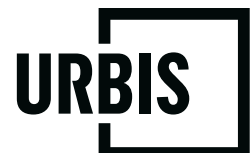




TARONGA ZOO UPPER AUSTRALIA PRECINCT

Modification Report

Prepared for
TARONGA CONSERVATION SOCIETY AUSTRALIA
December 2021



URBIS STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS REPORT WERE:

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1. INTRODUCTION

This Modification Report has been prepared on behalf of Taronga Conservation Society Australia pursuant to section 4.55(2) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (**EP&A Act**). The application seeks to modify Development Consent SSD-10456 relating to the Upper Australia Precinct of Taronga Zoo.

1.1. APPLICANT DETAILS

The applicant details for the proposed modification are listed in the following table.

Table 1 Applicant Details

Descriptor	Proponent Details
Full Name(s)	Taronga Conservation Society Australia
Postal Address	2A Bradleys Head Rd
ABN	41 733 619 876
Nominated Contact	Garry Neilsen, Project Manager

1.2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Taronga Zoo is located at Bradleys Head Road, Mosman and is situated in the Mosman Local Government area (LGA). The site is bounded by Bradleys Head Road to the east, Athol Wharf Road and Sydney Harbour to the south, Little Sirius Cove to the west and Whiting Beach Road to the north. Taronga Zoo is legally described as Lot 22 on DP843294 and is Crown Land managed by the TCSA (the Zoological Park Board).

Taronga Zoo has evolved over time from a Zoo that simply provides the traditional visitor experience of viewing animals in exhibits, to a Zoo that focusses on wildlife conservation, animal welfare and providing a range of visitor learning experiences. Taronga Zoo is one of Australia's most popular attractions, and together with Taronga Western Plains Zoo hosts more than 1.5 million visitors annually and contributes an estimated \$249 million per annum to the NSW economy. Taronga Zoo is a significant tourism attractor to the Mosman area and plays an important role in Mosman LGA, providing employment opportunities and contributing to the local economy.

The Upper Australia Precinct is surrounded on three sides by existing zoo facilities and adjoins Bradleys Head Road near the northern main zoo entrance. Adjoining the subject site, to the south, is the Australia Habitat Phase 1 and Taronga Wildlife Retreat which is completed and was open until the current COVID-19 pandemic forced its temporary closure. On the opposite side of Bradleys Head Road to the east of the site is Sydney Harbour National Park. The nearest residential areas to the proposed site are approximately 200 metres to the north on Bradleys Head Road and Whiting Beach Road. These areas are separated from the project site by the National Park and the zoo's car parking, forecourt and main entrance building.

The current Precinct contains existing exhibits and infrastructure for Australian animals. The existing facilities largely comprise open air exhibits, animal enclosures, pathways, landscaping and associated infrastructure/servicing areas. Existing uses and facilities in the Upper Australia Precinct area include:

- Avian Wetlands;
- Wild Ropes Course;
- Nocturnal House;
- Macropod Walk-through
- Koala Encounters venue; and
- Platypus House.

1.2.1. Approved Development

SSDA-10456 was approved on 21 December 2020 for the redevelopment of an animal exhibit known as the 'Upper Australia Precinct', which will complete the entire Australian precinct, including key attractions such as the Nocturnal House, Macropod walk and the commercial Koala Encounters venue. The Upper Australia Precinct is one of the pillars of Taronga's Centenary Capital Plan and will be a major tourist destination for international tourists to view Australian wildlife. The renewal of this area of the zoo will enhance the native landscape strategy of the existing precinct and greater communicate the connection of wildlife and the environment. The proposal aims to enhance the guest experience and presentation of Taronga Zoo with a focus to improve the welfare of animals.

