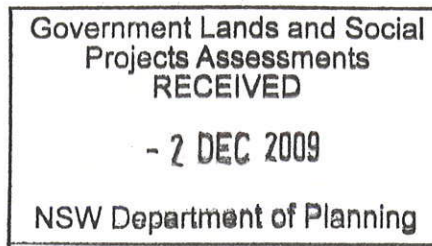


09591

2 December 2009

Mr Daniel Keary
Director of Government Land and Social Projects
Department of Planning
22 – 33 Bridge Street
Sydney NSW 2000



Dear Mr Keary

PART 3A REQUEST FOR MINISTER'S DECLARATION RAS/SOP EXHIBITION HALL

We are writing on behalf of Royal Agricultural Society (RAS), the proponent for the proposed alterations and additions to the RAS Exhibition Hall at Sydney Olympic Park, Homebush.

The purpose of this letter is to seek the Minister's opinion that the development proposal is a development of the kind described in Schedule 3 (State Significant Sites) of State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Development) 2005 (the Major Development SEPP) and therefore, is a 'major project' to be determined under Part 3A of the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act, 1979* (the EP&A Act).

Should the Minister form the necessary opinion, we request that:

- a) The Minister authorise the proponent to submit a Project Application for the proposed development; and
- b) The Director General issue the requirements as to the level and scope of the necessary documentation and assessment for the preparation of an Environmental Assessment to accompany a Project Application for the proposed development.

To support the request for the Director General's requirements relating to the environmental assessment, a Preliminary Assessment relating to the project is also included in this letter. The Preliminary Assessment provides detail on the site location and an outline of the project, and identifies the key environmental and planning issues associated with the proposal.

1.0 THE SITE

The site is located within the 'Sydney Showground Precinct' of Sydney Olympic Park at Homebush. It is bounded by Murray Rose Avenue to the south, Showground Road to the west, Riverina Avenue to the north and Australia Avenue to the east (see **Figure 1**). The RAS lease the site from the Sydney Olympic Park Authority. It is legally described as Lot 1021 & DP 875723.

The site has an area of 51,084m² and is occupied by the Royal Australia Exhibition Hall (RAS Exhibition Hall). The Hall comprises of a circular dome building and a rectangular building which are joined and can operate as one exhibition space or can be divided into 4 separate exhibition spaces. The RAS Hall has a total Gross Floor Area (GFA) of approximately 31,550m² and is generally constructed with a steel frame and metal cladding. Photos of the existing exhibition hall are provided in **Figures 2** through **5**. Under the Sydney Olympic Park Masterplan, the RAS Exhibition Hall is identified as an 'Iconic Structure' which was specifically built for the Olympic Games and is to be retained on the site.

The RAS exhibition centre is located immediately north of the Sydney Olympic Park train station which connects the site with the greater City Rail network. To the east of the site, on the opposite side of Australia Avenue is the western edge of Bicentennial Park. To the north of the site is the remainder of the Showground Precinct which comprises a series of stadiums and smaller exhibition spaces that have been predominantly designed for use during the Easter Show. To the west of the site is Showground Road which is an heritage item. Beyond Showground Road is a public park and the ANZ stadium.



The Site

Figure 1 – Site locality plan



Figure 2 – Northern elevation of the Exhibition Hall looking west



Figure 3 – Riverina Avenue looking east



Figure 4 – Western elevation of the Dome Building



Figure 5 – Existing entrances and service pods on the northern elevation of the hall

2.0 THE PROJECT

In mid 2008 an invited design competition was held for the expansion of the Convention, Conference and Exhibition facilities at the RAS facilities at the Sydney Showgrounds (SSG) Homebush.

This development was supported by John O'Neill in his state commissioned review of the Convention and Exhibition Industry in New South Wales.

However although the competition scheme was successful the project suffered funding constraints following the Mini-Budget. Therefore a staged project has been proposed to satisfy a smaller funding parcels which is the basis of this application.

The Project Application (PA) will seek consent for alterations and additions to the RAS Exhibition Hall. In summary the following is proposed:

- * Demolition of the two-storey service pods located to the north of the existing exhibition hall;
- * Construction of a new concourse along the northern edge of the exhibition hall to provide covered access to the hall;
- * Construction of 3 new single storey service pods within the new concourse structure providing toilet facilities and meeting room areas;
- * Installation new operable internal walls so to enable the further division of the exhibition space for smaller events;
- * Upgrade of the existing air-conditioning system within the hall by way of installation of new ducting in the roof space; and
- * Resurfacing of Riverina Avenue with concrete.

Plans showing the location of the proposed alterations and additions are included at **Attachment A**. The additions will have an approximate GFA of 4,685m². The primary reason for undertaking the above works is to improve the function of the exhibition hall during large events such as the Easter Show and to provide wet weather protection for patrons when moving between the different sections of the exhibition hall. It will also provide more flexible exhibition space which will appeal to a broader range of events, for example pre-event cocktails, registration and the like. The alterations will also improve and increase the number of toilet facilities and the function of the existing air-conditioning system.

