hill. Camp Hill was always envisaged in the Griffin plan as being the

1255 location for the permanent Parliament House. When the provisional Parliament House was built in 1927, it was understood at that time that it would compromise Camp Hill as a permanent location. That was accepted. It was also accepted that even as a provisional Parliament House, given the progress of a number of decades, there was no possibility of it ever being demolished. So whatever occurred would have to accommodate the provisional Parliament House in that location.

1260 You can see from this particular slide some of the difficulties the planners and those who were preparing the brief, and who knew Parliament House, were having. It's a building which has to acknowledge the axis through the centre of the Parliamentary Triangle towards Capital Hill by putting two large fins either side. It's a building which has to acknowledge the provisional Parliament House in front of it. It doesn't do either particularly well, but it is, in my mind, a very indicative image with regard to the stresses the planners were having.

1270 Another issue with regard to those pressures was the political context of the new Parliament House and the fear that many politicians had that, in building a parliament house for politicians—that was sometimes a public perception of what was occurring; it was not necessarily a parliament house for the nation, but really a house which would accommodate politicians and political activity—there must be care and attention paid to how ostentatious that building would turn out to be. If too much flair and money and degree of richness were put into that building, it would seem to be an aggrandisement of politicians. Now I don't subscribe to that, and I don't know that anyone else in this room would subscribe to that. But certainly that was a fear that politicians had—that the public would perceive the new Parliament House as being in that particular mode. To my mind, that's partly the reason why we didn't see a competition for the new Parliament House until 1979, even though it had been mooted 50 years earlier, almost on the completion of the provisional Parliament House. The discussions were already starting then for a permanent place.

1285 I'll go to the next slide. That is Canberra. That is the Griffin plan. The next slide shows the site. The next slide shows the British town planner Holford, who was commissioned by the Menzies government to think about the location of the permanent Parliament House within the Parliamentary Triangle. His location for permanent Parliament House was on the lakeside, as you can see, just next to Lake Burley Griffin. He also located on Capital Hill—you cannot read it there—the royal pavilions. These were intended as pavilions in which the Queen could come and stay, in a landscape setting, when she visited Australia. Even Sir Robert Menzies, a well-known anglophile, balked at this particular position. He replaced the royal pavilions with a national centre.

1290 This became more the standard model for the NCDC proposal for Parliament House.

1295 The previous image you saw was a cover from the joint standing committee with regard to the preparations and planning for the new Parliament House. On the cover was an image of something which was prepared from the 1977 50th anniversary of the provisional Parliament House. It was a scheme for permanent Parliament House on Capital Hill. It was prepared by a local architect under the NCDC called Burt Reid. He

did an amazing job in many ways. For a temporary exhibition, he completely designed a building on the site, involving, as you can see, a cone shaped building, a flagpole in the centre and a couple of wing walls rising towards the middle. What we do not see in this was the planning, which had the chambers for the Senate and the Reps suspended in
 1300 space. It's a giant void. Irrespective of that, what we see in this image and the next image is an indication that, at least as far as the exhibition was concerned, the NCDC sanctioned image for Capital Hill was a cone-shaped building. I put this in the category of a topographical response to the hill. As we see, this was something which was deemed in terms of public display as being a potentially appropriate image for the parliament
 1305 building.

If I may, I'll just go briefly to the brief for the competition. I'll extract a couple of sentences which, in my mind, transforms this political landscape into the briefing for the entrance for the architectural competition in 1979. Pamille referred previously to Westminster and the Washington Capitol building. I'll just read the quote here:

1310 Parliament House must be more than a functional building. It should become a major national symbol in the way that the spires of Westminster or Washington's Capitol dome have become known to people all over the world.

Yes, these two buildings have different connotations. To my mind, it raises a number of issues. Why reference these two buildings in an architectural brief? There are plans of
 1315 these two buildings and a couple of other examples in the architectural brief for the competition as well. It continues:

1320 The Capitol building, massive and of a monumental scale, is approached by huge flights of steps and is surmounted by a dome of the scale of St Peter's or St Paul's. Westminster, on the other hand, while still a vast building, is more informal and romantic rather than classical...Big Ben is the most photographed and well-known part of the building, a symbol of London as well as Parliament. It has very different connotations to the Capitol dome.

They briefly discuss the provisional Parliament House, which they describe as having a different language altogether, in terms of scale:

1325 It is less powerful than Washington or Westminster yet it has its own grace and simplicity...The competitors should consciously evaluate these factors during the design process. They should question whether it is appropriate that a building in the late 20th century should use the language of bygone eras.

And then there is a question in the brief. I always find questions in briefs interesting. What's the purpose of posing a question other than to create a rhetorical atmosphere
 1330 within which the competition could be undertaken? The question is:

What would be the connotations in the mind of the visitor of a building with a monumental scale sited on the hill? Does significance necessarily mean bigness?

That's not a question. That's an instruction to the architects who were entering the competition. They are looking for something which is not like the Capitol in Washington
 1335 and does not have significant scale in a vertical sense and does not signify bigness in a vertical sense. It's something which could be informal and romantic and perhaps have an air of grace and simplicity about it.

I've looked through all the competition entries—329—and 10 AO boards and models. It surprises me that, out of all those competition entries, very few of them

1340 actually picked up on this idea of humility, which was within the brief. It's a balancing act between importance and urban scale but also an air of humility about the building. In some ways, the entry that won the competition, if I can paraphrase Don again, was probably the only one that could have won. Of the other 328 entries, I apologise, but they just did not read the brief. Thank you.

1345 **Convenor:** Thank you.

Prof. Warden: [*Presentation included slides, which are not available on this website*] I started thinking about this building really seriously, I think, in 1994, when I worked here for a year as a political studies fellow and wrote a little thing called the *Bunyip democracy*, which was about the building and its endeavours to express identity and
1350 democracy. I've been coming back, I suppose, to this building repeatedly. It's very nice to have a chance to properly reflect on it today.