The approved development will completely refurbish the existing Upper Australia Precinct, including a new exhibit design and layouts. This includes demolition of existing structures, and some excavation works, while still remaining sympathetic to the design intent of the original 1970s exhibits. The Upper Australia Precinct will display critically endangered Australian animals that form part of Taronga's wildlife conservation and education programs and upgrade "star" attractions including kangaroo, koala, platypus, wombat and emu exhibits. The approved development will incorporate three main exhibits:

- The existing Nocturnal House building will be reconfigured to improve functionality and accessibility as well as creating an immersive experience for guests with new exhibit design in a simulated night-time setting. The completion of Nocturnal House will provide Taronga Zoo with an innovative space to display nocturnal Australian animals.
- A new Koala Encounter and public koala canopy walk will be constructed to provide guests with a more naturalistic experience with koalas. An elevated walkway and tree house located 3-4 metres above the ground will be constructed within existing trees, the area will be supplemented with additional trees to create a forest. This will be located in the same vicinity as existing koala facility along Bradley's Head Road and provide a new space for educational koala talks within the Precinct.
- Macropod walkthrough will be extended to replace the existing wetland area. The topography is to be retained and the exhibit will be heavily landscaped to enhance the presentation and welfare of the various macropod/kangaroos that will be housed in this large open range exhibit.

Additional works approved as part of the Upper Australia Precinct redevelopment include the following:

- Creation of a new defined western entry for the precinct;
- Upgrades to back of house facilities for animal care;
- Additional toilets and amenities for staff and visitors;
- Other supporting infrastructure and walkways; and
- Modifications to the existing Wild Ropes Course including removal and reinstatement of poles necessary to accommodate the design.

A modification to the approved Upper Australia Precinct was approved by DPIE in August 2021 which included the following modifications:

- Partial replacement of the approved Koala exhibit with a Dingo exhibit,
- Amendments to the overall landscaping and fence design,
- Removal of 6 trees due to exhibit changes and updates to associated biodiversity offsets
- Amend conditions relating to bushfire management to reflect TSCA safety protocols.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The following table provides an overview of the consistency of the proposed modifications with the relevant strategic plans. As outlined, the approved development as proposed to be amended remains consistent with the strategic planning objectives for the locality.

Table 2 Proposal Strategic Compliance

Strategy	Comment
NSW Premier's Priorities	The modification will remain consistent with a key Premier priority to maintain a strong economy via the creation of 800 jobs including design, project management and construction over the 18-month design development and construction period as well as ongoing operational jobs, TCSA maintains its international reputation as a world class zoo, with immersive and educational animal exhibits.
Greater Sydney Region Plan: A Metropolis of Three Cities	The Upper Australia proposal will continue to improve and enhance the existing zoo facilities and is generally consistent with the various objectives of the Greater Sydney Region Plan. In particular, the project will continue to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Modernise an important attraction within Taronga Zoo, strengthening Sydney's tourism sector; ▪ Strengthen Sydney's competitive economy by providing economic benefits and contributing to job creation; and ▪ Protect Sydney Harbour and its foreshore through sensitive design and landscaping.
Zoo 2000 – 'The View to the Future' Master Plan	Notably the modified proposal will continue to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide for the continued use of the site as a Zoological Garden, with this precinct housing Australian animals; ▪ Preserve the unique topography of the site; ▪ Not impact on significant views within and from the site; and ▪ Promote the evolution of enclosure design with the exhibits improving animal conditions in accordance with best-practice.
Taronga Zoo Centenary Master Plan 2015	Will result in the completion of a government funded project to finalise the 2015 Centenary Plan.
Our Greater Sydney 2056: North District Plan 2018	The proposed redevelopment of the Upper Australia Precinct will continue to align with the District Plan by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting the growth of an internationally recognised tourism destination. ▪ Providing upgraded facilities to meet changing needs of visitors and contribute to the ongoing operation of a historically significant facility. ▪ Providing continued job opportunities within the District.

Strategy	Comment
Mosman Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020	<p>In particular, the project will continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide improved facilities to meet community needs, and foster a culturally rich, creative and socially connected Mosman community. ▪ Protect, conserve and enhance Mosman’s urban tree canopy, landform, waterways and bushland setting. ▪ Protect, conserve and enhance the natural, visual, environmental and heritage qualities of Mosman’s foreshore scenic area, and significant views to and from foreshore slopes. ▪ Provides opportunities for local employment during construction.

