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SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE – THE OPERA (Proposed event on Forecourt and Podium, October – November 2016)

Heritage Impact Statement

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1.0 BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF REPORT

Design 5 - Architects has been engaged by the Sydney Opera House Trust to prepare an assessment of the Heritage Impact of the following:

1. A proposed 'one-off' event, staging of *Sydney Opera House – The Opera* (SOH – TO) to be performed on the Forecourt and Podium of the Sydney Opera House in October and November 2016 – the subject of this report.
2. A proposed modification to the existing Development Approval for performing arts, community events and corporate functions.

This report covers item 1 only as listed above. The Heritage Impact assessment for item 2 is included in this application as a separate report.

The report has been prepared by Alan Croker (director) of Design 5.

2.0 BASIS OF ASSESSMENT

The basis for this assessment is the Conservation Plan 3rd edition, 2003, by James Semple Kerr,

- Kerr, James Semple, *Sydney Opera House, A Revised Plan for the Conservation of the Sydney Opera House and its Site*. Third Edition, SOHT, 2003 (referred to below as the CMP 3rd edition)

as well as the Utzon design principles,

- *Sydney Opera House, Utzon Design Principles*, SOHT May 2002 (referred to below as the UDP 2002)

The fourth edition of the Conservation Management Plan, 4th edition is presently in draft form and is also referred to in this report. The draft referred to is dated June 2015.

2.1 Methodology

This Heritage Impact Statement has been prepared in accordance with the principles and processes of the *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter 2013*. The preparation of this Heritage Impact Statement also follows the process and model recommended in the NSW Heritage Office guideline *Statements of Heritage Impact* (revised 2002), including consideration of alternative options and their impact.

2.2 Documents reviewed

The documents and drawings used for this assessment are those prepared for the event by Opera Australia and comprise:

Drawings

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| OA_SOH_TO_MASTER_01 | Site Performance Mode Plan View – Site (dated 20/7/2016) |
| OA_SOH_TO_MASTER_02 | Site General Rehearsal Plan View – Site (dated 20/7/2016) |
| OA_SOH_TO_MASTER_03 | Site Non Performance Plan View – Site (dated 20/7/2016) |
| OA_SOH_TO_MASTER_03A | Site Non Performance Plan View – Site (dated 20/7/2016) |
| OA_SOH_TO_MASTER_04 | Site Technical Rehearsal Plan View – Site (dated 20/7/2016) |
| OA_SOH_TO_MASTER_05A | Site Construction Phase Plan View – Site (dated 20/7/2016) |
| OA_SOH_TO_MASTER_05B | Site Construction Phase Plan View – Site (dated 20/7/2016) |
| OA_SOH_TO_MASTER_06 | Site Emergency Egress Plan View – Site (dated 20/7/2016) |
| OA_SOH_TO_MASTER_07 | Site Concourse OA Plan View – Site (dated 20/7/2016) |

Reports:

- SOH-TO – Production & Site Design Storyboard (dated 11/3/2016)
- SOH-TO – Draft Event Management Plan (dated 11/3/2016)
- SOH-TO – Production (Indicative) Schedule 2016 (dated 22/7/2016)

3.0 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

The following brief description is based on documents and information provided to this author. The times have been taken from the Production Schedule.

The proposal is for the rehearsal, staging and performance of an opera on the Forecourt and Monumental Steps, including bump-in and bump-out in October – November 2016. Event duration – 25 days affecting the site. The proposed event requires a number of infrastructure elements that include:

- Seating for 3,000 patrons set up on Forecourt – duration 12 days.
- Stage area to be set up on the Monumental Steps and Podium. Setup on steps to be relocated to east side of steps between the two rounds of performances – duration 22 days.
- 4m high marquee for performers' back-stage facilities to be set up on Podium, immediately east of Bennelong Restaurant – duration 24 days.
- Two 12m high scaffold towers at the top of the Monumental Steps on either side of the Podium to support stage lighting – duration 23 days. (the west tower is approximately 4m from the southern glass wall of the Bennelong Restaurant)
- Two 12m high scaffold towers immediately adjacent to the Monumental Steps on either side of the Podium to support stage lighting – duration 23 days.
- Wall of 9 containers (stacked two high – total 18) on western side of Forecourt to house displays, patron and back-of-house services, and to screen performance from surrounding areas – lower containers duration 20 days; upper row of containers duration 13 days.
- One 12 metre high FoH tower on Forecourt close to Tarpeian Stairs – duration 23 days.
- Two containers (single height) set up immediately east of Monumental Steps, and four others along southern edge of Forecourt close to Tarpeian Wall.
- Food and beverage areas to be set up on eastern and south-western sides of Forecourt.
- Lavatory and other back-of-house facilities to be set up on southern side of Vehicle Concourse in a fenced enclosure.
- Associated fencing and barriers around infrastructure and event areas to provide screening and / or prevent or control access.
- Signage associated with the event to inform and direct patrons and the public.

4.0 HERITAGE LISTINGS & STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

4.1 Listings

Sydney Opera House is listed on the following statutory registers:

- World Heritage List (UNESCO) 2007
- National Heritage List (Australian Government) 2005
- State Heritage Register (NSW Government) 2003
- Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2005 (City of Sydney Council)

Sydney Opera House is listed on the following non-statutory heritage registers:

- National Register of Significant 20th Century Buildings (Australian Institute of Architects)
- National Trust of Australia (NSW) register
- Register of the National Estate (archived list with the Australian Heritage Council)

4.2 Statutory framework

The statutory framework for approvals for the Opera House is presently as follows:

Commonwealth: *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act)

- Part 3, Division 1, identifies Commonwealth requirements relating to World Heritage properties and National Heritage places.
- Approval must be obtained from the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment for actions that are likely to have a significant impact on matters of national environmental significance (including National and World Heritage sites) under the EPBC Act.
- The Sydney Opera House site was subject to a bilateral agreement between the Australian Government and the State of New South Wales made in 2005 pursuant to Section 45 of the EPBC Act however this expired in 2010.

State (Planning): *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act)* and *State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) 2011*

- All development on land identified as being within the Sydney Opera House site is designated as State significant development (SSD) (Schedule 2) that requires consent under the EP&A Act.
- The Minister for Planning is the consent authority for SSD.

State (Planning): *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000 (Regulation)*

- Clause 288 of the Regulation requires the consent authority to take into consideration the *Management Plan for the Sydney Opera House* (which was prepared in 2005 as part of the bilateral agreement negotiations) in relation to development on the Sydney Opera House site. The Management Plan references the CMP and the Utzon Design Principles.
- The Management Plan provides a framework for protection of the World and National Heritage values of the Sydney Opera House site and has been endorsed by the Heritage Division, Department of Planning (formerly the NSW Heritage Office).
- The Management Plan states that approval of actions in relation to the Sydney Opera House site may only be made in accordance with the Management Plan, which defers to the CMP 3rd edition for an assessment of heritage impact of proposals.

State (Planning): *Sydney Regional Environmental Plan (Sydney Harbour Catchment) 2005 (REP)*

- The Opera House site falls within the Sydney Harbour Catchment area designated in the REP. It also is within the Foreshores and Waterways area and is designated as a Strategic Foreshore Site.
- The REP sets out a number of considerations that must be taken into account when submitting a DA (see clauses 13-15; Division 2 of Part 3 and Part 5 of the REP).

