

**Preliminary  
Environmental  
Assessment  
Sydney Showground  
Main Arena  
Redevelopment**

Prepared on behalf of the  
Royal Agricultural Society (NSW)

August 2010

**urbis**

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## Executive Summary

This report has been prepared on behalf of the Royal Agricultural Society (NSW) (RAS) to seek the Director General's Environmental Assessment Requirements (DGEARs) for the preparation of a Major Project Application. The Major Project Application relates to proposed alterations and additions to the Sydney Showground Main Arena (Showground Main Arena) within Sydney Olympic Park to allow for its enhancement as a multi-purpose stadium and arena.

The Major Project Application will seek approval for:

- Reconfiguration of the Showground Main Arena into a multi-purpose oval capable of accommodating a range of cultural and sporting activities.
- Installation of a new video board and PA system.
- Increase in capacity up to 25,000 patrons (gross) accommodated within new open air and undercover grandstand seating and standing areas. This includes refurbishment of existing seating and stands as well as the construction of new stands.
- Dedicated broadcast, coaches and media stand on the centre line of the new oval on the northern side of the ground.
- Open air sport bar on centre line of the oval on the southern side of the ground.
- New perimeter fencing, entry structures, and egress gates.

The basis of the design of the proposed redeveloped Showground Main Arena has been to build on the success of the existing venue and expand where necessary to create up to 25,000 person capacity multi-purpose boutique oval based stadium. The upgraded Showground Main Arena will utilise where possible, the existing infrastructure of the Showground Main Arena and will be capable of hosting a variety of sporting and cultural events as well as enhancing the Showground Main Arena event opportunities during the annual Royal Easter Show.

All elements of the proposed development are consistent with the objectives and provisions of State and Local Government in terms of the use of the site. The project is situated within a gazetted area for Major Projects and has a capital investment value (CIV) of approximately \$73million and qualifies as a Major Development pursuant to State Environmental Planning Policy 2005 (Major Development).

Key issues relating to the proposal relate to visual impact; potential wind impacts; and timing. These planning issues will be assessed in the context of the environmental assessment report, as well the considerations relating to traffic management, event management, noise impact, public domain and landscaping, environmental management, access to sunlight and heritage. All issues and considerations will be assessed to ensure that any environmental impact is mitigated.

# 1 Introduction

This Preliminary Environmental Assessment report (PEA) has been prepared on behalf of the Royal Agricultural Society (NSW) (RAS) and is submitted to the Department of Planning pursuant to Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979. The PEA aims to inform the Director General in the preparation of Environmental Assessment Requirements for the preparation of a Major Project Application for the redevelopment of the Sydney Showground Main Arena (Showground Main Arena) within Sydney Olympic Park to allow for its enhanced use as a multi-purpose cultural and sporting event venue.

The PEA outlines the project and highlights the potential key issues associated with the construction and operation of the project. In summary, the Major Project Application will seek approval for:

- Reconfiguration of the Showground Main Arena into an oval capable of accommodating a range of sporting and cultural events.
- Installation of a new video board and PA system.
- Increase in capacity up to 25,000 patrons (gross) accommodated within new open air and undercover grandstand seating and standing areas. This includes refurbishment of existing seating and stands as well as the construction of new stands.
- Dedicated broadcast, coaches and media stand on the centre line of the new oval on the northern side of the ground.
- Open air sport bar on centre line of the oval on the southern side of the ground.
- New perimeter fencing, entry structures, and egress gates.

The basis of the design of the proposed redeveloped Showground Main Arena has been to build on the success of the existing venue and expand where necessary to create up to 25,000 person capacity multi-purpose boutique oval based stadium. The Stadium will utilise where possible, the existing infrastructure of the Showground Main Arena and will be capable of a range of sporting and cultural events as well as enhancing the Showground Main Arena event opportunities during the Royal Easter Show.