3. DESCRIPTION OF MODIFICATIONS

This section describes the proposed modifications to the architectural and landscape plans. It includes a comparative analysis of the original development and the proposed modifications, justifying the lodgement of the application in accordance with section 4.55(2) of the EP&A Act. Copies of the amended plans prepared by Lahznimmo Architects accompany this application (**Appendix A**).

3.1. TREE REMOVAL

During preliminary construction on site, thirteen locally endemic trees have been identified as potentially requiring removal as they are damaged or will have major encroachments into their Tree Protection Zones (TPZ) and/or Structural Root Zones (SRZ). These trees were not identified in the original SSDA or first modification as trees on site have grown since the survey used to prepare the Arboricultural Report prepared by Sydney Arbor Trees was prepared with roots now in locations which will be impacted by construction. The trees to be removed include:

- Tree 20 *Eucalyptus robusta* (Swamp Mahogany) – not impacted by the development however, the tree has a basal wound with internal decay and a vertical crack over development site within a fall distance of the children’s play area.
- Tree 45 *Eucalyptus saligna* (Sydney Blue Gum) – the tree has expired due to the ropes course attachments, which has induced irreversible decline.
- Tree 67 *Banksia integrifolia* (Coast Banksia) – the proposal works are within the TPZ and SRZ.
- Tree 87 *Hymenosporum flavum* (Native Frangipani) – the proposed works are within the TPZ and SRZ.
- Tree 92 *Eucalyptus robusta* (Swamp Mahogany) – the proposed works are within the TPZ and SRZ.
- Tree 123 *Eucalyptus botryiodes* (Bangalay) – this tree is subject to removal as it failed during an extreme weather event.
- Tree 129 *Melaleuca quinquenervia* (Broad-leaved Paperbark) and Tree 130 *Casuarina cunninghamiana* (River She-oak). The proposed development will cut into the SRZ of these two trees. Tree 130 also has a substantial lean over the proposed path hence, these trees are to be removed.
- Tree 156 and Tree 157 *Eucalyptus botryiodes* (Bangalay) – the proposal will encroach on their TPZ and SRZ.
- Tree 162 *Casuarina cunninghamiana* (River She-oak) – the proposed works are within the TPZ and SRZ.
- Tree 179 and Tree 185 *Lophostemon confertus* (Brushbox) – the proposed works are within the TPZ and SRZ.

While it is TSCA’s intention to retain these trees if possible, this modification is proposed to ensure that if tree removal is required due to approved construction works, development consent has been approved and adequate tree replacement can be undertaken on site in a timely manner and not impact on construction timing. Replacement trees are likely to be planted within the broader Taronga Zoo site to ensure the cumulative impacts are minimised but will ensure no additional impacts on bushfire risk and current bushfire management measures identified within the SSDA are caused by the modifications.

This modification application is also accompanied by amended Arboricultural Assessment prepared by Sydney Arbor Trees (**Appendix B**), an amended Biodiversity Development Application Report (BDAR) prepared by Narla Environmental (**Appendix C**), and a Heritage Impact Statement prepared by Urbis (**Appendix D**).

3.2. REFLECTIVITY

Condition B7 currently requires all materials used within the project to not exceed 20% visible light reflectivity and to ensure the approved development is designed to minimise glare. The approved translucent roof on the new main exhibit public congregation area within the Koala Treehouse does not reflect this condition. This shaded area is a fundamental design element for the Upper Australia Precinct and provides cover and dappled diffused light for public amenity. Interpretive artwork has also been designed using sunlight to sit on the underside of the roof and projects onto the deck below. As such, we propose that the condition is removed in its entirety.

