

10th September 2009

To: Dr Brian Gordon
Principal Research Officer
Community Development and Justice Standing Committee
Legislative Assembly
WA

Dear Dr Gordon,

I would like to take this opportunity of submitting my views on the 'Inside Australia' Lake Ballard sculptures.

I feel that some context may help, so bear with me here. I am in my 60s and a long term computer person ie. I'm not an "arty" person by nature.

My de facto and I have been together for 34 years, and she has a first degree in Fine Art and a doctorate in Design History, and currently holds a chair at one of our local universities. Over the past 34 years she has dragged me to see some seriously dodgy art (sometimes my description is far less polite) - at views, Galleries, Degree shows, and at exhibitions in the UK, Europe and now in Australia. Far too often these were exhibitions (etc) of things that frankly made no sense to me. Often they didn't even look nice to my eyes.

So, when in 2004 she suggested that we (plus our teenage son) took a coach for a day to Kalgoorlie, and then the next day another long trip out to a dried up lake bed a further 180kms north (50kms of which was on a dirt road) and then of course with the whole trip in reverse back to Perth the next day, in order to see some sculpture I really thought that she was pushing her luck to a new boundary.

I was wrong. Totally and utterly wrong.

My view of the installation is that it has to be one of the most wonderful piece of ART that I have ever seen. I was absolutely stunned by the concept and the implementation.

In fact, we both thought it was so good, that in 2007 we drove there from Perth for a second visit. In large part this was so we could spend longer walking slowly around the installation appreciating the effect. (Which really increases the further out onto the Lake you walk - and we went right out until we could see no sign of any sculptures beyond where we were.)

To drive that far from Perth (getting on for 1,600kms return trip) has to send a message about how impressed we both were with 'Inside Australia'.

Which of course leads on to the Committee's Inquiry.

In making both of these journeys (once on an organised trip - Goldfields Coach Tours, the other in our own car) we have injected a reasonable number of tourist dollars into Kalgoorlie and Menzies. (And some places in between Perth and Kalgoorlie). We needed places to stay, we needed to eat, we needed to refresh, we needed fuel, we visited other places, and we did some assorted shopping. Had 'Inside Australia' not been there, then I doubt very much that we'd have gone to Kalgoorlie, and even if we had, taking a further 180km drive onwards and past Menzies would have been improbable in the extreme.

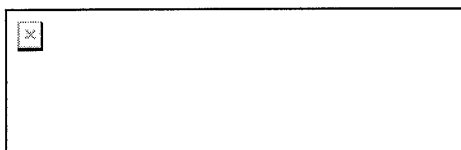
It is a very effective tourist magnet.

The art itself has obviously, for me, managed to "work". It has shown me that odd and obscure art in odd and even more obscure places can enrich the soul - and the commissioning agency (agencies?) must be both congratulated and encouraged to continue their policies.

Others will be in a better position than I am to know what encouragement and help (of all sorts) can appropriately be given to the Shire of Menzies and the local community - but my view is firmly that the Committee should recommend that the fullest permitted assistance and support should given.

Western Australia is big and it is beautiful, but sometimes the scale can be overwhelming. Unless visitors have a goal towards which to travel, then they may not make the journey. This extraordinary installation provides either a goal (or a waystation) that when looked after and managed well can only serve to assist the local and State economy.

Yours etc



Stephen Carter