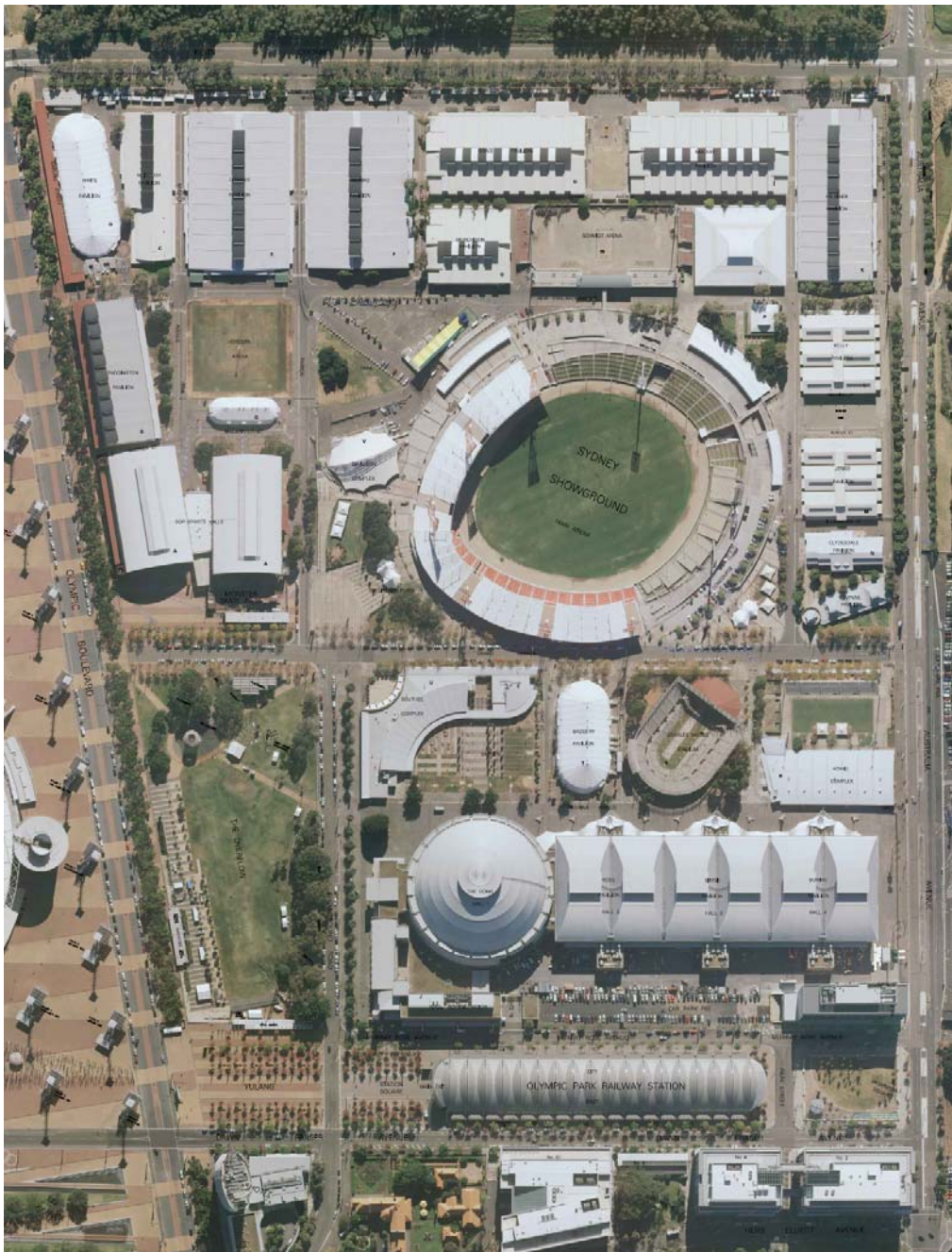
## 2 Site Details

### 2.1 Site Description

The Showground Main Arena forms part of the Sydney Showground Precinct as identified in the Sydney Olympic Park Masterplan 2030. The Precinct is defined by Olympic Boulevard and Murray Rose Avenue, Australia Avenue and Kevin Coombs Avenue. An aerial of the site indicating the extent of the site for this proposal is shown in **Figure 1** below.