State (Heritage): *Heritage Act 1977*

- An approval from the Heritage Council under section 60 of the Heritage Act is required for development on the Sydney Opera House site. Where the development has been approved as SSD, the approval under section 60 of the Heritage Act cannot be refused by the Heritage Council.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF IMPACT

The impact of the proposed production of *Sydney Opera House – The Opera* in October – November 2016, is assessed against the values and levels of significance that apply to affected parts of the place as a result of its various listings, the CMP 3rd edition, and the Utzon Design Principles. These are discussed separately below.

5.1 Discussion of impact on World Heritage Values of the Sydney Opera House

In 2007, the Sydney Opera House was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List (WHL) for its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) as a "masterpiece of human creative genius" under criterion (i) of the Operational guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

The Sydney Opera House was inscribed on the WHL for the following values. (*Emphasis added* on aspects of significance relevant to the assessment of heritage impact of the proposal):

Outstanding Universal Values

The Sydney Opera House constitutes a masterpiece of 20th century architecture. Its significance is based on its unparalleled design and construction; its exceptional engineering achievements and technological innovation and its position as a world-famous icon of architecture. It is a daring and visionary experiment that has had an enduring influence on the emergent architecture of the late 20th century. Utzon's original design concept and his unique approach to building gave impetus to a collective creativity of architects, engineers and builders. Ove Arup's engineering achievements helped make Utzon's vision a reality. The design represents an extraordinary interpretation and response to the setting in Sydney Harbour. The Sydney Opera House is also of outstanding universal value for its achievements in structural engineering and building technology. The building is a great artistic monument and an icon, accessible to society at large.

Criterion (i)

The Sydney Opera House is a great architectural work of the 20th century. It represents multiple strands of creativity, both in architectural form and structural design, a great urban sculpture carefully set in a remarkable waterscape and a world famous iconic building.

Further comments in support of the listing:

The Sydney Opera House continues to perform its function as a world-class performing arts centre. The Conservation Plan specifies the need to balance the roles of the building as an architectural monument and as a state of the art performing centre, thus retaining its authenticity of use and function.

Comment

On the positive side, the proposed opera production on the Forecourt and Podium in late 2016 is in line with the primary function of the place and will actually celebrate the story that brought this remarkable icon of architecture into being, culminating in its World Heritage Listing. In addition, if the production is staged and managed in accordance with the *Sydney Opera House Outdoor Event Guide*, there should be no permanent or lasting impacts on the fabric or setting of the place. This event may also attract an audience that may not normally attend performances at the Sydney Opera House, including visitors.

On the negative side, the infrastructure required to produce this outdoor production and the time that it will be in place will substantially impact key approach views towards the Opera House, and will be visible in longer views from within its Buffer Zone. This impact will temporarily detract from these universal values. The mitigating factor is that, according to the proposed schedule, this infrastructure will only be in place for 25 days, including 3 weekends. This includes set-up and removal (bump-in and bump-out).

These visual impacts should be reduced as much as possible by minimising the duration that intrusive infrastructure elements are in place. The revised program suggests this can be achieved and if so, the substantial temporary impacts of staging *Sydney Opera House – The Opera* on the Outstanding Universal Values that enshrine it on the World Heritage List would be considered acceptable.

5.2 Discussion of impact on National Heritage Values of the Sydney Opera House

The following is the Summary Statement of Significance of the National Heritage values of the Sydney Opera House. *Emphasis added* on aspects of significance relevant to the assessment of heritage impact of this proposal.

The Sydney Opera House, constructed between 1957 and 1973, is a masterpiece of modern architectural design, engineering and construction technology in Australia. It exhibits the creative genius of its designer, the Danish architect Jørn Utzon and the contributions to its successful completion by the engineering firm Ove Arup and Partners, the building contractors M.R. Hornibrook, and the architects Hall, Todd and Littlemore. It is an exceptional creative and technical achievement in the national history of building design and construction in Australia.

Since its completion the Sydney Opera House has attracted world wide acclaim for its distinctive design, enhanced by its prominent location on Bennelong Point within a superb harbour setting. With its soaring white roof shells set above a massive podium, the Sydney

Opera House is a monumental urban sculpture, internationally acclaimed as an architectural icon of the twentieth century. Its many national and international awards reflect its pivotal place in the national story of creative and technical achievement in Australia. The challenges involved in executing Utzon's design inspired innovative technical and creative solutions that were groundbreaking in the history of architectural design and building construction in Australia, particularly the roof shells that were based on the geometry of the sphere and demonstrated the extraordinary creative potential of the assembly of prefabricated, repeated components.

The interior spaces also reflect the creative genius of Utzon and his successors, Todd, Hall and Littlemore, who completed the building after Utzon's departure from the project in 1966.

The Sydney Opera House is the most widely recognised building in Australia, and is cherished as a national icon and world-class performing arts centre. It represents an enduring symbol of modern Sydney and Australia, both nationally and internationally, reflecting changing social attitudes towards Australian cultural life in the decades after World War II. The Sydney Opera House has played a seminal role in the development of Australia's performing arts, enhancing the cultural vitality of the nation. It continually attracts nationally and internationally acclaimed performers, and is a mecca for visitors from around Australia and overseas.

The peninsula on which the Sydney Opera House now stands has a special association with Bennelong, an Aboriginal man who became a prominent and influential figure in the early colony and played a significant role in mediating interactions between Aboriginal people and early settlers.

Comment

The National Heritage values of the Sydney Opera House are primarily related to Jørn Utzon's distinctive design as a monumental urban sculpture and architectural icon, and its siting in relation to the city and the harbour, attracting visitors from around the world. These values include it being a cherished performing arts centre of international standing.

See the more detailed listed values of the place under each of the individual National Heritage criterion below. Design 5's assessment of heritage impact is summarised at the end of that section.

5.2.1 National Heritage criteria

The Sydney Opera House is registered on the National Heritage List for meeting its listing criteria A, B, E, F, G and H.

The values of the Sydney Opera House that meet the National Heritage criteria are set out in full in Appendix C of the Management Plan for the Sydney Opera House (August 2005) and also in the listing of the Sydney Opera House on the National Heritage List, available at <http://www.deh.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahdb/search.pl>

The extracts from the National Heritage values, under each of the criteria below, summarise and draw attention to the aspects of significance that are relevant to the assessment of heritage impact of the proposal. Design 5's assessment of heritage impact is summarised at the end of this section.

NHL Criterion A Events, Processes

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history.

Relevant key values from National Heritage values:

- "... the building's striking design, its quality as a monumental sculpture in the round, and its inspired design solution in response to its prominent setting on Bennelong Point in Sydney Harbour, have attracted national and international professional and public acclaim."
- "Sydney Opera House has played a seminal role in Australia's performing arts history, enhancing the cultural vitality of the nation and continuously attracting nationally and internationally recognised performers from around the world."

Comment

The infrastructure proposed for staging SOH – TO, particularly those elements that obscure or interrupt key views towards the podium and shells, or are close to or on the podium, will detract from

its design and setting and inhibit its enjoyment and appreciation. This is discussed in greater detail with Criterion E below.

This proposed opera production on the Forecourt and Podium is in line with the primary function of the place and will actually celebrate the story that brought this remarkable icon of architecture into being, culminating in its National and World Heritage Listing. The associated negative impacts are temporary and unlikely to detract from Sydney Opera House's ability to attract nationally and internationally recognised performers.