When my students ask how you understand good art in worrying about cultural heritage and aesthetics, I guess the simple test is whether it holds your attention. If it's really good art, does it keep you coming back? I think this building is a genuine success
1355 in that sense—it holds our attention and we keep coming back to it.

There are three points I would really like to make. They partly derive from what Clem was speaking about on 9 May. These points go to the heart of the utopian-dystopian division that we have about cities and about buildings. Aldo referred to the horror
1360 buildings that you spend your life in, eight hours a day, as against the attempt to create a building here that would be a pleasure to be in. All of our understanding is about the dystopian cities and the utopian cities. Canberra is squarely placed as a really explicit attempt to build a utopian city.

What I really want to concentrate on in making those three points is the continuing development of this building, keeping it vital and revitalised, and to deal with
1365 the structure as it is and its context. It's partly in terms of the 90,000 or so schoolchildren who come here—I had to wade through some of them this morning to get here—and the many other visitors who come here. There must be hundreds of thousands of people who have visited the building. There's an opportunity here to create what our friend Bernard Crick calls political competence. That has a sort of instructional and educational value,
1370 let alone an entertainment value, in the building.

So my three points are, returning to the access point, about the interpretation of what is here and one specific culture within the building. Working in the building and walking around it a lot and trying to write about it, I came up with some sort of metaphors, motifs and similes. The citadel was not one of them, but it's a nice one. The
1375 Vatican was one. I don't know if that informed Aldo's thinking at some stage. But it is the idea of the cardinals and the clergy and the lay folk and the liturgies and genuflections and the vestments and texts and the altars. The dystopian one is perhaps the prison—the security, locks and bells, routine, surveillance and guards dressed in grey, I think still, the

1380 routines around food and, not least, the three- to six-year sentences that are imposed. I don't mean that flippantly. I want to come back to that.

1385 Another is the spacecraft motif, which is that this is the mother ship and the distributed empire is out there. There are docking craft, which are Comcars, that bring the captains back and forth from the outer parts of empire to the hermetically sealed spaceship against the rest. And then the supply chains into the building keep the mother ship fed, watered and ventilated.

1390 Finally, there is the castle—the keep. Perhaps this is the genuine historic lineage of the feudal model of the baronial castle. The Magna Carta is there. I want to return to that as well. There's the fortress, the walled city and, of course, the moat. This slide shows the \$1.50 postcard, and it's a good one. I think the moat does create a genuine problem about isolation, in the same way that the other four or five metaphors do as well. There is isolation within the building and with the citizens from the building. This is another slide of the road barriers. Some of the ways into the building in the parliamentary wings and the executive can transcend that, if you are delivered to the door as against trying to enter the building in other ways.

1395 I think a way around this is to try to do something much more with Federation Mall. It's a kind of a lazy space, in a way. It's put there as an assembly point. Indeed, I was there with many other people from far and away on the day of the Sorry speech. We've all been there many times before, standing in that kind of mob outside the front door. Now it works okay for that. But I think, as an approach and as a link between Old Parliament House, especially with the new gallery of democracy going in down at Old Parliament House, this can become a really strong link between the buildings. We need to do much more with it, in the same sense perhaps as the way Anzac Parade is used. There might indeed be a sort of installation—another world competition—on what to do with that space there.

1405 That slide shows some of the new signage, which I think is good. This slide shows our main way in. I like the Geoffrey Smart kind of look of this. Someone's head should pop over the top. Frank would be ideal for sort of peering over the top of the portrait. If the lights are out, you can see a bit better what's going on here. This is the experience of most people, I think, coming into the building. It's that sort of look. My car is parked down there now.

1415 The next slide shows the lift by the garbage bin and pigeon droppings. This is not a good way into the building. I agree with the pedestrian model approach more. We could link the buildings. I'm not sure how you resolve the car parking. We can make a more emphatic approach to the building as a pedestrian, and as a way of drawing what is down below towards the lake and the great institutions down there—drawing them up into the building and creating that sort of umbilical cord between the two.

This is my next point, really, which is about interpretation in here. Here we are a quarter of the way into the next term of government, and whose responsibility is this? It

1420 could well be the members themselves. But that is an empty cabinet [i.e. display case] in
 the current Parliament in the House of Representatives. Who are they? When was the
 election? This is months in. That should be attended to, I think. The next slide is the
 same. This slide shows the display case on the Senate side. I'm not sure whose
 responsibility this is. But this is to go with the curatorial expression, if you like, of what
 1425 goes on in the building. There's a problem here. That is clearly an abandoned space,
 roped off with cords of rope and bollards just lying around. It's not a good look, I think.
 If you're saying that this building is an expression of democracy and citizenship, we
 should attend to this. Employ more curators to work on this. Maybe there's already
 1430 burdened staff in the building who have to deal with this. But I think there needs to be
 more effort here.

1430 It goes to the larger point that when you are a visitor and you arrive, what do you
 get? You come in through security. It's like coming through an airport. Can we get a
 better model than that? You go into the foyer and then the rather mysterious place of the
 Great Hall. I know things go on there, including graduations from my own university.
 But it's a bit of a strange, empty and dark space most of the time. I think the cut-out of
 1435 the tapestry is a mistake. I think the tapestry should be completed and dropped in that
 bottom corner. Lets make that a discussion point. With the interpretation up in the main
 public areas of the artwork, the four cornerstone documents, there is incoherence around
 the curation there. I think that can be done in a much more inspired and coherent way. So
 I think there are curatorial answers to some of these questions.