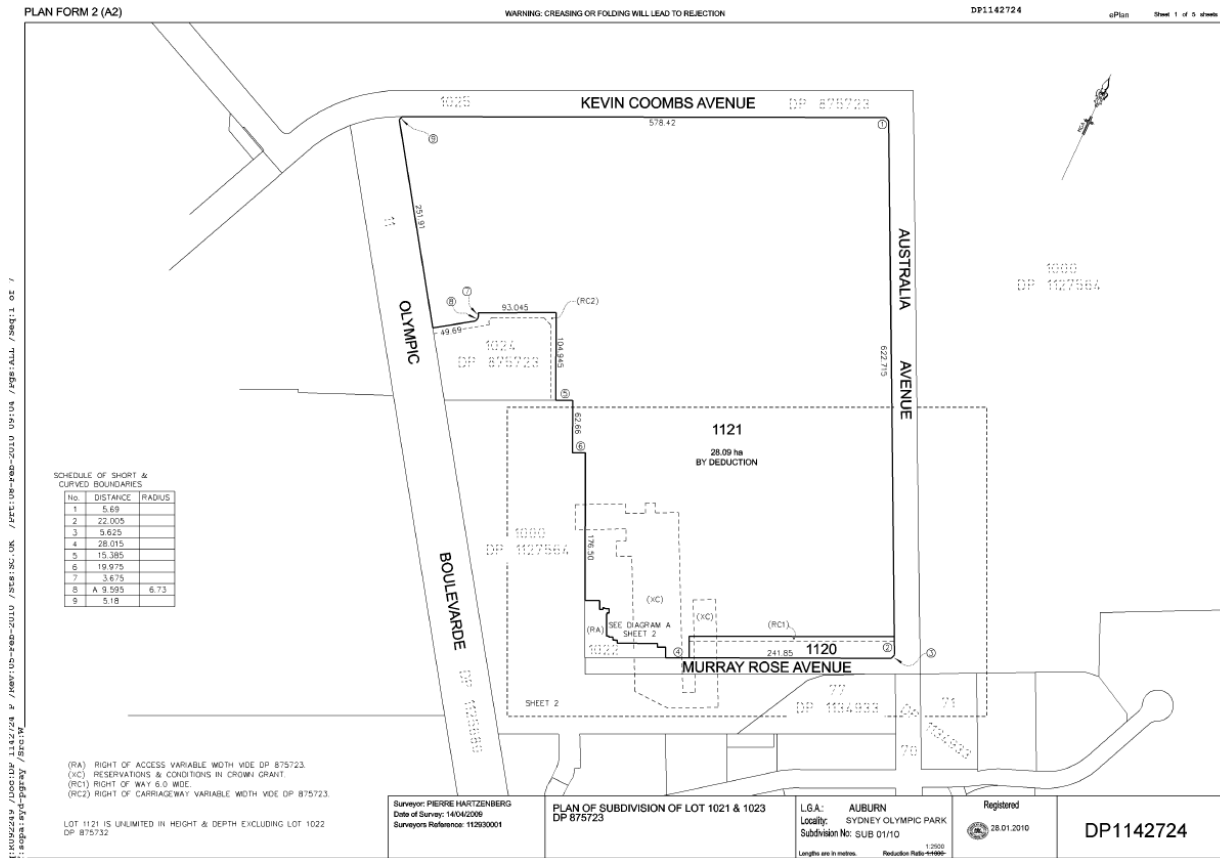
Figure 1 – Aerial View of the Sydney Showground Precinct.

The Showground Main Arena is shown located centrally within the Precinct



The legal description of the site is part of Lot 1121 in DP 1142724 (source Sydney Olympic Park Authority)

Figure 2 – Deposited Plan



The Showground Main Arena was designed to accommodate the baseball games of the 2000 Sydney Olympic and Para Olympic Games and has become the primary activity zone for the Royal Easter Show. The existing arena is a bowl formation of which one third of the bowl comprises a grass berm and the remainder is made of three 3 concrete seating tiers. Temporary seats are located on the grass berm to the south east of the field of play

## 2.2 Site Context

The Showground Main Arena is located in the north-eastern quadrant of Sydney Olympic Park. Sydney Olympic Park is a significant recreational, sporting and cultural asset in metropolitan Sydney, featuring a range of quality sports and entertainment venues. Sydney Olympic Park has also become an important economic centre, accommodating over 100 businesses and continues to attract major investment in commercial, sporting, education and hospitality development. The Sydney Olympic Park Masterplan also envisages a residential element, and multi-unit housing is currently under construction.

The Showground Main Arena is surrounded by activity zones associated with the Royal Easter Show which cater for a range of secondary show activities, accommodated within a range of buildings as illustrated in the figure below.

Locally, the Sydney Showground Precinct has an interface with the following precincts within Sydney Olympic Park, as described in the Sydney Olympic Park Master Plan 2030:

- Stadia Precinct to the west, across from Olympic Boulevard. This precinct host main events within the ACER arena and ANZ Stadium.