NHL Criterion B Rarity

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's natural or cultural history.

Relevant key values from National Heritage values:

- "... the Sydney Opera House is the most widely recognised building in Australia, and one of the most definitive national architectural icons of the twentieth century. It is also a rare example of a national cultural centre that has gained widespread recognition and respect as a performing arts venue."

Comment

This proposed opera production on the Forecourt and Podium will support the Opera House's standing as a national cultural centre for the performing arts.

The infrastructure proposed for staging SOH – TO, will have temporary negative impacts on the qualities that support its rare architectural icon status. These impacts will be high, but temporary, and the time they are in place should be no more than is absolutely necessary. These issues are discussed in more detail below.

NHL Criterion E Aesthetic characteristics

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group.

Relevant key values from National Heritage values:

- "The design, form, scale and location of the Opera House make it one of the most significant landmarks in Australia. The aesthetic qualities of the Sydney Opera House relate both to its topographical setting on Bennelong Point, and its distinctive architectural features. Its landmark qualities are enhanced by the building's juxtaposition with Sydney Harbour, its relationship with the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the garden landscape of Bennelong Ridge, the sandstone cliff face of Tarpeian Rock, and the vistas and views to and from The Rocks, Circular Quay, East Circular Quay, Macquarie Street, the Botanic Gardens and the harbour."
- "The building's ability to emotionally move people and invoke a strong aesthetic response is enhanced by the experience of approaching, entering and moving around the building and surrounds. The public promenades including the Forecourt, Broadwalk, and podium platform and steps contribute to the majestic qualities of the place. The large forecourt and sweeping podium steps prepare the visitor for the majestic quality of the soaring internal spaces including the folded concrete beams throughout the building, and the reinforced radial cranked beams in the northern foyers."
- "The building's ability to emotionally move people and invoke a strong aesthetic response is enhanced by the experience of approaching, entering and moving around the building and surrounds."

Comment

The infrastructure proposed for staging SOH – TO, particularly those elements that obscure or interrupt key views towards the podium and shells, or are close to or on the podium, will detract from its design and setting and inhibit its enjoyment and appreciation by all those who visit while these are in place.

This is an exceptionally significant masterpiece of 20th century architecture in its own right as well as a world renowned performance venue. It is a world heritage listed site, and for many visitors to Australia, it is possibly their most anticipated destination.

The visual and functional impacts, although temporary, will be significant and to mitigate this a number of recommendations are proposed – refer to Summary Conclusion at the end of this report.

NHL Criterion F Creative or technical achievement

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

Relevant key values from National Heritage values:

- “the creation of sensory experiences to bring pleasure to the building’s users, particularly the experience of approaching, mounting the grand staircase to the podium, passing through the low ribbed box office, up to the foyers flanking the auditoria with their harbour views, and the climax of the performance itself.”
- “On a grander scale, the light toned shells of the building were to stand out against the (then) darker fabric of the city’ (Kerr 2003, 44).”

Comment

The setting up, staging and dismantling of infrastructure for SOH – TO will restrict access to the Forecourt, Monumental Steps and Podium and therefore impact on the ability of visitors and patrons to experience and appreciate them. It is therefore essential that public access and key views are maintained as much and for as long as possible. Refer to Summary Conclusion at the end of this report.

NHL Criterion G Social value

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

Relevant key values from National Heritage values:

- “The Sydney Opera House is an enduring symbol of modern Sydney and Australia, both nationally and internationally. Indeed, the profile of the distinctive ceramic clad roof shells has become an instantly-recognisable national emblem.”
- “The building’s role as a cultural icon is also derived from the numerous performances conducted there (100,000 since 1973), and the place’s role as a focal point for community events. The Sydney Opera House is a mecca for both Australian and international visitors to Sydney, attracting over 100 million visitors since the opening in 1973.”

Comment

The setting up, staging and dismantling of infrastructure for SOH – TO will restrict access to the Forecourt, Monumental Steps and Podium over a 25 day period and therefore impact on the ability of visitors and patrons to experience and appreciate them. It will also impact on longer views and the setting of the place. It is therefore essential that public access and key views are maintained as much and for as long as possible. Refer to Summary Conclusion at the end of this report.

The opera performance itself will celebrate the history, significance and iconic value of the place, but access to this is restricted to those who buy a ticket and attend. For visitors generally, a number of individual containers within the ‘container wall’ will house images, artworks etc relating to the history of the Opera House and may entice them to attend a performance. Other containers will house services and facilities related to the event.

Refer to Summary Conclusion at the end of this report.

NHL Criterion H Significant people

The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Australia's natural or cultural history.

Relevant key values from National Heritage values:

- “The Sydney Opera House is directly associated with Jørn Utzon”
- “The peninsula on which the Sydney Opera House now stands has a special association with Bennelong”

Comment

The proposed staging of SOH – TO on the Monumental Steps and Forecourt will interpret and celebrate these values.

5.2.2 Summary assessment of heritage impact on National Heritage values

In summary, the setting up, rehearsal, staging and bump-out and the associated infrastructure required for Sydney Opera House – The Opera, will have substantial but temporary impacts on the significance and setting of the Sydney Opera House. These impacts are considered acceptable, but should be mitigated by the recommendations set out at the end of this report.

5.3 Discussion of impact on State Heritage Values of the Sydney Opera House

The Statement of Significance of the State Heritage values of the Sydney Opera House is as follows. *Emphasis added* on aspects of significance relevant to the assessment of heritage impact of this project.

*The Sydney Opera House is of State significance as a **twentieth century architectural masterpiece sited on a prominent peninsular in Sydney Harbour**. In association with the Sydney Harbour Bridge it has become an **internationally recognised symbol of Sydney and Australia, which is also widely admired by local citizens**. Designed for the NSW Government by renowned Danish architect Jørn Utzon between 1957 and 1966, and completed in 1973 by Hall, Todd and Littlemore, the building has **exceptional aesthetic significance because of its quality as a monumental sculpture in the round, both day and night, and because of the appropriateness of its design to its picturesque setting**. Its public spaces and promenades have a majestic quality, endowed by powerful structural forms and enhanced by vistas to the harbour and the city. An icon of modern architecture, the Sydney Opera House uses the precise technology of the machine age to express organic form. It has scientific and technical significance for the ways in which its construction continually pushed engineering and building technologies to the limit. It also has significance for the extensive associations of the site with many famous people and important themes in Australian history. Abutting the site of the first settlement of Europeans in Australia at Sydney Cove, the Sydney Opera House stands on Bennelong Point, Aboriginal land which was named after a Wangal Aboriginal man and which is of significance in the history of the entanglements and interactions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures in Australia. Other historic themes associated with the site include the arrival of the First Fleet in Sydney Cove, scientific investigation, defence, picturesque planning, marine and urban transport and most recently, cultural showcasing. Since its official opening by the Queen in 1973, the Sydney Opera House has been the scene of many notable achievements in the performing arts and has associations with many nationally and internationally renowned artistic performers. **The Sydney Opera House provides an outstanding visual, cultural and tourist focal point for Sydney and Australia.***

Comment

The CMP 3rd edition was developed in preparation for the listing of the Sydney Opera House on the NSW State Heritage Register (SHR), on 3 December 2003. The CMP draft 4th edition has retained and further developed the methodology and policies in the 3rd edition, however it has not yet been formally adopted. Hence, the CMP 3rd edition is used as the basis for discussion and assessment of the heritage impact of the proposal to stage Sydney Opera House – The Opera (SOH – TO) on the State Heritage values of the Sydney Opera House.