The removal of this condition is considered an acceptable response for the site for the following reasons:

- The location of the roof within the Zoo site will ensure reflections from the roof will have no impacts on neighbouring properties, surrounding roads or public domain. The roof form also faces away from Bradleys Head Road to further mitigate any potential impacts.
- The roof is surrounded by dense tree coverage and sits within the tree canopy of the Zoo. As such, any reflectivity within the Zoo will be masked by foliage cover.
- The roof pitch is at a relatively low angle of 7.5 degrees limiting any reflectivity at eye level.

While the current approved translucent roof will have reflectivity greater than 20%, this would occur with any light coloured roofing material. Overall the development has been designed to glare and has no impacts on the amenity of the Zoo, neighbouring properties or surrounding publicly accessible areas.

3.3. AMENDED CONDITIONS

To reflect the proposed amendments in relation to tree removal, the following amendments are proposed to the current conditions of consent.

The proposed modifications to the conditions of the consent are shown by a strike through the deleted text and red text for new text.

Terms of Consent

A2. The development may only be carried out:

...

(e) In accordance with the approved plans in the table below.

Table 3 Amended Architectural Drawing table

Architectural Drawings prepared by Lahznimmo Architects			
Drawing No.	Revision	Name of Plan	Date
A-DA-001	02	Cover page	15/06/2020
A-DA-002	02	Site Analysis	15/06/2020
A-DA-003	02	Site Survey	15/06/2020
A-DA-011	02	Existing Site Plan	15/06/2020
A-DA-012	02	Early Works Demolition Site Plan	15/06/2020
A-DA-013	02	Early Works Temporary End State Site Plan	15/06/2020
A-DA-2-01	02	Site Demolition Plan	22/06/2021
A-DA-015	01	Nocturnal Housing Demolition Site Plan	15/06/2020
A-DA-2-02	01	Site Plan	22/06/2021
A-DA-022	03	Site Sections	03/08/2021
A-DA-023	03	Site Sections	03/08/2021
A-DA-2-03	01	Site Sections/Elevations	12/03/2021
A-DA-2-04	01	Boundary Fence	12/03/2021

Architectural Drawings prepared by Lahznimmo Architects			
A-DA-101	02	Pavilion & ropes bridge floor plan	15/06/2020
A-DA-102	02	Pavilion & ropes bridge sections & elevations	15/06/2020
A-DA-201	02	Tree house & koala walk floor plan	15/06/2020
A-DA-202	02	Tree house & koala walk roof plan	15/06/2020
A-DA-203	02	Tree house & koala walk sections	15/06/2020
A-DA-2-05	02	Dingo Exhibit	22/06/2021
A-DA-401	01	Nocturnal house ground floor plan	15/06/2020
A-DA-402	01	Nocturnal house sections and elevations	15/06/2020
A-DA-501	02	Macropods holding yard floor plan, sections and elevations	15/06/2020
Landscape Drawings prepared by Lahznimmo Architects			
Drawing No.	Revision	Name of Plan	Date
A-DA-2-07	05 06	Tree protection and removal plan	22/06/2021 26/10/2021
A-DA-2-08	04	Landscape Plan	22/06/2021
A-DA-2-09	02	Planting zones plan	12/03/2021
A-DA-703	02	Planting palette	15/06/2020
A-DA-2-10	0	Planting palette	12/03/2021
A-DA-2-11	02	Surface treatment plan	12/03/2021
A-DA-2-12	03	Level Plan	12/03/2021
A-DA-2-06	01	Shadow Diagrams	12/03/2021

Biodiversity Offsets (Condition B24)

B24. A total of ~~4~~ 5 ecosystem credits and ~~3~~ 5 species credits must be retired prior to the commencement of any vegetation clearing. Details confirming compliance must be provided to the Certifier and Planning Secretary.

Construction Environmental Management Plan

B30. Prior to the commencement of works, the Applicant shall prepare and implement a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the development and be submitted to the Certifier. The CEMP must:

...