- Central Precinct to the south, across from Murray Rose Avenue. This precinct includes the Olympic Park railway station immediately south of the Showground precinct and forms a central core of commercial buildings, including hotels with a residential area to the fringe. It is designated to also become the new commercial heart of Sydney Olympic Park;
- General parkland areas to the north across Kevin Coombs Avenue and to the east, across from Australia Avenue. The northern portion of the Parkview Precinct also abuts the Sydney Showground precinct to the east. The Parkview Precinct is identified be in a predominantly residential area with some community uses.

In terms of access to the site, the greater site is serviced by:

- Olympic Park railway station to the south of the Showground precinct;
- Bus and taxi drop off on Australia Avenue;
- Private vehicular access from the local road network.

Figure 3 – Aerial View of Sydney Olympic Park



## 3 Description of Proposal

### 3.1 Redevelopment Need

The Showground Main Arena is an under-utilised public recreational and cultural asset that is potentially capable of accommodating a range of additional sporting and cultural events. This can be achieved by implementing relatively modest improvements to facilitate enhancement of opportunities for adaptive multiple-use. Central to these improvements are increases in arena capacity and reconfiguration of the existing arena surface.

### 3.2 Project Overview

The Showground Main Arena was originally constructed for the 2000 Sydney Olympic and Para Olympic Games primarily as the baseball venue for the Game with a legacy of forming the centrepiece of the new Sydney Showgrounds relocated from Moore Park and the conducting of the Royal Easter Show and other entertainment events.

The basis of the design of the proposed redeveloped Showground Main Arena has been to build on the success of the existing venue and expand where necessary to create up to 25,000 person capacity multi-purpose boutique oval based stadium. This reconfiguration in essence represents carrying our alterations and additions that will utilise where possible, the existing infrastructure of the Showground Main Arena and enhance its multi-use capability in 3 broad modes of use:

- Showground mode.
- Sporting mode.
- Concert event mode.

Other considerations for the redeveloped Showground Main Arena are as follows:

- Enhance the revenue generating opportunity for the stadium when hosting events by providing an increased mix of corporate, sponsor and members accommodation both within the existing stands and in the new north east and south east stands.
- Improve back of house circulation.
- Meet minimum venue standards.
- Provide additional seating, public amenity and revenue options for the Showground Main Arena both during the Royal Easter Show and other community, cultural and entertainment events.
- Provide a state of the art high definition video replay screen and stadium sound system to provide a unique event day experience for all patrons.
- Utilise as much of the existing stadium infrastructure as possible.
- Provide a cost effective design solution that enhances the Showground Main Arena.
- Inclusion of a removable security fence comprising of pivoting sections that allow full flexibility between ticketed and non-ticketed modes.
- Redefine the lower seating bowl and provide a consistent lower seating bowl through the regrading of the earth tiered berm to the eastern half of the Showground Main Arena and the extension of the existing lower seating tier.
- Constraints during the construction phase while holding major events like the Royal Easter Show and Big Day Out.

### 3.3 General Description of Proposed Works

As the design is still being resolved, a detailed schedule of proposed works will be included in the Environmental Assessment document. The redevelopment involves a capital investment value (CIV) of approximately \$73m and will entail to the following alterations and additions to the Showground Main Arena:

- Reconfiguration of the Showground Main Arena into a symmetrical oval capable of accommodating an enhanced range of sporting and cultural events.
- New lower tier to the eastern half of the ground.
- New north east stand for corporate patrons and media.
- New south east stand for General Admission and Members seating.
- Installation of a new video board and PA system.
- Increase in capacity up to 25,000 patrons (gross) accommodated within new open air and undercover grandstand seating and standing areas. This includes refurbishment of existing seating and stands as well as the construction of new stands.
- Dedicated broadcast, coaches and media stand on the centre line of the new oval on the northern side of the ground.
- Open air sport bar on centre line of the oval on the southern side of the ground.
- New perimeter fencing, entry structures, egress gates and perimeter security.

An illustrative concept image of the redeveloped arena is shown in Figure 4 below. It is noted that the redevelopment is accommodated within the curtilage of the existing Showground Main Arena

Figure 4 – Illustrative Concept showing Redeveloped Showground Main Arena



## 4 Statutory Planning

### 4.1 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

Part 3A of the EP&A Act requires that major projects obtain approval from the Minister for Planning. Development is defined as a 'Major Project' to which Part 3A applies either by being identified within a State Environmental Planning Policy (see SEPP Major Projects below), or by order of the Minister published in the Gazette.