5.3.1 State Heritage Register criteria

The Sydney Opera House is listed on the SHR for meeting all its listing criteria (a)-(g). The values of the Sydney Opera House that meet the SHR criteria are set out in full in the NSW Heritage Database, available online at:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=5054880>

The extracts from the SHR values, under each of the criterion below, summarise and draw attention to those aspects of significance that are relevant to the assessment of heritage impact of the proposed staging of SOH – TO. The assessment is summarised at the end of this section.

SHR criterion a) Historical significance

An item is important in the course, or pattern, of NSW's cultural or natural history.

Relevant key values from SHR values:

- "... a modern architectural masterpiece, recognised internationally as a symbol of Sydney and Australia, ..."

Comment

The proposed staging of SOH – TO will have substantial but temporary visual and functional impacts on the setting and key view lines towards the Opera House. Refer also to comments above in relation to Criterion G.

SHR criterion b) Associative significance

An item has strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in NSW's cultural or natural history.

Relevant key values from SHR values:

- "Many significant people are associated with the construction of the Sydney Opera House, including Eugene Goossens, Joe Cahill, Jørn Utzon, Eero Saarinen and Ove Arup."
- "Many famous artistic performers from Australia and overseas have been associated with the Sydney Opera House since its completion, ..."

Comment

Most of these significant people appear as characters in the production of *Sydney Opera House – The Opera*. The staging of this opera can therefore be regarded as interpreting these associative values through theatre on the site itself. Famous artistic performers are also recognised in this production.

SHR criterion c) Aesthetic significance

An item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW.

Relevant key values from SHR values:

- "... exceptional aesthetic significance because of its quality as a monumental sculpture in the round, both day and night, and because of the appropriateness of its design to its setting and the picturesque quality of the setting."
- "Its public spaces and promenades have a majestic quality endowed by powerful structural forms and enhanced by vistas to the harbour and the city."

Comment

The infrastructure proposed for staging SOH – TO, particularly those elements that obscure or interrupt key views towards the podium and shells, or are close to or on the podium, will detract from its design and setting and inhibit its enjoyment and appreciation by all those who visit while these are in place. Some visitors may be intrigued by this infrastructure and want to attend the performance as a result, and for those who attend, it will all make sense.

Nonetheless the visual and functional impacts, although temporary, will be significant and to mitigate these a number of recommendations are proposed – refer to Summary Conclusion of this report.

SHR criterion d) Social significance

An item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in NSW for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

Relevant key values from SHR values:

- "... an internationally recognised symbol of Sydney, one of Australia's leading tourist attractions and a focal point for community events. It is also widely admired by Sydneysiders, and can be seen to contribute importantly to the sense of place in the Sydney CBD."
- "As a world-class performing arts centre, the Sydney Opera House has enhanced the cultural vitality of the nation. It has also hosted many "everyday" cultural activities as well as providing free public access to its harbour-side Broadwalk."

- “Of the 85,000 people estimated to visit each week in 2003, about a quarter came for performance-related reasons while the rest came to experience the building and its environment. In offering this remarkable accessibility to a broad public, Sydney Opera House can be seen to be fulfilling Cahill's hope that it would be “a monument to democratic nationhood”.”

Comment

The setting up, rehearsal, staging and bump-out, and the associated infrastructure required for SOH – TO, will have substantial but nonetheless temporary impacts on the significance and setting of the Sydney Opera House.

It will be essential that potentially negative impacts are minimised, both in time and extent, and public access and view lines are maximised, otherwise the clutter and distraction from this event may have a lasting impression on the memories of those who visit during this period.

SHR criterion e) Research potential

An item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW's cultural or natural history.

Relevant key values from SHR values:

- none relevant

Comment

There is no significant research potential values identified from the SHR listing that are impacted by this proposal.

SHR criterion f) Rarity

An item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of NSW's cultural or natural history.

Relevant key values from SHR values:

- “The Sydney Opera House has significance for its rarity as a twentieth century architectural masterpiece sited on a prominent peninsular in Sydney Harbour.”
- “It is an exceptional landscape (and seascape) monument because of its quality as a sculpture in the round, both day and night, and because of the appropriateness of its design to its setting and the picturesque quality of the setting.”
- “It is also unique in so far as it has become an internationally recognised symbol of Sydney and Australia, which is also widely admired by local citizens.

Comment

The duration and extent of potentially negative impacts on the immediate and broader setting of the Opera House, and on the ability for the public to appreciate it should be minimised as much as possible.

SHR criterion g) Representativeness

An item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of NSW's cultural or natural places; or cultural or natural environments.

Relevant key values from SHR values:

- “It is outstanding because of its innovative design appropriate both to its entertainment functions and to its harbour-side setting, and because of the esteem in which it is held in Australia and internationally.”
- “As an icon of modern architecture it combines an expressive, sculptural freedom of form with the precise technology of the machine age.”

Comment

The proposed staging of SOH – TO, on the Forecourt, Monumental Steps and Podium is an idea that is consistent with the design intent of the Opera House, however it is important that the design of the

infrastructure, and the programming of its installation and removal is consistently of a high quality and appropriate for this outstanding place.

5.3.2 Summary assessment of heritage impact on State Heritage values

In summary, the proposed staging of Sydney Opera House – The Opera, on the Forecourt, Monumental Steps and Podium is an idea that is consistent with the design intent of the Opera House, however there will potentially be a number of substantial but temporary negative impacts on the State Heritage values of the Sydney Opera House.

It will be essential that these negative impacts are minimised, both in time and extent, and public access and view lines are maximised, otherwise the clutter and distraction from this event will have a lasting impression on the memories of those who visit during this period.

The acceptable threshold at the Opera House for any works, installation, performance or event is one of excellence – a far higher threshold than would be acceptable on other sites.

With potentially very intrusive, but temporary installations in very significant outdoor spaces, this aspiration for excellence is important. While many of the documents provided by Opera Australia suggest this is a high priority, this goal should not be lost sight of and should be pursued in a manner that is consistent with the Utzon Design Principles and the CMP. A problem regularly faced by Sydney Opera House with outdoor events is the lack of availability of well designed infrastructure such as barrier fencing etc.

To mitigate these temporary negative impacts a number of recommendations are proposed – refer to Summary Conclusion at the end of this report.

The assessment of heritage impact on all relevant significant values is discussed in the section below (compliance with CMP 3rd edition).

5.4 Discussion of compliance with Sydney Opera House Conservation Plan (CMP) 3rd edition

The CMP identifies and defines the significant values of the Sydney Opera House and then formulates policies framed to retain these values. The following discussion assesses the impact of the proposed opera event on the Forecourt, Monumental Steps and Podium in the following order:

- Significant values,
- Significant elements of the place, and
- Relevant policies.

5.4.1 Significant values – discussion of impact

The following Statement of Significance from CMP 3rd edition summarises the significant values of the place (emphasis in bold type added as it relates to this assessment):

The Sydney Opera House is a dramatic expression of the genius of a then relatively unknown architect, Jørn Utzon (whose subsequent international fame was in part a result of the design of the building), of the high quality completion of the work by Hall, Todd and Littlemore, and of the technical support given throughout by the internationally renowned engineering firm of Ove Arup and Partners and finally by M.R. Hornibrook, the inventive contractor of stages two and three.