1440 The final point is that the isolation in the building, I think, assists in creating a
 mentality in the parliamentarians here that they are delivered into this building and they
 are not properly part of the city. The building's relationship to the city is too isolated. It's
 back to that prison-spaceship metaphor. The city needs to be looked after better, I think,
 in terms of attitudes and the sort of public expressions at the end of a parliamentary
 1445 sitting period. How pleased they are to leave. This is not good for Canberra and not good,
 I think, for the parliament to have that particular sort of cultural attitude by its main
 inhabitants to the building and the city.

Convenor: Thank you very much for that. Our fifth speaker is David.

Prof. Tait: Thanks very much for inviting me. I'd like to make a few remarks about
 1450 what I see to be John Uhr's fundamental project, which is about strengthening
 parliamentary democracy. I'll make a few comments about the ways in which the
 building and its environment has supported that.

1455 I'd like to first start, though, by saying that my entry to the building is much more
 pleasant and relaxing. I bike up the hill, find a tree, chain my bike to it and then walk past
 the beautiful lake, having to go around and then slowly through the entrances. So it
 actually reminds me rather more of Islamic architecture, where your mood is shaped by
 the procession through the space. I think that's a very important thing that this building is
 actually able to do. There's not a sort of dramatic confrontation. You don't stand there

1460 and look at it. You move through the space. It's in that moving that I think you somehow transform your mentality. So that's one of the things I appreciate about it.

1465 I'd like to use a phrase that Burley Griffin used when he was talking about one of the other major institutions that he was proposing for the axis. And that is the national stadium, which was to be just over the other side of the lake. The importance of that, he said, was that the roar of the crowd could be heard by their elected representatives. I think when we are talking about parliamentary democracy, we need to think about the roar of the crowd and how that can be heard and filtered and understood. I think there is a range of ways in which this has been achieved.

1470 In the very early days of the old Melbourne Parliament, there was a debate late at night in the Senate, the house of review, looking at the first Commonwealth census. Some of the Protestants there thought it might be a good idea to find out about some of their Papist neighbours and what they were up to. They proposed a question in the census on whether or not you were a teetotaler. We've talked about the importance of some of the drinking holes around Parliament and, in particular, the Australian philosopher Herodotus and how he thought that there was a link between passion and insight—that you have conviviality one day and policy development the next. This particular senator came into an evening's sitting of the Senate and said, 'Look, this question on being a teetotaler, what does it mean? I'm a teetotaler in between drinks'. So there was a kind of insight that came out of the type of conviviality, the roar of the crowd, within the drinking holes.

1480 But there's also the roar of the crowd involved in other uses of the space. The University of Canberra uses this space for graduations. When students, particularly from overseas, take photos of the place, they have their personal link with the building. They have a photo of themselves with the Parliament behind them. Some come from countries where parliamentary democracy might not be as strong. So there's something that embraces and brings in the whole Canberra community to this place.

1490 Thirdly, going out a bit, there are the lawns below and Federation Mall. I was there too for the apology speech. I thought at least one of them was good. But I was also there for the vigil for Van Nguyen. There I met most of the current cabinet, or at least I saw them. I think that was a moment of tragedy that united people from all around the nation. But particularly the people from Canberra came to that site. It was very important to be able to stand in the shadow of Parliament and talk about a fundamental matter of life and death and how people shared these values and were horrified by what they saw was happening.

1495 If we go further down the hill—this is something which I think is probably unique, or certainly distinctive—there is Old Parliament House. There's something amazing about having the other, the shadow, the predecessor there, almost confronting, holding accountable the new building. When you go around with Michael Richards and he explains the rich history, the tapestry, and finally takes you into where the Prime Minister's secretary was, and you see this tiny broom closet, you realise the dramatic

1500 change that has come about with this new building. So I think when we're talking about
this building, we always have to think about the other—that other building which stands
there and confronts, embraces and engages with this new building. It does say something
about Australia's history, that both buildings are there.

1505 Finally, I'd like to make a modest suggestion about how the Parliament might be
used if an indirect election for President is held. I think we could learn a bit from the way
in which Germans run their presidential election—not just having politicians but all sorts
of celebrities, film stars and so on engaged. Rather than everybody coming to Canberra,
what I would suggest is that we have a 3D video link to all the other state parliaments
around Australia and all the celebrities gather in those places and somehow this building
1510 then becomes the centre of the nation. Thank you.

Convenor: Thank you. Tom Duncan is next.

Mr Duncan: I'm going to use my short presentation time to concentrate on the
chamber and the subject of future possibilities. The chamber for me is my office. Ian and
Harry and Don, when he was working there, and Rosemary and President Reid—we
1515 spent a lot of our time in the chamber. We think it is integral to the working of the
Parliament.

I was trying to answer the question posed in the flyer—does architecture impact
on the parliamentary culture and performance? I was looking at the size of the chamber
and the effect that it has had on the dynamics. In a speech given earlier this year,
1520 Professor Macintyre quoted Barry Jones as saying in relation to the House of
Representatives chamber that members are too remote to see the whites of their
opponents' eyes. He also quoted Winston Churchill as saying that a small chamber meant
that important speeches were delivered to a congested House and ministers needed to be
able to command the space and draw strength from the tension.

1525 I thought I'd ask the question: what is the optimal size of a chamber? I should
point out that I'm an economist, so I always like to get statistics. Unfortunately, the
projector is not working. I had a table which shows—my fellow panellists will have the
table there—the details of the size of most of the chambers around Australia as well as
the UK House of Commons and the New Zealand Parliament. In the table, I've calculated
1530 how much area each member has in each jurisdiction's chamber. Not surprisingly, the
UK House of Commons tops the list as having the smallest space for each member. The
technology is now working. There is the table. The relatively recently built Northern
Territory legislature has the largest space for each member, which proves the point that
everything is big in the Territory. The figures show that the move from the Old
1535 Parliament House to the new Parliament House appears to have resulted in a doubling of
the space for members in the House of Representatives. I don't know if this is true for the
Senate. Unfortunately, I didn't get the figures from Michael for the Senate, but I suspect
that it is. Harry.

