I, Geoffrey London, of level 2, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne in the state of Victoria, government architect, say as follows: I am the government architect for the state of Victoria. I attend before the committee in my capacity as a member of the Victorian public service. I have been provided with a copy of the code of conduct for Victorian public sector employees (No 1) 2007; the government’s guidelines for appearing before state parliamentary committees; and Parliament’s guidelines on the tights and responsibilities of witnesses. I make this statement from my own knowledge save where otherwise indicated.

My qualifications are: bachelor of architecture from the University of Western Australia; bachelor of arts in fine arts from the Western Australian Institute of Technology; graduate diploma in art and design from the Western Australian Institute of Technology, and graduate diploma (AA) history and theory from the architectural association graduate school in London.

I was appointed to the position of government architect on 28 July 2008. In addition to that role I also currently hold the following positions: Winthrop Professor of Architecture at the University of Western Australia since 1992; life fellow of the Australian Institute of Architects since 2005; member of the Australian Research Council’s College of Experts, since 2008; honorary fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Architects from this year; chair of the Australian Institute of Australia’s Venice Biennale Committee, and chair of the AIA’s Architecture Australia Editorial Advisory Committee.

I have previously held the following positions: I have been a professorial fellow at the University of Melbourne from 2003 to 2009, and I was government architect of Western Australia prior to assuming this position from 2004 to 2008. Between 1989 and 1996: I was dean and head of school at the University of Western Australia. I was chair of the Committee of Heads of Architecture Schools of Australasia between 1995 and 1996, and president of the Western Australian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects between 1994 and 1997.

The Office of the Victorian Government Architect was established in January 2006. The OVGA, as I will refer to it, provides leadership and strategic advice to government in relation to architecture and urban design. It was created to promote and maintain Melbourne, and Victoria more generally, as centres of design excellence, to deliver quality design in public buildings and to generate sustainable urban design outcomes.

To achieve these outcomes, I provide the following advice to the Premier, ministers, government departments and local government: strategic advice about architecture and urban design on specific projects or initiatives; ways to improve design outcomes for capital works programs, individual projects and broader planning initiatives, and advice on processes that enable better design outcomes to be achieved. This includes initiatives such as the development of design principles and key quality selection criteria to support the selection and evaluation process of consultants and procurement processes related to major public infrastructure and building projects, and the establishment of project design review panels or design quality teams for major projects or key strategic precincts or sites.
I also play an advocacy role and in particular seek to promote an awareness of the importance of good design and achieving high-quality, sustainable design outcomes in Victoria’s built environment. To this end I attend various public speaking events in my capacity as government architect, including to industry, government representatives and universities.

The OVGA publishes the ‘Good Design’ publication series which aims to raise awareness of good design and promote discussion supporting its benefits and value. I provide a voice for architectural excellence within government.

On occasion I am invited to attend and present at professional seminars held by professional peak bodies such as the Property Council of Australia, the Building Commission, the Australian Institute of Architects and the Planning Institute of Australia. This is a key part of my advocacy role in raising awareness and communicating to a broader audience the value and importance of good design.

The OVGA is currently comprised of eight staff members, including me. I have recently advised or collaborated with numerous state government departments and agencies to achieve the best possible design outcomes. As an example, at the invitation of Major Projects Victoria and Arts Victoria, I was a member of the architect selection panel for the Southbank cultural precinct, I attend the project control group (PCG) meetings, chair the project design review panel for the Arts Centre Trust and am a member of the PCG design endorsement committee. My role in those various capacities is to assert the need for design quality and help broker quality design outcomes.

A further example is the Parkville Comprehensive Cancer Centre. At the request of the Department of Health, the OVGA contributed sections in the expression of interest documents asserting the need for quality design and was a member of the panel that short-listed the consortia to go forward to the request for proposal (REP) stage. I am currently reviewing the REP documentation to ensure that sufficient emphasis is given to the capacity to deliver quality design and that this is reflected in the selection criteria. I have been invited to chair the selection panel that will determine the design component of the project. I will have an ongoing design review role during the period of project delivery.