(t) include the relevant recommendations detailed in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment, prepared by Sydney Arbor Trees, dated 18 June 2020; and the addendum Arboricultural Impact Assessment, prepared by Sydney Arbor Trees, dated 9 December 2021

(u) include a site-specific tree protection plan

(v) include the relevant recommendation and mitigation measures detailed in the Biodiversity Development Assessment Report, prepared by Narla Environmental, dated 4 November 2020 **October 2021**

Protection of Trees (Condition 41)

C41. During construction, trees must be managed in accordance with the site-specific tree protection plan in the CEMP and in accordance with the relevant recommendations detailed in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment, prepared by Sydney Arbor Trees, dated 18 June 2020 **and the addendum Arboricultural Impact Assessment, prepared by Sydney Arbor Trees, dated 9 November 2021**

During construction, if any of the following trees require removal, adequate tree replacement is required on site:

- Tree 20 *Eucalyptus robusta* (Swamp Mahogany)
- Tree 45 *Eucalyptus saligna* (Sydney Blue Gum)
- Tree 67 *Banksia integrifolia* (Coast Banksia)
- Tree 87 *Hymenosporum flavum* (Native Frangipani)
- Tree 92 *Eucalyptus robusta* (Swamp Mahogany)
- Tree 123 *Eucalyptus botryiodes* (Bangalay)
- Tree 129 *Melaleuca quinquenervia* (Broad-leaved Paperbark)
- Tree 130 *Casuarina cunninghamiana* (River She-oak).
- Tree 156 *Eucalyptus botryiodes* (Bangalay)
- Tree 157 *Eucalyptus botryiodes* (Bangalay)
- Tree 162 *Casuarina cunninghamiana* (River She-oak)
- Tree 179 *Lophostemon confertus* (Brushbox)
- Tree 185 *Lophostemon confertus* (Brushbox)

4. STATUTORY CONTEXT

This section assesses the proposed modifications in accordance with section 4.55 of the EP&A Act including a comprehensive assessment of whether the modified proposal is substantially the same as the original approval.

The EIS submitted with the original SSDA application addressed the development against the following planning instruments and policies (in accordance with the project SEARs):

- *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
- *Exhibited Animals Protection Act 1986*
- *State Environmental Planning Policy (State & Regional Development) 2011*
- *State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007*
- *State Environmental Planning Policy No. 55 – Remediation of Land*
- *State Environmental Planning Policy No. 64 – Advertising and Signage*
- *State Environmental Planning Policy (Vegetation in Non-Rural Areas) 2017*
- *State Environmental Planning Policy (Coastal Management) 2018*
- *Sydney Regional Environmental Plan (Sydney Harbour Catchment) 2005*
- *Draft State Environmental Planning Policy (Environment)*
- *Mosman Local Environmental Plan 2012*

Further to the assessment provided under the original SSDA application, the proposed modifications are consistent with the relevant provisions and objectives of these instruments and policies as detailed in the table below.

Table 4 EPI Assessment

SEPP	Comment
<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i> (EP&A Act)	The proposed development has been assessed in accordance with the matters of consideration listed in Section 4.15 of the EP&A Act.
<i>Exhibited Animals Protection Act 1986</i>	The proposed modification does not result in any changes to enclosure designs and the proposed development will continue to deliver a high quality environment contributing to animal welfare.
<i>State Environmental Planning Policy (State & Regional Development) 2011</i>	<p>The proposed modifications do not affect the development's classification as SSD as approved in the original SSD.</p> <p>Schedule 2 of the SRD SEPP lists specific sites that where development has a capital investment value of more than \$10 million; works on those sites are state significant. Clause 2 of Schedule 2 identifies Taronga Zoo as a specific site.</p> <p>The proposed modification is to a SSD.</p>
<i>State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007</i>	The proposed modifications to the approved development do not alter the conditions of the Infrastructure SEPP as the proposal only results in updates to an existing animal precinct within Zoo.