**“Seeing the whites of their opponent’s eyes”
Size of Chambers**

1540

Parliament	Length (metres)	Width (metres)	Total area (sq metres)	No of MPs	Area per MP (sq metres)
United Kingdom – House of Commons	20.7	14	289.8	646	0.45
NSW – Legislative Assembly	14.6	8.9	129.9	93	1.4
House of Representatives – Old Parliament House	14	16	224	148	1.5
Victoria – Legislative Assembly	12	11.4	136.8	88	1.6
New Zealand – House of Representatives	19.6	12	235	121	1.9
Queensland	17	11	187	89	2.1
Western Australia – Legislative Assembly	13	10.2	132.6	57	2.3
Victoria – Legislative Council	10.1	10	100	40	2.5
NSW – Legislative Council	11.8	10.1	119.2	42	2.8
South Australia – House of Assembly	11.6	12.4	143.8	47	3.1
Senate	13.2	18.9	249.5	76	3.3
House of Representatives – New Parliament House	23.7	23.7	561.7	150	3.7
Tasmania – Legislative Council	10	6.5	65	15	4.3
Tasmania – House of Assembly	13.3	11.2	149	25	5.96
South Australia – Legislative Council	14.9	9.1	135.6	22	6.2
Australian Capital Territory	16.1	8.8	141.7	17	8.3
Northern Territory	19	20	380	25	15.2

Mr Evans: You have the figures there.

Mr Duncan: But not for the Old Parliament House. It seems that Barry Jones has some basis for his comment. But he was not the only member with a view on the size of the chamber. Ian Harris, in a paper given in 2003, entitled ‘Attempts to Encourage
1545 Interactive Debate in the Australian House of Representatives’, noted that a former Speaker, the right honourable Ian Sinclair, was of the view that many members were too removed for what he described as the prime parliamentary triangle of Speaker, Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition. Mr Sinclair suggested as a remedy moving the table to a more central point in the chamber. Ian noted that the proposal was not taken up
1550 by subsequent Speakers.

Another comment I want to make relates to the configuration of seats and desks in the chamber. One of the comments I regularly hear from visitors to parliaments, other than when they view question time, is, ‘Where are all the members?’ I’m sure Harry and Ian have fielded similar questions. I don’t intend to try to answer that question. But I
1555 want to pose the question as to whether the chamber should have desks for ministers and shadow ministers. In other words, are we sending a message to the executive and their shadows that they need not be in the chamber? I note that the architects may have had little say in this decision. Ric confirmed that this morning. I should point out that, of the nine lower house legislatures in Australia, only three do not have desks for ministers.
1560 There is the House of Representatives, of course, the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, the Victorian Legislative Assembly and, of course, the House of Commons, from where we derive many of our practices. But the other six Australian legislatures—the ACT, my chamber; the Northern Territory; the Queensland; the South Australian; the Tasmanian; and the Western Australian—all have desks, as do the Canadian House of
1565 Commons, the New Zealand House of Representatives and, indeed, the Lok Sabha in India.

Would it make a difference if there were desks for ministers? I am not qualified to answer that question. I know that from my experience in the ACT Legislative Assembly there are often many ministers in the chamber during periods of sittings and not question
1570 time. One minister has remarked to me that he brings his large stack of briefs and correspondence into the chamber and works away at it on his desk because it’s the only time he can get through them without interruption. Whilst that is hardly an endorsement for attending the chamber to listen to or participate in debates, it nevertheless means that there are often several ministers present. When something controversial or noteworthy
1575 occurs in the proceedings, I note that ministers do listen and sometimes are drawn to participate. So perhaps we should invite Ric, Aldo and Hal back to see whether they do want to fiddle with those chamber designs and see what kind of chamber they might want to design for us.

The final point, if I have the time, is about artworks. This building has some
1580 beautiful artworks scattered throughout its corridors, offices and outer spaces, with some notable exceptions—the two chambers and these committee rooms. The Legislative Assembly for the ACT has the same firm of architects as for the New Parliament House.

Hal Guida is sitting next to me. We've had many discussions. An art chamber has a similar style as a Senate and the House of Representatives chamber. Several years ago, I was showing a visiting Queensland parliamentary delegation an art chamber. One member observed that what the chamber needed was some good artworks hanging on the walls. Since then I've often wondered why no artworks were placed in the chamber. Certainly in the South Australian House of Assembly and the Tasmanian Legislative Council, to name but two, there are several artworks hung in the chamber. I'm also aware of some US legislatures.

I've recently been reading a book by Alain de Botton entitled *The architecture of happiness*. In that book, the author makes the point that, as a society, we design our buildings and place beautiful artworks in them to assist us to bring out our best qualities. If we were to apply this sentiment to the chambers of parliaments, the argument would probably be put that members would draw inspiration and be enriched by the presence of artworks in the chamber and that it would make them consider higher ideals and principles when undertaking their important duties. Presumably it would also mean they would think less about politics. To finish up, maybe we also need to get Pamille back and get her to finish the job in the chambers and the committee rooms.

Convenor: Thank you, Tom. Harry, you're the last of the presentations.

Prof. Warden: Harry raised a very bicameral point with me. With a slip of the tongue, I put the exhibition space in the Senate side rather than the House of Representatives side that I was commenting on.

Mr Evans: The photos of the senators are all in place. There's a very nice exhibition on the Senate side. I think we should be accurate.

Convenor: This is coming out of your five minutes, Harry.