The Sydney Opera House is of exceptional significance because of:

- **its spectacular quality as sculpture in the round both by day and night;**
- **its inspired design solution in response to its setting;**
- **the picturesque quality of the peninsula setting;**
- *the way in which its fabric reflects the contemporary philosophy of creating refined forms from machine-made components;*
- *the way in which the plastic arts, geometry and technology were drawn on to create a structure at the leading edge of endeavour;*

- *the majestic quality of its public spaces contained by powerful structural forms;*
- *the evidence of its fabric in expressing its place in twentieth century architecture (not excluding the troubled history of its construction);*
- *the seminal influence of some of its design and construction techniques;*
- *its function as a performing arts centre of world renown;*
- *its almost mythological status as a cultural icon (then and now) arising from all the above, from the high public interest in its protracted and controversial development; and from its power to attract artists, patrons and tourists on a national and international level.*

This significance is intensified by the extensive associations of the site and its structures, including:

Aboriginal and European contact (Bennelong and his house); scientific investigation (Flinders and Baudin); defence (Phillip's 1788 redoubt to Greenway's Fort Macquarie, 1817–1901); Picturesque planning (Macquarie to Utzon); marine and urban transport (overseas shipping and local ferry wharves, tram terminal and depot); popular recreation; and, finally, the nation's most famous cultural icon (The Opera House) and its legions of national and international performers.

Those values noted above in bold type are relevant to the proposed staging of *Sydney Opera House – The Opera* on the Forecourt and Podium in October – November 2016. Taking each of them separately, the following comments are made:

- *its spectacular quality as sculpture in the round both by day and night;*

Comment:

Much of the infrastructure required to stage this event will be seen against, on, or in close proximity to the Monumental Steps, Podium and Roof Shells. These are key elements in the sculptural qualities of the Opera House and their presence, although temporary, will be a substantial visual impact.

The views most impacted will be those on approach to the building from the south west via the Southern Forecourt, and views from West Circular Quay. These impacts result in large part from the wall of double height containers defining the external auditorium, and the lighting towers on and immediately adjacent to the Podium

Infrastructure is placed to focus the performance on the Monumental Steps and Podium as the stage, with the tiled clad shells rising behind as the stage backdrop. While this works for the audience during performance, it becomes visually intrusive outside of these times.

Some modifications have been made to the set-up schedule to reduce these impacts and where possible open up key views towards the Opera House when there are no rehearsals or performances. These efforts by Opera Australia are supported.

- *its inspired design solution in response to its setting;*

Comment:

The comments above on 'quality of sculpture in the round' apply equally here as views of the Opera House are inseparable from its setting.

- *the picturesque quality of the peninsula setting;*

Comment:

The comments above on 'quality of sculpture in the round' apply equally here as views of the Opera House are inseparable from its setting.

- *its function as a performing arts centre of world renown;*

Comment:

The proposed staging of SOH – TO on the Forecourt and Podium will not adversely impact on this value. As an outdoor event, it will extend this function to the exceptionally significant Forecourt, Monumental Steps and Podium, using the ribbed and tiled shell structures as a spectacular backdrop.

- *its almost mythological status as a cultural icon (then and now) arising from all the above, from the high public interest in its protracted and controversial development; and from its power to attract artists, patrons and tourists on a national and international level.*

Comment:

SOH – TO has as its subject, the protracted and controversial development of the Opera House. It narrates this on the site itself, using the building as the stage and the backdrop to the stage.

5.4.2 Significant elements – discussion of impact

Broadly the elements and areas listed below (following the main headings in the *Schedule of levels of significance* in the CMP 3rd edition), will be potentially affected to varying degrees by the proposal:

- Topographic setting
- Forecourt
- Lower forecourt (1988)
- Broadwalk
- Furniture of forecourts and broadwalk
- External lighting
- The form, fabric and structural systems of the Opera House
- Podium exterior
- Original concept of sequential experiences on arrival, entry and circulation
- Vehicle concourse

Each element is discussed below in relation to this proposal. At the end of each discussion section a table sets out the components of each element that still remain since the CMP 3rd edition was completed and their significance as listed in the CMP, with comments on the impact on each. The significance rankings are taken from the CMP 3rd edition and are as follows:

- A – Exceptional significance
- B – Considerable significance
- C - Some significance
- D - Little significance
- Int – intrusive element

5.4.2.1 Topographic setting

Topographic setting generally refers to the broader setting of the place, however it also applies to the immediate setting, of which the Forecourt, Broadwalk and other external spaces and features are an important part. The scale and configuration of infrastructure required to stage SOH – TO will impact to varying degrees on both the broader and immediate setting for a period of 25 days.

Mitigation measures have been proposed by Opera Australia to reduce these impacts, and these are reflected in the documents listed in this report, however the impacts will still be high, and visible from surrounding areas. It is only the limited timeframe that will make them acceptable.

| Element | Significance | Potential impact of proposal | Comment |
|--|--------------|------------------------------|---|
| Topographic setting | A | | |
| Unencumbered exposure to the harbour on three sides, permitting views to the Opera House from neighbouring ridges and headlands, particularly Dawes Point, Observatory Hill, Mrs Macquarie's Point, Garden Island, | a | high | Impact of the event infrastructure on the setting and these views will be high but temporary. The most intrusive items will be the wall of containers towards the west side of the Forecourt, stage lighting towers adjacent to and on the |

| | | | |
|---|---|------|---|
| Bradley's Head, Cremorne Point, Kurraba Point, Kirribilli, Milson's Point and McMahon's Point; the waters of the harbour, city buildings and the harbour bridge; | | | Podium, stage trucks on the Monumental Steps and Podium, and the BoH marquee on the Podium. |
| open relationship with the Bennelong ridge, its garden landscape and the sandstone cliff face of the Tarpeian Rock; | a | high | Impact on this relationship will be high but temporary. Most intrusive items will be wall of containers, FOH Tower, activity area on southern part of Forecourt, and F&B on eastern Forecourt. |
| vistas, progressively or suddenly enlarging to views, from The Rocks, the northern end of Circular Quay, East Circular Quay, Macquarie Street, the Botanic Gardens and the harbour. | a | high | The impact of the event infrastructure on these vistas will be high but temporary. The most intrusive items will be the wall of containers, four stage lighting towers adjacent to and on the Podium. Most affected vistas are from northern end of Circular Quay, East Circular Quay and Macquarie St. |

5.4.2.2 Forecourt

The event infrastructure will interrupt and fragment the broad open sweep of the paved Forecourt by its scale, configuration and presence, and be perceived as intrusive clutter while it is in place. These are issues that affect all high impact events on the Forecourt.

Opera Australia have considerably reduced the number of unnecessary items from the western side of the Forecourt, particularly outside of rehearsal and performance times to reduce impact on views and improve public access, and this is reflected in the plans.