At the invitation of the Department of Human Services I conducted a design workshop which explored how good design could contribute to improving the quality of life for children and carers in the children-in-care program. This involved coordinating a group of invited architects, DHS officers, carers and consultant architects, together with former clients of the program. The workshop was considered very successful by the participants and proposed a number of innovative approaches to the design of these care facilities. Recently a presentation was made to me by DHS and their consultant architects, demonstrating how effectively these new approaches had been incorporated into their modified designs.

I could cite many further examples where the OVGA has assisted government departments and agencies, such as the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, VicUrban, the Department of Transport, DPCD, DIIRD, MPV and VicRoads, all to achieve better design outcomes. I am happy to do so if the committee requires.

Local government bodies also approach me to obtain advice on projects. Whether I provide advice depends to a large degree on whether I consider the particular project to be of public significance. Local governments are not required to pay a fee for my advice.
I do not as a matter of course provide advice to private individuals, firms or companies. On occasion private parties do present ideas to me, and I am happy to listen to their ideas if they are of interest or relevance. For example, a prefabricated housing manufacturer recently presented details of a new product to me. This was of interest because of my participation, with DPCD, DHS and VicUrban, in a project which we call DASH — the Designed Affordable Sustainable Housing project.

I have also attended meetings with developers and/or architects in the past who have wanted to advise me of their planned developments. I attend these meetings where they provide an opportunity to learn about proposals that are being mooted for the city.

I will now discuss the Victorian planning process. I do not play a role in the Victorian planning processes prescribed by the Planning and Environment Act 1987. However, an informal voluntary protocol has developed between me and the Department of Planning and Community Development whereby DPCD informally advises me of planning applications for significant projects and seeks my comments on the design and architectural merits of applications.

As an example, last year I was invited by the DPCD to review and advise on the urban design and architectural quality of a significant residential development at 1 Ascot Vale Road, Flemington. The project design team responded positively to our involvement and the advice provided, and the final design outcome greatly improved as a result of this process. Further key examples where the OVGA has been asked by the DPCD to review and provide design advice for major projects in the central city include the master plan approval process for the former Carlton and United Breweries site; the planning application for the redevelopment of the former power station site on the corner of Lonsdale and Spencer streets, and the development planning application of 80 Collins Street, Melbourne.

I am sometimes invited to contribute to a design review process. This role involves critiquing project designs and providing this critique to both the project design team and the approvals body. This advice is non-binding but comprises part of the body of the advice that is taken into account in planning decisions.

The Windsor Hotel redevelopment: I was first contacted about the Windsor Hotel redevelopment in my professional capacity on 24 July 2009 via an invitation to a Hotel Windsor future plans breakfast on 29 July 2009. My executive assistant dealt with the invitation and declined it on my behalf because I was in Western Australia at the time of the event. My executive assistant did not inform me that the invitation had been made at the time, as she is aware that this is not the kind of event I would normally attend because of its private-sector focus.

On 31 July 2009 I received an email sent on behalf of Mr David Perry, chief executive officer and general manager of the Hotel Windsor, which noted that I had not been able to attend their VIP breakfast at which they had announced their refurbishment plans for the Hotel Windsor and stating that they hoped that ‘this project will enjoy your support’. I did not reply to this email.

On 6 October 2009 I received a letter from Mr Adrian Salmon, assistant director, statutory approvals, DPCD, advising me that the Minister for Planning had received an application for a planning permit for the redevelopment of the Windsor Hotel, and seeking my comments on the application. Mr Salmon’s letter of 6 October 2009 attached a copy of the planning application plans, which included architectural plans and design drawings. The letter also advised that additional material ‘can be made available on request’. I did not request these further documents, as the information attached to Mr Salmon’s letter was sufficient to enable me to form a view on the quality of the design.
We accept such invitations from the DPCD as a matter of course, as is evident from the examples referred to in paragraphs 21 and 22 earlier.