The Major Project approval process provides for the Minister for Planning to undertake a co-ordinated, whole of government assessment of the merits of a proposal that has significance to the State or region.

Section 75F of the EP&A Act relates to the Environmental assessment requirements for approval which includes the process of seeking the Director –General's environmental assessment requirements (DGEARs). This PEA accordingly seeks the DGEARs for the proposed Major Project to enable the preparation of an Environmental Assessment Report.

### 4.2 State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Development) 2005

Schedule 3 of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Development) 2005 identifies Sydney Olympic Park, which includes the Showground Main Arena as a State Significant Site. Development within Sydney Olympic Park with a CIV of more than \$10 million is subject to the Part 3A process under the EP&A Act.

The proposed Showground Main Arena redevelopment has a CIV of \$73 million, confirming that the project falls within the ambit of Schedule of the SEPP. Pursuant to Clause 6 of the Major Development SEPP, the proponent lodged a request on the 17 August 2010 seeking the Minister's confirmation that the project will be subject to the provisions of the Part 3A of the EP&A Act.

Other relevant provisions of the Major Projects SEPP include:

- Permissibility – the proposal does not alter the approved use of the land.
- Height – there is no maximum height for the site.
- Floor Space Ratio – there is no maximum floor space ratio for the site.

### 4.3 State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007

The Infrastructure SEPP provides a mechanism by which the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) is given the opportunity to comment on the impact of a development proposal that meets certain criteria relating to potential traffic generation.

The Project Application will be required to be referred to the RTA as it involves a sportsground facility associated with a likely generation of over 200 vehicles.

### 4.4 State Environmental Planning Policy No.55 - Remediation of Land

SEPP 55 provides the planning provisions for the remediation of contaminated land. Investigations into the potential contamination of the land will be undertaken and any measures required to remediate the land will be provided in the environmental assessment.

## 4.5 Sydney Regional Environmental Plan - Sydney Harbour Catchment 2005

Sydney Regional Environmental Plan - Sydney Harbour Catchment 2005 (deemed to be a SEPP) relates to Sydney Harbour, including Parramatta River and its tributaries and the Lane Cove River. This instrument includes a range of matters for consideration by consent authorities assessing development within the Sydney Harbour Catchment.

As the site is not within designated Foreshores and Waterways Area, nor identified as a Strategic Site, the instrument has limited applicability, relating to the planning principles for land within the Sydney Harbour Catchment in general. These planning principles will be addressed in the environmental assessment.

## 4.6 Sydney Olympic Park Master Plan 2030

The Sydney Park Master Plan 2030 (the Master Plan) recently came into effect on the 10 March 2010 and provides a 22 year vision for the development of Sydney Olympic Park. A range of guidelines and controls for the future development of the Sydney Olympic Park is provided and will be required to be addressed within the Major Projection application as follows:

- Planning Principles

A range of planning principles relating to existing site elements; sustainability; land uses; public domain; landscape; access and transport; building form and height; major event capability; new facilities and infrastructure; neighbourhood and community; and implementation.

- General controls and guidelines

A range of controls and guidelines relating to sustainability; public domain; event access and closures; land uses and density; building form and amenity; access and parking; transport strategies and infrastructure; landscape; and community facilities.

- Precinct controls and guidelines

The Sydney Showground Precinct has a set of precinct specific controls and guidelines which entail consideration to site configuration, floor space ratio, land use and building height controls. Other provisions include building zone and setback controls; and event controls.

These provisions generally do not relate to the Showground Main Arena site as they apply to land suitable for further expansion of its exhibition, conference and convention facilities as well as agricultural, education and entertainment adjacent to The Overflow. Notwithstanding, the Major Project Application will ensure consideration to any of these relevant precinct specific provisions.

- Information required for Project Applications

A range of information is required to accompany the Major Project Application. Following discussions with SOPA officers, the key issue relates to visual impact and wind impact. Other relevant considerations relate to landscape and public domain; contamination and remediation; travel management; shadow diagrams; noise impact; event management; environmental management include sustainability; and waste management.

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## 5 Strategic Planning Considerations

### 5.1 Draft West Central Subregional Strategy

The Draft West Central Subregional Strategy provides an overall management and development strategy of the western subregion up to 2031. It provides a basis for coordinating planning and economic development, environmental management, open space systems and targets for dwelling and employment growth in each Local Government Area of the subregion.