Mr Evans: When we moved up to this building, the Senate was operating on standing orders that had been drawn up and adopted in 1903. In the year after we came here, they adopted a new set of rewritten standing orders. They adopted them without debate, something I thought was totally impossible. I thought it would take a great deal of wrangling and difficulty to try to get them to adopt a new set of standing orders.

Since that time, those standing orders have been amended more often than the old ones were amended in the previous 80-odd years. I sometimes wonder whether the atmosphere of the new building has sort of stimulated a readiness to change things. Bernard Crick, who was referred to earlier—one of the great political scientists of the world who wrote a classic book called *The reform of parliament*—said that the dark and gloomy neo-gothic pile of Westminster had an inhibiting effect on the adoption of parliamentary reform in that place. It reminded everybody that they were subject to an ancient feudal monarchy rather than citizens of a republic. It had a crushing effect on the willingness to change because it focused on a romantically reconstructed past. He was very incensed when his publishers put a picture of the palace of Westminster on the front

of his book because he thought that was the exact opposite of what he wanted to say about the institution.

I wonder if we had adopted a different style of architecture it would have had a similar inhibiting effect. The old building was a very colonial building. It looked like all-purpose British colonial style adopted for Cape Town, the Bahamas, Canberra or wherever. It had the imperial arms out the front, something that led to some dispute from time to time. When we were down there, Westminster was the touchstone of everything—‘What do they do at Westminster?’ That seemed to disappear when we got up here. Maybe it was a coincidence. Maybe this building, with its space and openness and its slightly neoclassical references but its basic modernity, has had an effect on the willingness of people to think of us as going our own way and adopting changes. I don’t know the answer to that, but it may well have had some effect.

We’ve talked about it having a negative effect on the public. Somebody should do a survey to see what the public reaction to this building really is, not what we think it is. We think we get depressed by the sight of the car park and so on and so forth, but is that really the reaction of people who come here? I think we focus too much on democratic interaction and trying to be all very democratic. Maybe the public who come here would have been inclined to look at the old building and say, ‘Are the rabbits who live in this rabbit warren really capable of solving our problems for us?’ Maybe they look at this building and think, ‘This is obviously a building designed for statespersons. Maybe we can have a bit of confidence that the people who are operating here are capable of solving the big problems that we have to grapple with’. In other words, there’s a certain looking up in every society. Maybe the building facilitates the appropriate level of that.

So there you go. I’m in the company of academics. Like a good academic, I’ve posed questions without answers. But I think I’ve suggested what my answers are.

Convenor: Thank you for that. Now we are in a time of open discussion. I’m happy for any of the panellists to comment on each other’s thoughts. Indeed, I invite the panellists from the earlier session to do so also. Is there anyone with a burning issue they want to take up? I suppose one thing that came to me, listening to those contributions, was the need—again, I’d be interested in the views of those responsible for the design—to balance the symbolism and monumentalism. which was referred to at one level quite overtly in the brief that Andrew was talking about, with a degree of modesty and almost humbleness in the final outcome. Is there a tension in trying to meet that with the image of the fortified, walled city or the citadel that Chris was talking about? I suppose the question is: was there an alternative resolution of the design problem,? Is the parliament we now have the only one we are ever likely to get?

Mr Beer: Part of the problem is that the building is in the wrong place. They’ve done a very good job with the brief they were given. But the problem was an actual planning problem, in that it was put in the wrong place to start with. As I said, there are probably things you could do to address that.

Mr Guida: I was just interested that we had pedestrian distance, citadel, spaceship and moats all cited, which would have resulted with any of the competition winners. We've just heard that the building is in the wrong place. It *is* in its place. Regardless of this disengagement that has been identified, you get 90,000 students here every year. I live quite near here. I see visitors every time I walk to the Parliament and walk through the gardens and the mall down to the provisional Parliament and the lakefront. I see engagement by people every time I do that, even if I take the bicycle. So, yes, it is disengaged from the fabric, if you will, of the city. That was purposeful. It was a decision by parliamentarians using their judgement. It's not dissimilar to settings of other parliamentary facilities in other parts of the world, where a little bit of distance is a thankful thing.

Convenor: It's in contrast to most of the other Australian parliaments, I suppose. That's one observation. An exception is perhaps Western Australia, where the planners have seen the wisdom of putting a freeway between the city and the parliament. All of the other Australian parliaments are within the city. One thing that strikes me is the ease with which—I return to a point I was making earlier—members of parliament can leave that building, go to the other side of the road, literally and metaphorically, and be engaged in the community. That's much harder, I think, in Canberra. But the question of whether distance is a good thing is perhaps an interesting one.

Dr Hutson: I think it's inevitable that you're going to have distance. Canberra is not a city of pedestrians. The land bridge or Federation Mall is never going to be populated except under extraordinary events. During the course of the design competition, a number of entrants commented on how ridiculous a land bridge was going to be, because the population of Australia was not large enough to accommodate and occupy that space. In Canberra, the Parliamentary Triangle and the location of Parliament House is not really about an engagement with a city as such. It's a motif. People occupy and walk around and maybe drive around this motif. They drive from various points within it, as tourists would. They very rarely have a desire to wander around. I can't remember the name of the pedestrian connection from the gallery to the library that goes past the High Court. Even on lovely days in the middle of the school holidays there's hardly anybody on it. You'd imagine that would be a very popular way of getting from one side to the other. No. Everyone jumps in their car and drives to the library.

Convenor: There were lots of people on skateboards the last time I was there.

Mr Guida: I just heard a humorous but true story that might answer the question of the Mall. As I said, I walked from the mall down to the lakefront. One hot summer day about two years ago, I ran into a couple who were walking around looking a little bewildered. I came up to them and said, 'Can I help you? You are obviously looking for some assistance'. They said, 'Well, we're looking for Federation Mall'. I said, 'Well, this is Federation Mall'. They looked, scratched their head and said, 'Well, where are all the shops?' I said, 'What do you mean?' They said, 'Well, we're from Canada and a mall is a big shopping place. We thought maybe it was under all this grass'.