Mitigating factors include:

- limited time that event infrastructure will be in place;
- programming of infrastructure installation to reduce time that it will be in place;
- relocation of northern bank of containers on west side before and between blocks of performances as indicated on Drg OA_SOH_TO_MASTER_03A;
- minimal crowd control barriers on western Forecourt and their placement only when required for rehearsal and performances;
- public access to whole of event seating area and majority of Monumental Steps outside of rehearsal and performance times.

| Element | Significance | Potential impact of proposal | Comment |
|---|--------------|------------------------------|--|
| Forecourt | A | | |
| Openness and freedom from impedimenta; | a | high | The impact of the event infrastructure on setting and these views will be high but temporary. |
| Tarpeian cliff face with stone steps and iron railings (not on SOH property) | a | high | These elements physically unaffected. View of the cliff face from the south eastern approach will be masked by the wall of containers and from the north by the FOH tower. |
| Paving of fan pattern granite setts and strips of ashlar granite parallel to the podium steps (1988); | b | low | These elements physically unaffected. |

| | | | |
|---|-----|------|---|
| Impediments to pedestrian vision across and into forecourt | int | high | Event infrastructure will intrude but this will be for a limited time. Relocation of the container wall between blocks of rehearsal / performances will mitigate this to some extent. |
| Advertising or announcement banners on the Tarpeian cliff or the palisade fence above | int | high | The proposed projection screen over the air intake grille will be intrusive, particularly when viewed from the Podium, but to some extent will be diluted by other large scale event infrastructure adjacent to this wall. The wall of containers should prevent this screen being seen from longer views. |

5.4.2.3 Lower forecourt (aka lower concourse)

The proposal will impact on the lower forecourt only in terms of the flow on effect from the presence of event infrastructure possibly encouraging greater use of this area by the public.

5.4.2.4 Broadwalk

The proposal may potentially impact on the Broadwalk in terms of the flow on effect from the presence of event infrastructure possibly encouraging greater use of this area by the public.

5.4.2.5 Furniture of forecourts and broadwalk

Furniture around the Forecourt and Broadwalk will remain unaffected by the event.

5.4.2.6 External lighting

External lighting will be interrupted or modified while rehearsals and performances are happening. Floodlighting on the shells may also be interrupted, depending on lighting requirements for the performance. This is considered a low impact.

5.4.2.7 The form, fabric and structural systems of the Opera House

These remain physically unaffected by this proposal, however the views within the Vehicle Concourse towards the folded and cranked beams will be impacted by the presence of BoH facilities along the southern side for this event. The up-lighting along the south edge of this space will be obscured in some areas by this same infrastructure. Refer to discussion in regard to Vehicle Concourse below.

5.4.2.8 Podium exterior

The fabric of the Podium exterior remains unaffected by this proposal, however the access, appreciation and views towards and across the Monumental Steps and Podium will be interrupted by the stage trucks, stage props, lighting towers and BoH marquee. The impact of the 12m high lighting towers in particular will be substantial and very visible from surrounding areas.

Mitigating factors include:

- limited time that event infrastructure will be in place;
- relocation of stage trucks to east side of Monumental Steps between blocks of performances;
- use of bollards and ropes on the steps instead of the standard bike-rack as control barriers;
- public access to majority of Monumental Steps and Podium platform outside of rehearsal and performance times.

5.4.2.9 Original concept of sequential experiences on arrival, entry and circulation

This presence and placement of event infrastructure will have a high impact on the public appreciation of this concept. Views towards the Opera House on approach and the opening up of vistas across the Forecourt as one gets closer are an important part of the experience of the Opera House. These views and vistas and the approach sequence will be substantially obscured or interrupted by container walls and towers, and public access will be diverted around them.

Opera Australia have made a number of modifications to their proposal to reduce these impacts.

Mitigating factors include:

- limited time that event infrastructure will be in place;
- programming of infrastructure installation to reduce time that it will be in place;
- relocation of northern bank of containers on west side between blocks of performances;
- minimal crowd control barriers on western Forecourt and their placement only when required for rehearsal and performances;
- public access to whole of event seating area and majority of Monumental Steps outside of rehearsal and performance times.

5.4.2.10 Vehicle concourse

Lavatory and other facilities are proposed along the southern side of the Vehicle Concourse area. These will be in place for approximately 25 days and largely screened by Mojo barriers. These facilities should appear reasonably tidy to other visitors, but the impact on this exceptionally significant space will be high, particularly as the Vehicle Concourse will act as the de-facto main entry to the Opera House while the Forecourt and Monumental Steps are unavailable to the public.

The fabric of this area will be protected and remain physically unaffected by this proposal and the space will not be enclosed, however the views within the Vehicle Concourse towards the folded and cranked beams will be impacted by the presence of facilities and the associated barriers. The up-lighting along the south edge of this space will be obscured in some areas by this same infrastructure.

Mitigating factors include:

- limited time that event infrastructure will be in place;
- programming of infrastructure installation to reduce time that it will be in place;
- removal of Hills Hoists out of site when not required for rehearsal and performances;
- minimal crowd control barriers on western Forecourt and their placement only when required for rehearsal and performances;
- maximising public access area to Vehicle Concourse.

5.4.3 Compliance with CMP policies

It is clear from the Statement of Significance in the CMP that the Sydney Opera House derives its significance primarily from its form (design structure and construction), function and setting. These three components are interdependent and as each of them is crucial to this significance then each must be maintained to the highest level. These are discussed below within the framework of the policies from the CMP 3rd edition.

Policy 1.2 Utzon, Hall and the approach to change – Utzon's concepts

The following fabric and attributes are essential to Utzon's concept for the Sydney Opera House and should be retained in any future development:

- a. the relationship between the three shell groups and the platform below;*
- b. the shell geometry and the ceramic tile cladding;*
- c. the canted alignments of the major shell groups;*
- d. the supporting structural systems throughout the building;*
- e. the visually free standing sculptural form of the building unobstructed by adjacent erections;*
- f. the open and uncluttered character of the forecourt and grand stair by which the raised podium is gained;*

- g. *the visual relationship with the harbour setting from the podium – including the foyers surrounding the auditoria;*
- h. *the retention of a 'natural' palette of materials for external fabric.*

Comment

The 'visually free standing sculptural form of the building' will be obstructed by the infrastructure proposed to support this event.

The 'open and uncluttered character of the forecourt and grand stair' will also be obstructed.

The most prominent of these obstructions will be:

- two 12m high scaffold towers at the top of the Monumental Steps on either side of the Podium to support stage lighting – duration 23 days. (the west tower is approximately 4m from the southern glass wall of the Bennelong Restaurant)
- two 12m high scaffold towers immediately adjacent to the Monumental Steps on either side of the Podium to support stage lighting – duration 23 days.
- stage trucks on the Monumental Steps – duration 22 days.
- stage trucks with backdrops at the top of the Monumental Steps – duration 22 days.
- 4m high BoH marquee at Box Office level on the Podium, immediately east of the Bennelong Restaurant – duration 24 days.
- seating for 3,000 theatre patrons on the Forecourt – duration 12 days.
- 12 metre high FoH tower on Forecourt – duration 23 days.
- wall of double height containers defining the western side of the opera event 'auditorium' space – lower containers duration 20 days; upper row of containers duration 13 days.

Note – times have been taken from the Production Schedule.

These impacts are substantial, but have a limited duration. They are accepted as a consequence of the requirements for this particular production.

Policy 2.2 Setting – Views and vistas

The Sydney Opera House Trust should ensure that no erection in the area under its control interferes with any view or vista to or from the Opera House.