In conjunction with Rhodes, Sydney Olympic Park is identified as one of the subregion's specialised centres that perform vital economic and employment roles of metropolitan Sydney. In respect to Sydney Olympic Park itself, it is identified as a major recreational and tourism attraction for the region.

Further consideration to the Draft West Central Subregional strategy will be included in the environmental assessment.

## 6 Preliminary Environmental Assessment

### 6.1 Key Planning Issues

The key planning issues associated with the proposed upgrade and alterations have been determined in relation to the nature of the project, discussions with SOPA and matters contained within the SOPA Master Plan 2030. These key issues relate to design quality and visual impact; potential wind impacts; and timing of the planning approvals process insofar as they affect the continued use of the Showground Main Arena.

#### 6.1.1 Design Quality and Visual Impact

The proposed alterations and additions is required to respect a key design principle of ensuring the Showground Main Arena reflects a multi purpose facility, in particular retaining the historical association of the Royal Agricultural Association (NSW) and the Royal Easter Show, as well enabling its use for a range of other sporting and cultural events..

The Showground Main Arena is an architecturally distinctive venue, featuring a suspended, barrel-vaulted roof and lightweight light towers. To ensure the visual and architectural design of the structure is not compromised, the basis of the proposed upgrading is to reuse, recycle and refurbish where possible with minimal additions.

The most significant alteration to the overall structure is a design scheme that entails the proposed north-east and south-east stands with two floating lightweight roofs that reflect an extension of the existing roof forms of the Showground Main Arena stands.

In terms of visual impact, the proposed additions will respect the existing architectural massing and style of the structure and will represent an appropriate addition to the context of the Showground precinct and the Sydney Olympic Park setting, maintaining the overall presence of Sydney Olympic Park. A detailed assessment of visual impacts will be included in the environmental assessment report.

#### 6.1.2 Wind Impact Analysis

The proposed additions of two new stands and associated roof forms will require assessment relative to potential wind impacts upon the surrounding public domain areas. A wind assessment will be undertaken and include measures to mitigate any exacerbation of existing wind conditions upon public domain areas.

#### 6.1.3 Timing for Planning Approvals Process – Stadium Operation

In recognition of the importance and significance of the current operations of the Showground Main Arena, the Showground Main Arena will continue to host the Royal Easter Show in 2011. Accordingly, construction programming and management must be capable to working within this operational need of the Arena

### 6.2 Other matters for consideration

Aside from the above key planning issues, the proposed alteration works is assessed relative to the following considerations.

#### 6.2.1 Travel Management

The proposal entails an increase in capacity from some 10,000 existing seats to 25,000 seats. Taking into account the overall capacity of Sydney Olympic Park, the planned expansion is well within the current traffic generation of events held at Sydney Olympic Park (up to 250,000 patrons in one day), such that traffic impacts generated by the proposed additional seats is minimal and within that already planned for Sydney Olympic Park. These existing events include:

- the Royal Easter Show;
- ANZ Stadium sporting events with a capacity 83,500;
- Acer Arena concerts with a capacity of 21,000; and
- Music festivals with a capacity of over 50,000.

During these major / peak events, the majority of patrons visiting Sydney Olympic Park arrive via public transport given the site's ease of access from Olympic Park railway station. It is not proposed to include additional parking to encourage the use of public transport for future events at the Showground Main Arena.

Further details relative to traffic assessment; event periods and public transport will be provided in the environmental assessment.

### 6.2.2 Event Management

The proposed increase in capacity of the existing facility will enhance the major event hosting capacity of Sydney Olympic Park. As outlined above, the overall capacity of Sydney Olympic Park has been designed to accommodate up to 250,000 patrons per day, such that an additional 15,000 patrons will not result in any cumulative impact.

The environmental assessment will include an assessment relative to SOPA event management considerations such as:

- Operating impact on Sydney Olympic Park's major event capability and measures to avoid impacts, such as crowd safety and emergency management.
- Impacts from construction on Sydney Olympic Park's major event capability and measures to avoid impacts.

### 6.2.3 Noise Impact

The proposed works will not change the function of the Showground Main Arena or the underlying function of the Showground Precinct or Sydney Olympic Park as a major sporting and entertainment precinct. The proposed alterations aim to enhance the use of the existing facilities for a wider range of events, as well as accommodating existing events.