Mr Evans: We've got to get away from shopping, though.

Ms Berg: I think the number of things that have just been said come from a whole series of different directions. We need to somehow in our minds both accept and give value to the experiences and impressions people have had of momentary experience in this building. But at the same time in this kind of a forum we need to understand whether those experiences come from unfortunate changes since the time of the planning or whether they're an actual outcome of either the brief or the planning. I think understandably we have a real mixture of a whole series of things here. I'd just like to make a very few quick comments in response.

I think it would be very interesting to hear what some of the participants in the audience think about the difference between thinking that something is well-engaged as a political and symbolic institution, merely because it has the drycleaners and a café next door, as opposed to being well-engaged because it's given precedence of place in a symbolic sequence within a city. As we've just said, Canberra is a planned city. It's not a city which has grown up over time through accretion. The reason why both through decision and through planning we have a major public building on this site, which, after all, Griffin expected to have on this site, whether it was the Parliament or not, needs to be thought about.

I think also in a whole series of things, when this building was briefed and designed, you did walk up to the front door. There was an attendant who opened the front door to you and you could walk in. So the current process of having to be funnelled in lines around a mysterious process through metal detectors is not part of the original experience of this building. It's not something that makes any of us happy. We have to think that through. Similarly, with the notion of citadel caused by terrorism et cetera, we will go through the discussion in our society about whether we're willing to take more risks with terrorist action in order not to continually be separated et cetera. That's a pretty hard decision for people to take, but we may do that in the next decade after experiencing this one. That's something which has beset this building.

I think many of the things that have been said about this building assume that the building and the Parliament and the members and the processes are self-referential. If we ask, 'Why isn't the art cartoon-based and lively and about political process?', it is because there's a decision in all of those series of papers and meetings and joint standing committees and other committees that the art about this building would not be about the politicians and political process in a narrow view. The art in this building would be about the big issues of: Who are we? What is our pluralism? What does that mean? What is our diversity? The very thing that's explained in the quote put up by Alain de Botton about what art does is that it is meant to be the precept to us about what the actions of the people who are privileged to be in this building as members are meant to be. It's like the **wording to the underworld** that gives us a sense of precedence before we walk in the door.

Quotes were mentioned as an essential part of what we'd planned in terms of how things spoke to people in this building—that is, not just visual images but also this amazing compendium of quotations, which was a commission to Manning Clark and researchers to prepare. The brief for it said, 'These are quotations from history, from past leaders of this country, from literature, from song. They are the words that need to be in the hearts and minds of the Australian people as they come to this place'. While that document was fully approved by the joint standing committee for every one of those to be able to be used in the building, when the architects put the proposals forward where those quotes were meant to be incised into the white walls of the members' halls with great abandon and richness, the parliamentarians on the joint standing committee made the decision that they could not take the responsibility for deciding what quotes would be permanently placed in the building, whether in the Members Hall or the centre of the reception hall floor. That then meant that they could only be put in display cases.

I'm using these as examples of how the difference between the clarity of relationships, which also gave a clarity of use of spaces, has inevitably been truncated and blockaded over time into a very imperfect and episodic sense of the way the building works.

I'll say two more quick things and then I'll be quiet. There are big displays along the first floor of public circulation, where the Senate display is, for example. They have always been a matter of some degree of vigorous discussion, because the briefing for displays in the Parliament was very limited, as Don knows, in terms of a display place. There was a very clear instruction implicit in the brief that said, 'Parliament House isn't a display place. This is a working building. It's not a place where we show ourselves—our history, our past, other things'. So during the design—I think the other architects would agree—we had the fervent hope and advocated for the Old Parliament House to become the teaching place about our past history, both parliamentary and otherwise, and that there would be a nerve cord linkage between that building and this building, where this was the working parliament. Therefore, there would be much less of a sense of putting forward background displays.

So those public spaces were meant to function in a very different way than what we have called since that time the cork and bottle displays, which don't give you the sense of what's there. So those areas had handmade commissioned rugs and seating areas for members of the parliament to move through. That is of a very different character than what we have now.

I guess I'll conclude with the notion of intensifying, clarifying and refining—in use as well as in design—this building as the working parliament. The reason there were no works of art in the chambers—I realise that what you have said is in part tongue in cheek, but it is also asking a bigger question—is that, as opposed to thinking of the chamber as a place where a member would come in with his correspondence to work through it because he never got disturbed, our view, as the architects, was that this was the most potent and important place because the life of the nation was being determined and formulated here. So the working places—that is, the two chambers—were intended

1785 to be like this committee room, a place where there were no attendant images, because
 what was important was what was being discussed, what was being debated and what
 was being decided, which was going to be the future of all of us.

I'm actually grateful for many of the things that have been said, because I think it
 shows the potency of what we desperately need to do if we love and critique and feel
 1790 strongly about having a building like this. Rather than allowing the ideas to get more and
 more truncated and chopped up and marginalised through successive misunderstood
 things, we need to do what is referred to as curatorial care. It is not just curatorial; it is
 curatorial in ideas. We need to say, 'How do we continue to re-examine and reaffirm? If
 we are not going to reaffirm, how do we really change in substantial ways the way this
 1795 building speaks to members and to outsiders and to ourselves?' It's perhaps that process
 of an accidental and unintended benign neglect that eventually comes back to a potency
 of care and debate.

Convenor: Thank you for that.