SEPP	Comment
<i>State Environmental Planning Policy No. 55 – Remediation of Land</i>	The proposal seeks to remove thirteen mature trees onsite, no change is proposed to building footprints. As such, the site remains suitable for the proposed development without the need for remediation works in addition to those approved by SSD-10567.
State Environmental Planning Policy No. 64 – Advertising and Signage	There is no new or additional signage or advertising proposed as part of this modification. All signage included within the architectural plans will be undertaken as exempt development in accordance with Schedule 2 of the Mosman LEP.
State Environmental Planning Policy (Vegetation in Non-Rural Areas) 2017 (Vegetation SEPP)	The proposal seeks the removal of thirteen mature trees. However, the proposed modification still reflects the aims of the Vegetation SEPP by proposing adequate tree replacement to ensure the ongoing amenity of the Zoo is maintained.
State Environmental Planning Policy (Coastal Management) 2018	The site is located within a ‘Coastal Environment Area’ and ‘Coastal Use Area’. However, this clause does not apply to land within the Foreshores and Waterways Area within the meaning of Sydney Regional Environmental Plan (Sydney Harbour Catchment) 2005. As such, this SEPP is not triggered by the proposed modification.
Sydney Regional Environmental Plan (Sydney Harbour Catchment) 2005	The site is located within the foreshore and waterways area of SREP 2005 and is identified as a “Strategic Foreshore Site”. The original SSD demonstrated that the proposed development was consistent with the provisions of the plan. The proposal remains consistent with the planning principles relating to the Sydney Harbour Catchment Authority as it will not have any significant adverse impacts on the Sydney Harbour Catchment.
Mosman Local Environmental Plan 2012	
Aims of MLEP 2012	<p>The proposed modified works reflects the various aims of the MLEP 2012 by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhancing an existing recreational and tourist facility for local and international visitors; ▪ Retaining a design that will preserve the natural, visual, environmental and heritage qualities of Mosman and Sydney Harbour including items of European and Aboriginal heritage items on the site; and ▪ Maintaining views from public streets and private properties towards Sydney Harbour.
Zoning and Permissibility (Clause 2.3)	The site is zoned SP1 Special Activities and is identified on the zoning map as “Zoological Gardens” under MLEP 2012. The only uses permitted on the site with development consent is for the purpose shown on the Land Zoning Map including any development that is ordinarily incidental or ancillary to development for that purpose. The proposed modified development is permitted with consent and will remain consistent with the SP1 zone objectives in that it will:

SEPP	Comment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preserve the special use of the site as the dominant purpose by maintaining an approved animal precinct; ▪ Protect the natural characteristics of the site including vegetation; ▪ Minimises any adverse impacts on surrounding land by incorporating manageable bushfire safety conditions.
Height (Clause 4.3)	No maximum building height applies to the site. However, the proposed modification relates to the removal of four mature trees. It does not propose any changes to the height of the approved development.
Floor space Ratio (Clause 4.4)	No maximum floor space ratio applies to the site.
Preservation of Trees (Clause 5.9)	The modified design will result in a loss of thirteen trees within the Upper Australia Precinct based on the approved design. This will result in trees being removed from the precinct however not enough to reduce the overall tree canopy. Replacement trees will be planted elsewhere within the site to ensure the tree canopy of the Zoo is maintained.
Heritage Conservation (Clause 5.10)	Taronga Zoo site contains several locally listed heritage items, identified as Item 134 being the “Rainforest Aviary”, “Elephant House”, “bus shelter and office”, “floral clock” and “upper and lower entrance gates”. None of these items are located within the Upper Australia Precinct. As noted in the Heritage Impact Statement prepared by Urbis (Appendix D) there will not be any adverse impact on any locally listed items as a result of the proposed modification.
Scenic Protection (Clause 6.4)	Pursuant to clause 6.4 of MLEP 2012, the site is identified as a “Scenic Protection Area”. Development consent must not be granted to any development on land in a Scenic Protection Area unless the consent authority is satisfied that measures will be taken, including in relation to the location and design of the proposed development, to minimise the visual impact of the development to and from Sydney Harbour, and the development will maintain the existing natural landscape and landform. The proposed modifications will not be visible from the Sydney Harbour or foreshore and will not impact upon existing view corridors.