Comment

The proposed infrastructure for SOH – TO will interfere with a number of views and vistas, both towards and from the Opera House. These include:

- Four 12m high towers on and beside the Podium will substantially interfere with key views of the roof shells from east, south and west
- Wall of containers will interfere with views towards the Opera House on approach from the south west and views south from the Podium and Monumental Steps
- 12m high FoH tower close to the Tarpeian Wall will interfere with views towards the Tarpeian Wall from the Podium and Monumental Steps
- The BoH marquee on the Podium will be visible in views from the Tarpeian Walk, Botanic Gardens, Mrs Macquarie's Chair, and from Farm Cove

These impacts are substantial, but have a limited duration. They are accepted as a consequence of the requirements for this particular production.

Policy 3.3 Setting – Open and uncluttered setting

Objects should only be permitted on the forecourt, lower forecourt sea wall path, broadwalk, podium deck and steps, if they do not interrupt or intrude upon the open and uncluttered character of the place, or if they are absolutely necessary for the safety of visitors.

Comment

The proposed infrastructure for this opera event, including seating, is necessary for its staging and performance. Most is not required for the safety of visitors but to achieve the desired experience with

staging, props, lighting and patron comfort.

It is acknowledged that large scale outdoor events on the Forecourt will inevitably require infrastructure that intrudes to some degree on the open and uncluttered character of the place, but this is for a limited period of time – 25 days. The impacts are substantial but are accepted in this instance.

There has been a proposal, not shown on these documents, to install a ticket booth towards the southern end of the Forecourt. If one is required, it should be as small and transparent as possible, and also kept as far south as possible. It should not be anywhere in the view lines towards the Opera House, north of the covered escalators to the Lower Concourse or north of No 1 Macquarie St. A preferred approach would be to disseminate information on the SOH website and in the press with tickets also available from the new Welcome Centre and existing Box Office.

All infrastructure elements should be of the highest design quality, appropriate for a world heritage listed site that is focussed on the pursuit of excellence in all fields of endeavour to do with design and performance.

Policy 3.4 Setting – Performance facilities and fencing

The frequent or long stay erection of above ground performance facilities and fencing that results in the visual encumbrance of the setting and the loss of public access to, and views across, the forecourt is unacceptable.

Policy 3.5 Setting – Public vision across forecourt

Whatever activities take place, fencing designed to block public vision across or into the forecourt is unacceptable.

“A practical heritage rule of thumb suggests that, where seating is to be installed and public access denied, three days is an acceptable short run performance duration. Any intrusion of facilities with introduced seating and loss of public access extending past that time is an unacceptably long stay. However, performances and celebrations that simply use the stairs as seating but do not exclude the public and require a minimum of infrastructure, may be acceptable up to eleven days. Ultimately it will be up to the Sydney Opera House Trust in negotiation with NSW government planning and heritage bodies to determine the appropriate interpretation of the words ‘frequent’ and ‘long stay’ in policy 3.4.”

Comment

The proposed SOH – TO is a one-off event affecting the site over a total of 25 days. Within these 25 days there are two performance periods, one of 2 days and another of 3 days. The facilities required will have substantial visual impacts on the setting of the place and will, while the rehearsals and performances are on, prevent public access to, and views across the Forecourt.

In an earlier proposal for this event, fencing in conjunction with double height containers, designed to block vision across the forecourt was proposed to maintain security and block vision and sound to those not attending the event. The infrastructure has been revised to have the audio of the performance transmitted to patrons via headphones, without normal speaker arrays on towers, and to remove the containers and fencing closest to the Monumental Steps in between performances to open up views.

The Production Schedule and other documents indicate that outside of these rehearsal and performance times, most of the Forecourt and large areas of the Monumental Steps will be open to the general public. These measures will mitigate the limited periods where public vision across the Forecourt is blocked and there is no public access.

Policy 6.1 Exterior – External form

The Opera House should retain unchanged its external form of roof shells, glass wall concept, podium and podium steps, forecourt and broadwalk.

Policy 6.2 Exterior – External form

Proposals that obscure the original exterior form of the Opera House are unacceptable.

Comment:

The proposed SOH – TO will have no lasting impact on the fabric and form of the Opera House.

The staging of this event will obscure the original form of the Opera House for a limited time of 25 days. The extent of this impact is discussed in regard to Policies 1.2 and 2.2 above. Whilst these impacts would not normally be considered acceptable, they are mitigated by the limited timeframe they will be in place.

Policy 11.1 Exterior – Podium “platform”, broadwalk and forecourt

The exterior platform of the podium, the broadwalk and the forecourt are important open spaces which set off the Opera House and should be kept free of permanent structures or wheeled vehicles. Furniture should be kept to a minimum and should not intrude aggressive tonal or colour contrasts with the surrounding built form. Temporary structures for occasional celebrations or manifestations should be designed to be erected, used and dismantled without damage or alteration of the fabric.

Comment:

The proposed event will be for a limited period of time and thus none of its associated infrastructure will be long term or permanent.

All infrastructure elements have been designed to be erected, used and dismantled without damage or alteration of the fabric.

This policy mentions tone and colour. It is very important that no part of this infrastructure is white, highly reflective, or a light colour that is likely to compete with or distract from the tiled shells. Wherever possible, the colour and tone of all infrastructure should be close to that of the granite clad Podium so that while it is in place, it visually recedes, thus mitigating some of its visual impact. Importantly, white or off-white should be avoided.

Policy 56.1 Continuity of heritage conservation advice

Continuity of relevant and experienced heritage conservation advice should be provided as part of the process by which changes to the Sydney Opera House and its setting are developed and executed. The timing of this advice is important. For major projects it should be drawn upon:

- *initially, at the concept stage;*
- *during the development and refinement, or alteration, of the proposal;*
- *for a formal statement of heritage impact, or its equivalent, in response to the completed development application;*
- *to keep a watchful eye on work actually underway.*

Comment

Heritage conservation advice has been provided during the refinement of this proposal. The potential impacts were identified at that time. The present documents have been revised as a result of this advice and include measures to mitigate many of the impacts where this was possible.

These mitigation measures include:

- Revised timing for placement and removal of the upper level of the container wall towards the west side of the Forecourt to reduce visual impacts,
- Deletion of a set of double height containers immediately west of the Monumental Steps to reduce visual impacts,
- Temporary relocation of the northernmost set of 3 double height containers between blocks of performances to reduce visual impacts during this period,
- Allowing public access to patron seating area between performances to increase access to the Forecourt,
- Stacking of stage trucks for the steps towards the eastern end of the Monumental Steps to improve public access and reduce visual impacts,
- Agreement to remove the Hills Hoists when not required for performances to reduce inappropriate clutter.

5.5 Discussion of compliance with Utzon Design Principles

The *Utzon Design Principles* (UDP) provide important guidance on the intended quality and character of particular spaces and elements and how they should be treated. Along with the Conservation Plan, the UDP provide a fundamental basis on which to assess the impact of any proposal for the Sydney Opera House. Relevant quotes with comment on impact are provided below.

5.5.1 Building as a sculpture in the harbour

"The character which is most prominent about the Opera House is it's being free in the centre of the Sydney Harbour, free from all sides, visible from all sides." (page 63)

"Sculpture in contrast to surrounding buildings...