Mr Harris: I've had a fair say. I'll make this brief. Of course I'm concerned about
 1800 access and engagement with the city of Canberra. But I'm more concerned about
 engagement with Australia and the people of Australia and making sure that we do
 everything possible to make this institution relevant to the needs of the people of
 Australia. We use this building in just about all of our promotional material. Some of you
 will have got a copy this morning of the latest *About the House* magazine, which we
 1805 bring out about four times a year. It displays very prominently on that. I'd like to come
 back to that point in a minute in relation to something David said. It also figures largely
 in our television programs that Sky channel show for us throughout Australia and
 throughout the Pacific. So I think as a symbol it is linking us with the people of Australia.

The second point I'd like to make relates to David's point about the focal point of
 1810 the building for the nation. Something that has impressed me greatly is that in moments
 of great tragedy, such as the Bali bombing victims and the Sea King helicopter disaster,
 the Great Hall was the centre of focus of the nation's grief. I think it will also probably be
 the centre of focus of the nation's celebrations when the Olympic athletes return. So in
 great national issues, this building has become a focal point where all of Australia can
 1815 concentrate. Thank you.

Convenor: Thank you. I think we've run out of time. It's probably time to invite
 some comments from the audience. We've heard a bit in our presentations about access
 and security and so on. We've heard a bit about the disposition of the chambers. The
 other thing that I was keen to raise was touched on briefly this morning. It's the
 1820 relationship between the legislature and the executive and the location of the executive
 physically in the building. I suppose with those three topics in mind, I'd be very keen to
 hear some thoughts from the audience.

Mr Weglarz: I'm an interested member of the public. On the access versus security
 issue, I think one of the fundamental dynamics that work there is the ideological or

1825 romantic view we have of ourselves as Australians as not being hierarchical, as being
 very open, easygoing people versus, I think, what the sad reality is, which is that we are
 very security conscious, very status conscious and very hierarchical. So we create these
 briefs for these beautiful buildings, for these beautiful ideals, and then we have to live
 1830 from the very beginning of Parliament House you had the greenery over the hill to
 represent the link to the people. But on top of that, of course, they had to plonk that great
 big flagpole. As well as that, when Parliament House first opened up, as a little vignette,
 we tried to have a barbecue on it. 'I'm sorry. You guys will have to move on. Security
 issues'. We tried to have a picnic there. 'Oh, no. Security issues'. So you can walk briefly
 1835 across it as an invited guest into the high status area, like a rich person opening up their
 doors for an open day on one of those heritage tours, but it's not really the essence and
 substance of a non-hierarchical approach.

On the cycling, I enjoy cycling up here as well. But you have to be careful. A
 number of times when I've been working up here on the House, security guards have
 1840 chased me down all the way back to my office to tell me that having a bicycle parked
 against a tree outside Parliament House is a major security issue.

On a positive note, with Federation Mall, one of the more pleasant experiences
 I've had there is actually playing games of football there—soccer, touch footy and what
 not. That goes back to Burley Griffin's earlier idea of being close to sport. So sport has
 1845 come to Parliament House in spite of Parliament House and is there anyway. In short, I
 think it just reflects, whether it's a sad reality or a good thing, that we do have these
 ideals about ourselves that we cannot measure up to. But it does reflect that dichotomy.

Convenor: Thank you.

Dr Larmour: I'm also from the ANU. Two things are related. One is the moat.
 1850 There's also between the moat and National Circuit a sort of penumbra of buildings,
 some of which are government offices and so on. Increasingly, they are heads of lobby
 groups and peak bodies and accountancy firms and so on, who are in a sort of corporatist
 relationship with this place, not a democratic one. The original problematic was
 1855 representative democracy versus participatory democracy. But there's also this other
 thing. This is a place where industry comes to get its agenda seen to. If we want to think
 about Parliament, we should not just stop at the moat. We should stop at the institutions
 camped outside the moat, which are there wanting and presumably effectively achieving
 their goals.

Convenor: Thank you.

Mr Richards: I want to make two quick points. I'd also challenge this idea that we're
 1860 isolated. I think the link to the rest of the Parliamentary Triangle and the collecting
 institutions, which really are what bring people from outside Canberra to Canberra, is a
 strong one. Federation Mall is an unfinished project if you compare it to Anzac Parade.
 The War Memorial is just as remote, if you like, and yet there is that sense of connection.

1865 So Federation Mall needs to be worked on. The future of Old Parliament House is that it will be focused on just one thing—the story of Australian democracy—instead of being a bit schizophrenic in its approach, although it worked for the 10 years or so that we had the different approach as well. The future for building that sort of connection is really strong.

1870 Another point I'd make is just a passing comment. The people who ran my building when it was the Parliament House were very sensible people. They were very conscious of all these issues. When they had to introduce a security entrance in the 1970s, you had to come in that way, but they preserved the exit from King's Hall. So no matter who you were—member of the public, lobbyist, parliamentarian, whatever—as you left
1875 the building, an attendant opened the door and you walked out on those steps and you felt as if you owned the building. I actually think that's a compromise that I would strongly urge on this building if it were thinkable.

Dr Moore: The second thing that I noticed when I walked into this room was the gender imbalance of the panel. I wish to ask you: is this building a masculinist building?

1880 **Convenor:** Can I say slightly in defence that we did give serious consideration to the gender balance as we were trying to put the panel together. For various reasons, we were unable to do any better than we have. So it was thought of. Apologies.

Dr Moore: There's a reason for that.

1885 **Convenor:** Possibly, yes. Does anyone want to respond to whether the building is a masculine building?

Mr Beer: I've read a PhD thesis on that topic. I read a very good PhD thesis that deals in part with that topic. It deals with things like childcare centres, family relationships and the sort of fly-in, fly-out parliamentarian lifestyle and that sort of thing. I agree. I'd tend to agree with you on that.

1890 **Ms Marshall:** I'm just wondering, particularly for Harry, how this building has improved the quality of deliberation in the House as opposed to the quality of deliberation in the House or Senate from the old building.