There is no change proposed to the existing parking provided on the site and no new parking is proposed. Similarly, no changes are proposed to the existing servicing facilities on the site.

The preliminary cost estimate, prepared by WT Partnership Pty Ltd and included at **Attachment B**, suggests that the Capital Investment Value (CIV) of the Project is \$33,000,000. The RAS are hoping to start construction of the alterations and additions immediately following the 2010 Easter Show.

In order to expedite the delivery of the project, the RAS are considering the submission of a Part 4 application for early site preparation works. This application would include works such as demolition works, piling works and any subterranean service connections and would have a capital investment value of less than \$10 million. Therefore even if this application proceeds, the actual construction of the addition to hall will still have a CIV of \$20 million or more and remains within the scope of a Part 3A application. It is requested that the Director General's requirements be worded in such a way that either scenario is catered for i.e. for the early site preparation works are included in either the Part 3A application or a Part 4 application.

3.0 MAJOR PROJECTS SEPP 2005

Schedule 3, Part 23, Clause 5 of State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Development) 2005 states the following:

"Development within the Sydney Olympic Park site, including any associated subdivision of land, that has a capital investment value of more than \$10 million is a project to which Part 3A of the Act applies, other than development for the purpose of a public utility undertaking."

As noted above, the project has a CIV of \$33,000,000 (see **Attachment B**). It is therefore requested that the Minister advise her opinion that the proposed development is of a type listed in Schedule 3 of the SEPP and is therefore a Major Project to which Part 3A of the EP&A Act applies.

4.0 PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Once the Minister has formed her opinion regarding the status of the project, it is requested that the Director General issue the requirements for an environmental assessment to accompany a Project Application for the proposed development.

The requirements will identify the key issues to be addressed, the level of assessment required in relation to these issues and any other requirements in accordance with the environmental assessment guidelines.

The information below has been prepared to assist the Director-General in identifying the general requirements and key environmental issues associated with the project.

4.1 Approvals and Permits

In the absence of the provisions of Part 3A of the EP&A Act, the proposed development would not have required any approval or permit to be issued under a different Act.

4.2 Matter of National Significance

There are no known matters of national environmental significance on the site.

4.3 Key Environmental Impacts

The key environmental considerations associated with the proposed development are as follows:

- * Compliance with the Sydney Olympic Park Masterplan and other relevant planning controls;
- * Urban Design;
- * Equitable Access;
- * Function of the exhibition space and the Sydney Olympic Park Precinct;
- * Environmental and Construction Management;
- * Acoustic Impacts; and
- * Compliance with the Building Code of Australia.

These are discussed in more detail below.

Compliance with the Sydney Olympic Park Masterplan and other relevant planning controls

The Environmental Assessment Report (EAR) will contain an urban design assessment which will demonstrate the proposals compliance with the objectives and built form controls of the Draft Sydney Olympic Park Masterplan 2030. In particular the EAR will demonstrate that the proposed alterations and additions will not prevent the future redevelopment of the site to the immediate north of the exhibition hall as is currently proposed under the masterplan.

Other relevant instruments / guidelines that will also be referenced include:

- Major Projects SEPP
- Sydney Olympic Park Masterplan 2002
- Sydney Olympic Park Accessibility Guidelines

Urban Design

A design statement will be prepared by the architect outlining how the proposed additions have been designed to integrate and complement the form of the existing hall.

Equitable Access

An access report prepared by a specialist access consultant will accompany the EAR outlining the proposal's compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act and also the relevant Australian Standards.

Function of the exhibition space and the Sydney Olympic Park Precinct

Details of the proposed staging of the development will be provided which will demonstrate that the construction of the addition will not adversely impact on the operation of the hall or the general operation of the Olympic Park Precinct.

Acoustic Impacts

It is recognised that Acoustic Impacts are a significant issue for residents that live in close proximity to the site. In response to this, an Acoustic Impact Assessment will be prepared outlining potential acoustic impacts and the need for any mitigating measures in the event of any material impacts. A copy of the existing Noise Management Plan will also be included in the supporting documentation, with any amendments made if recommended by the acoustic specialist.

Compliance with the Building Code of Australia

Confirmation will be provided that the proposed development can comply with the relevant provisions of the BCA. Particularly those in relation to fire safety and management of large crowds.

Environmental and Construction Management

A Preliminary Environmental and Construction Management Plan (PECMP) will be submitted with the EAR outlining the general mitigation measures that will be put in place during construction works. In particular the PECMP will address the following issues:

- Air Quality
- Noise Impacts
- Soil and Water Management
- Construction Traffic Management
- Pedestrian and Cycle Safety

5.0 CONCLUSION

We trust that the above and enclosed Preliminary Assessment is sufficient to enable the Minister to form an opinion that the proposed development is a Major Project to be dealt with under Part 3A and to allow the Director General to issue requirements for the preparation of the necessary Environmental Assessment.

Should you have any queries about this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me on 9956 6962 or jbuchanan@jbaplanning.com.au.

Yours faithfully



Jennie Buchanan
Principal Planner