On about 10 October 2009 I asked one of my staff members to contact the architects for the Windsor Hotel redevelopment, Denton Corker Marshall (DCM) to request a briefing from them on the project design and the architectural approach. Obtaining such a briefing is part of my usual practice because in-person briefings enable me to ask questions of architects that do not get answered by architectural drawings and therefore enable me to obtain a better understanding of a project's architectural merit.

On 14 October 2010 Ms Sophie Patitsas, principal policy officer at OVGA, and I attended a meeting with Bill Corker and Ian White of DCM at which we were provided a briefing on the development plans for the Windsor Hotel. Adi Halim and Glenn Coupar from the Halim Group Pty Ltd, the owners of the Windsor Hotel, and Vaughan Connor from Contour Consultants Australia Pty Ltd, a consultancy group that specialises in town planning, also attended that meeting at the request of DCM.

The meeting of 14 October ran for approximately 1 hour. At this meeting Bill Corker provided us with a comprehensive briefing on the rationale behind all the key design decisions that had directed the redevelopment proposal. I asked a number of detailed questions about aspects of the design that were not clear, for example in relation to materials, finishes and the opening of the Windsor's Spring Street colonnade. Our questions were directed at DCM, who responded in a detailed and comprehensive way.

I have not had any further contact from DCM or representatives from the Halim Group Pty Ltd about the Windsor Hotel redevelopment since our meeting of 14 October 2009.

On 6 November 2009 I wrote to Mr Salmon, responding to his letter of 6 October 2009. This appears in attachment C. This letter informed Mr Salmon that I supported the applicant's ambition to reposition the Hotel Windsor as the city's premier hotel, securing the ongoing viability of an important cultural asset for Melbourne. The letter stated also that the proposal demonstrates an intelligent response to the surrounding urban context and develops a compelling three-pronged strategy for the site — namely, the restoration of the heritage hotel, the introduction of a simple, zinc-clad perforated block on the corner of Bourke and Spring streets to replace the unfortunate addition of the 1960s, and the insertion of a new backdrop building containing hotel rooms.

The letter also stated that collectively, the proposed sequence of urban strategies creates a distinctive and memorable design for the site. It stated that the proposal offers a fully considered and exceptional outcome in terms of urban design and architectural design quality and is likely to contribute in a positive way to the existing precinct. It stated that achieving the full potential of the proposal will depend on these compelling concepts being realised in the detailed design and that it is critical that approval processes include mechanisms that ensure that the qualitative aspects of the design are monitored and that sufficient detail is provided to enable realisation of the high quality being pursued. The letter recommended that a request be made to the applicant for further details on the clear glass re-entrant on Spring Street.

On 17 December 2009 Ms Patitsas and I attended a meeting with Mr Adrian Salmon, assistant director, statutory approvals, DPCD, and Mr David Hodge, executive director, planning services and development facilitation, DPCD, to discuss the comments set out in my letter of 6 November 2009. In particular I wanted to inform DPCD that I was concerned about placing a condition on any development approval that would require that the qualitative aspects of the proposal be monitored and maintained to ensure that the project was of a high quality.
Since the meeting with DPCD of 17 December 2009 I have not had any further contact with the DPCD about the Windsor Hotel redevelopment.

In terms of the deferral of project, an article published in the *Age* newspaper on 29 April 2010 by Mr Royce Millar titled ‘First strategy on Windsor revamp also a failure’ stated that:

> an officer from the Government Architect’s office, which is located in the Department of Premier and Cabinet —

proposed —

> to have the Windsor Hotel redevelopment deferred until after the state election to avert any political backlash over the $270 million project.

This appears in attachment D. The article also stated that:

> State architect Geoffrey London said he was ‘confident’ the idea of postponing the revamp had not been put to the Windsor group by anyone in his office.

I have never suggested that the Windsor Hotel redevelopment project be deferred until after the 2010 state election. I have asked my staff, and they have informed me that they also have never suggested that the Windsor Hotel redevelopment project be deferred until after the 2010 state election.

That completes my statement and I now welcome the committee’s questions.