1895 **Mr Evans:** Well, I said the other day that coming to the building and finding they had very large offices with generous facilities and so on made members of parliament think they must be important. People thought I was joking or being rude, but I was not. I think there's been an effect of this building in making people concentrate more on their role as legislators and their role as members of parliament rather than just larrikin participants in a street brawl. The street brawl still goes on in question time, which is very unfortunate, but I think the individual member of parliament has become more conscious
1900 of their role in the system as a legislator. They have to look at clauses in bills and think, 'Is this really a good idea?' And so on. So I think it's had some effect. Now it could be just a coincidence. That just happened after 1988 by coincidence. But I have a feeling

1905 that having their offices with their staff here, as somebody mentioned before, for the first time, they have started to think of themselves more as significant legislators in the government system.

Convenor: Ian, did you want to comment on that? I was wondering if there are any former members in the audience who want to reflect their thoughts.

1910 **Mr Harris:** Briefly, I agree with what Harry says. I'll add that the committee meeting facilities in this room are quite magnificent. Members are better able to undertake their committee responsibilities much more seriously. The Parliamentary Library, of course, is magnificently housed. It helps members with their deliberations.

Convenor: Do any former members want to comment on that? No. Perhaps one last observation.

1915 **Mr Thompson:** On very similar subject matter, I certainly don't begrudge the members their decent offices. I've worked around the Victorian, ACT and New Zealand parliaments. I certainly don't begrudge the members and senators quite decent, adequate accommodation. I've only recently come back from New Zealand. Just on the sense of
1920 bustle and members moving around and talking to each other during sittings and between sittings and after sittings, that is less evident here. I don't have a good solution to it. It just seems to me that there's a healthy degree of camaraderie, which is harder to generate with such big spaces where people can move back to their offices so quickly. I'll just leave that as an unfinished part of the business in what I otherwise regard as an incredibly successful building.

1925 **Convenor:** I think we might take that unfinished business as the finish of our business. We've happened to come neatly to a point reflecting very much on strengthening parliamentary democracy, which is the theme at the core of the session today. I'm going to hand over to John Uhr in a minute. Before I do that, I'll ask you to thank the panellists again. I'm also going to add my thanks to John and to Lynette in particular, and others, I'm sure, for the hard work they've put in to making this the
1930 success it's been. I've found it a terrific session and very productive. There are lots of new ideas for me to go away with. I hope that certainly members of the panel as well as the audience have done the same. With that, I'll ask you to once again thank the members of the panel up here. Then I'll hand over to John Uhr.

1935 **Convenor (Prof. Uhr):** Thanks, Clem. Our time is up. Of course, it's incomplete. We have a lot more that we could discuss and a lot more that we could learn from one another. That was part of the intention—just to run a half-day session or roundtable to leave lots of loose threads that we can try and weave together later on, try and work out where we want to go and where we want to take these sorts of conversations. It was a kind of experiment when Harry, Ian and I thought about the possibility of using the 20th
1940 anniversary to try and explore more generally the relationship between parliamentary buildings and parliamentary business. We were not certain that we would have the kind of support that we've got from the audience today and, indeed, whether we could actually

gather such a professional group of panellists together. We have been able to do that. I think that has given us the confidence. We've been strengthened, in at least one way, that we can take this forward.

I've been struck by the moving metaphor this morning—moving from Old Parliament House to New Parliament House and moving around this building, moving into the building, using the art to help you move around the building and navigate. There are lots of ways in which moving has really set the tone for today. I've been quite moved myself by the discussions, by drawing upon the experience of others who've been so closely involved. So it's not just a gathering of intelligence and information. It is actually learning more about the kind of design and the operational culture of this important part of our democracy.

I have to thank the Australian Research Council because they bankrolled us. They are an important institution. I'm moved by them all the time. They've also helped us with lunch outside. So in a minute I will invite you to move outside and, those of you who have time, to take advantage of the lunch. I have to thank Ian and Harry for their support over the first 12 to 15 months of this project and highlighting the importance of this particular theme, because it is slightly adventurous and one that I can imagine other clerks would not have the same relish for. The staff they supervise have helped us so much. That has been wonderful.

Lynette Mollard was seconded from Parliament across to the ANU to help get all the practicalities of this particular big idea sorted so that it actually works out in practice. That's wonderful. Rachel McGrath-Kerr, the administrator of the Parliamentary Studies Centre, has been an absolute powerhouse of strength to me in making sure that a plan that arose seven or eight months ago actually did come to fruition. That is good. Hayley Thorpe has been with us from the Crawford School today helping quietly to make sure things moved forward. Without that, things would not have happened.

There is Terry and Clem. Terry, of course, has been so involved with the process. He has a kind of historic professionalism. Clem, in a way, is an outsider. He comes in from academic political science. They are almost a perfect combination. I think we're in their debt for holding it together this way.

The panellists, of course, are very busy people. I didn't think I could get them for half a day. Add up their experience and just think of how valuable this has been. I as a researcher could have tried to interview each of them, but here is this wonderful opportunity where we now have them speaking on the public record and the interviews, as it were, available to all of us.

I thank the audience. We would not have had this and the spark, the ability to try to communicate and draw some lessons from the building, unless there were people willing to not only listen but also challenge. So that is good.

Where do we take this now? Ian and Harry, one way we take it is by noting that this is all being recorded. There will be a transcript of this roundtable up on the Parliamentary Studies Centre website. There are lots more themes and issues that we can try and tease out and take forward, so it's a matter of watching that space, the
1985 Parliamentary Studies Centre website space. There's also the prospect of a kind of video of this important discussion. Nothing will take place without the consent of the panellists, but that's something that we might look to as well.

If there is nothing further to be said, and I don't think there is, I invite you to give one last round of applause to the panellists. Then we'll move out to lunch.

1990

Roundtable adjourned at 12.38 pm.