The anticipated noise levels associated with an additional 15,000 seats will be within the current noise levels arising from existing sporting and music events held within Sydney Olympic Park, such as sporting events at ANZ Stadium that has a capacity 83,500 and outdoor music festivals, such as Big Day Out, with a capacity of over 50,000 patrons.

Further details relative to noise impacts will be provided in the environmental assessment.

### 6.2.4 Public Domain and Landscaping

External works that relate to the public domain and landscaped areas will be limited to:

- Provision of coach team drop off area to provide direct access to the player's facilities on the northern side of the Showground Main Arena.
- Provision of new removable security fence to define the perimeter of the Showground Main Arena. The removable security fence will enable the reconfiguration of the Showground Main Arena from a secure ticketed venue during sporting and cultural events to an open access venue during the Royal Easter Show.

The impacts of these works will be assessed relative to existing public domain and landscaping elements and whether reconfiguration will be required to accommodate these elements.

### 6.2.5 Environmental Management

The proposed upgrade works will include construction of environmentally sensitive features to ensure that water and energy use is minimised. A Design Environmental Management Plan will detail the measures to implement the sustainable design initiatives of the project such as:

- Stormwater reuse
- Solar water heating
- Water sensitive stormwater design
- Adaptive reuse of existing buildings
- Recycling of building materials
- Waste minimisation.

A Construction Environmental Management plan; Operational Management plan and Waste Management plan will be prepared as part of the environmental assessment.

### 6.2.6 Access to Sunlight

The proposed new seating stands and roof structures will provide an additional building element to the overall envelope of the existing structure. Shadow diagrams will be submitted demonstrate overshadowing impacts to the public domain.

### 6.2.7 Geotech and Contamination

Given the nature of the use of the stadium is not to be changed; a contamination assessment is unlikely to be required. Geotech investigations will be undertaken to determine the suitability of the existing berms.

### 6.2.8 Services

The proposed works will dispose sewage into the existing sewer system and the internal network will be upgraded as necessary. Consultation will be undertaken with the relevant service agency to ensure that infrastructure and capacity is appropriately addressed.

Consultation will be undertaken with the relevant service agency to ensure that the existing system will be appropriately amplified to serve the proposed works.

### 6.2.9 Heritage

The Showground Main Arena is not listed as an item of environmental heritage is not located within a heritage conservation area. The nearest heritage conservation area is the Abattoir Heritage Precinct south of the site, commencing from Showground Road to Herb Elliot Avenue. There are no individual heritage items within proximity to the site.

As the site of the Showground Main Arena does not have a direct relationship with the heritage conservation area, a detailed heritage assessment will not be undertaken in the environmental assessment.

### 6.2.10 Stakeholders

A range of stakeholders will be consulted throughout the approval process. These will include:

- Department of Planning.
- Sydney Olympic Park Authority.

- Auburn Council.
- Department of Transport.
- Roads and Traffic Authority.
- State Transit Authority.
- NSW Industry & Investment.

Consultation will continue and will be documented in the environmental assessment report.

## 7 Conclusion

The proposed investment into redevelopment of the Showground Main Arena represents an exciting opportunity to provide for an enhanced multi-use sporting and cultural event venue for the people of NSW. The Showground Main Arena was purpose built for the 2000 Sydney Olympic and Para Olympic Games and as the focal point for the Royal Easter Show. However, its current configuration is limiting on its ability to attract and accommodate a broader range of use and activity. This has created a degree of under-utilisation for what is otherwise significant asset within a world class events venue, being the wider Sydney Olympic Park.

The basis of the design of the proposed works to the Showground Main Arena has been to build on the success of the existing venue and expand where necessary to create up to 25,000 person capacity multi-purpose boutique oval based stadium. The Stadium will utilise where possible, the existing infrastructure of the Showground Main Arena and will be capable of hosting a range of sporting and cultural events as well as enhancing the main arena event opportunities during the Royal Easter Show.

This report has been prepared to provide the Department of Planning with an understanding of the project and including an initial scoping and assessment of matters to be assessed. The proposal will work within the existing capacity of Sydney Olympic Park terms of traffic management, event management and expected noise impacts an aim to improve and enhance function of the existing facility.

Upon review of this report, it is requested that the Director-General issue Environmental Assessment Requirements for the proposal to assist in the preparation of the Environmental Assessment documentation for the Project Application

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