"The position on a peninsula, which is overlooked from all angles makes it important to maintain an all-round elevation...the building must form a freestanding sculpture in contrast to the square buildings surrounding it." (page 63)

"New structures placed close to the Sydney Opera House will diminish its value as an icon by disturbing its chief characteristics of being free in the centre of Sydney Harbour." (page 49)

"If you clutter the new spaces around such a significant building then you obscure the building, and can obscure it to an extent that it no longer retains its value in the city or its character... it will lose its importance as an icon or as a landmark for the city." (page 49)

Comment

Key infrastructure elements for the proposed event, SOH – TO, will obstruct views towards the Roof Shells, Podium and Monumental Steps and visually diminish the Opera House's iconic value as an architectural landmark. The most obtrusive of these infrastructure elements will be:

- two 12m high scaffold towers at the top of the Monumental Steps on either side of the Podium to support stage lighting. (the west tower is approximately 4m from the southern glass wall of the Bennelong Restaurant)
- two 12m high scaffold towers immediately adjacent to the Monumental Steps on either side of the Podium to support stage lighting
- stage trucks on the Monumental Steps
- stage trucks with backdrops at the top of the Monumental Steps
- 4m high BoH marquee at Box Office level on the Podium, east of the Bennelong Restaurant
- wall of double height containers defining the western side of the opera event space.

The location and configuration of these infrastructure elements is a direct result of the desire to use the Monumental Steps as the stage and the Opera House itself as the backdrop and focus for the performance. This is logical for this particular opera, but requires lighting towers and stage trucks very close to the main steps and curved roof shells.

Whilst this will be a dramatic experience for those attending performances of SOH – TO, it will have negative impacts for others visiting during the time this infrastructure is in place. The only major mitigating factor is that the time for this event is limited to 25 days on site.

5.5.2 Approach and arrival

"People approaching, walking up the stairs and entering the auditoria are all the time oriented in the beautiful harbour." (page 67)

"In this way very sculptural shapes were arranged side by side, so one gets a varied picture of the complex, according to which way you move around in or around the structure." (page 64)

"The patron or tourist will see the shells from below as an expanse of curved wall changing constantly." (page 64)

"So going to the Opera House is a succession of visual and audio stimuli, which increase in intensity as you approach the building, as you enter and finally sit down in the halls,

culminating with the performance.” (page 68)

Comment

Those infrastructure elements listed in 5.5.1 above, particularly the 12m high towers and the double height container wall, will also impact on the experience of approach and arrival at the Opera House. The ‘sculptural shapes’ will be masked and Utzon’s intended approach and arrival sequence will be fragmented and partially concealed.

The temporary relocation of the northern most set of containers will mitigate this impact to some degree, but the towers in front of the Bennelong roof shells will remain a major impact.

5.5.3 Forecourt and Monumental Steps

“This outdoor auditorium created by the grand staircase is of course part of the townscape and is also very dependent upon what goes on elsewhere in the city. Because as you sit on these stairs you look towards the city, and you have the city and its buildings as a background to whatever happens on the forecourt.” (page 67)

“Forecourt should not be cluttered with new buildings at any size.” (page 50)

Comment

Utzon envisaged the ‘grand staircase’ (Monumental Steps) would be used as seating for any performance or event in the Forecourt area. The proposed SOH – TO reverses this arrangement with seating on the Forecourt and performance on the steps. For this particular opera event, this is logical and reasonable, however it means that lighting towers and stage props etc are placed in the most sensitive part of this space – right in the main view lines of approach to the Opera House. The only mitigating factor is that the time for this event is limited to 25 days on site.

Utzon’s comment on clutter refers to buildings, however it equally applies to any structure on the Forecourt. Again the only mitigating factor is the limited timeframe this event infrastructure will be in place.

5.5.4 Performance venue

“The conception and the design of the Sydney Opera House is based on... the desire to create a building which will form a home for those activities essential to the cultural life of a big city.” (page 62)

“When completed, the Sydney Opera House will serve as a home for the cultural activities of the city and will inspire artists and technicians to present to the public the highest quality performance for many years to come.” (page 62)

Comment

The use of the Opera House and its site as a centre for the performing arts is fundamental to its conception and design. The staging of this event, SOH – TO, has as its subject the story of the Opera House, its conception and design. In that sense, the proposal to stage this performance in this location is supported.

The infrastructure required to stage and perform this opera on the Forecourt, Monumental Steps and Podium needs to be located where proposed and as a result will be intrusive to the setting and experience of the place itself outside of performance times.

It is therefore important that the timing for the set-up and removal of infrastructure is programmed to minimise intrusive impacts on the place. Refer to recommendations proposed in the Summary Conclusion below.

6.0 SUMMARY CONCLUSION

The proposed staging of *Sydney Opera House – The Opera* in October – November 2016 will have substantial temporary impacts on the setting of the Opera House, and on public access to the Forecourt, Podium, Monumental Steps and Vehicle Concourse. While acknowledging that this event and its associated infrastructure will be a temporary inconvenience to some lasting no longer than 25 days, for others, particularly those visitors with limited time, it may well be experienced as a major inconvenience and disappointment.

The subject of the opera is Sydney Opera House itself, and in that sense, this event will be seen and experienced by many as a celebration of the design and realisation of the building. The rationale for holding this particular opera event on the forecourt and podium steps in this configuration is therefore supported. Given the subject of the opera, it is considered an appropriate venue to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Opera Australia. It may also attract an audience that may not normally attend Sydney Opera House performances.

The documents provided by Opera Australia regarding this proposal indicate that the physical risks to the fabric of the Opera House have been identified and considered. These documents also confirm that visual impacts and functional inconvenience for patrons and visitors while the event is being set up, rehearsed, and then dismantled have also been identified and considered.

Design 5 met with Opera Australia to discuss the potential heritage impacts of this production, and confirm that substantial modifications were subsequently made to address these, particularly with regard to improved views and public access outside of rehearsal and performance times. However, as with most other large scale events on the Forecourt, there will still be substantial temporary impacts.

To further mitigate potentially negative impacts, the following recommendations are proposed for consideration by the proponent:

1. Stage, rear and side-stage trucks and props, when not in use and between blocks of performances should, where possible, be moved to the eastern end of the monumental steps to minimise visual intrusion and to maximise public access to these steps;
2. All containers, scaffold towers etc should be covered in a suitable screening material with appropriate graphics or artwork that reduces their visual impact and does not detract from or compete with the Opera House itself;
3. All infrastructure elements, including the proposed picket fencing should not be highly reflective, white or off-white, but a more neutral colour that does not compete with the Opera House shells or Podium (this excludes props used and visible only during the performance);
4. Potentially intrusive items, or those that inhibit public access should be installed at the last possible opportunity and removed as soon as possible and practicable after the performance. These include:
 - Hills Hoists at east end of Forecourt, and in Vehicle Concourse;
 - BOH marquee on the podium;
5. All event infrastructure and installations, including fencing and signage, should be of high quality design and execution, that does not diminish or detract from the setting and presentation of this World Heritage Listed site.
6. Infrastructure and installations required for this event must comply with the latest version of the Sydney Opera House Outdoor Event Guide.

We further recommend the staging of *Sydney Opera House – The Opera*, should be considered as a 'one-off' event and not used as a model for future events.

On balance, while the temporary impacts of staging *Sydney Opera House – The Opera* on the Forecourt and Podium in 2016 are substantial, they are considered acceptable and we recommend the application be approved.



Alan Croker 5th August 2016