5. ENGAGEMENT

5.1. MOSMAN COUNCIL

A meeting with Mosman Council was held at Council offices on 30 March 2021 with TSCA representatives and Urbis to discuss current projects being undertaken at Taronga Zoo including the ongoing construction of the Upper Australia Precinct. Council was generally supportive of the overall redevelopment of the Upper Australia Precinct as an animal precinct and will be notified of the proposed development during public exhibition of the Modification Report.

We trust that this initial consultation will assist to understand the scope of works proposed to be assessed by Council and DPIE.

5.2. DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, INDUSTRY AND ENVIRONMENT

An informal meeting was held between DPIE, TSCA and Urbis on 7 October 2021 to discuss tree removal across the Taronga Zoo site. While this was not a formal scoping meeting as they are no longer required for modifications, it was determined during the meeting that any proposed tree removal would require a formal modification.

Given the cumulative impacts of the proposed tree removal are considered relatively minor, the proposed modifications were considered a Section 4.55(1A) Modification. A modification package was lodged with DPIE in November 2021. DPIE assessed the information lodged and determined that given the scope of works, the application should be considered a Section 4.55(2) Modification. Since the original application was lodged, two trees were identified as suitable for retention and have been removed from the amended Section 4.55(2) modification package.

6. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

6.1. BUILT FORM AND VISUAL IMPACTS

The proposed modification does not result in any changes to the approved built form on site. While the proposed tree removal will not result in any visual impacts as the overall tree canopy is retained with tree replacement proposed to retain the landscape character and reflect animal habitats of animals of the Upper Australia Precinct. The removal of Condition B7 in relation to reflectivity will not result in any changes to the approved materiality of the development and will retain the intent and amenity of the public seating area within the Koala Treehouse.

6.2. TREE REMOVAL AND BIODIVERSITY IMPACTS

Thirteen trees are proposed for removal as part of the proposal as they are damaged or will have major encroachments into their TPZ or SRZ. These trees were not identified in the original application as it was only during construction of the early works package that these trees were identified as requiring removal. An amended Arborist Report prepared by Sydney Trees accompanies this application and has assessed the impacts on the additional tree removal. The removal of the trees is supported and can be undertaken in accordance with the recommendations of the approved development. As noted in **Section 3**, all trees identified will only be removed if required during construction. All trees removed to facilitate the development shall be replaced at a ratio of 2:1 per tree removed. Replacement trees shall be supplied at 100 litre pot size and planted within the Zoo site.

An amended Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) has also been prepared by Narla Environmental and accompanies this application to reflect the additional tree removal proposed. Vegetation within the Upper Australia Precinct is largely comprised of planted vegetation that is subject to landscaping, regular maintenance and has been historically cleared for the purpose of creating suitable animal enclosures and wetlands. Overall, the proposed development does not result in any irreversible impacts on the overall biodiversity of Taronga Zoo and the surrounding areas.

Whilst the proposal may result in the removal of an additional thirteen trees, the overall number of trees on the Taronga Zoo site will remain or be increased. A cumulative assessment into the number of trees approved and proposed for removal (including level of significance) and replacement trees has been prepared in the Table below.

Table 5 Cumulative Tree Assessment

	Original SSDA	Proposed Modifications
Trees to be removed	43 including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 12 moderate value▪ 31 low value	13 including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 1 high value▪ 3 moderate value▪ 9 low value
Trees to be retained	155	142
Additional trees planted	18	26
Total trees	173	160 + 26 trees to be replanted across the Zoo

As illustrated in **Table 4**, the overall number of trees across the Zoo will be increased if all thirteen trees require removal during construction.

6.3. HERITAGE

Taronga Zoo is well recognised as place of heritage significance and has been subject to a number of heritage and archaeological studies. The *Taronga Zoo Conservation Strategy 2000* (the Conservation Strategy) by GML is the key document that guides the future management of heritage resources within the Zoo.

The significance of Taronga Zoo as a whole is articulated in the Conservation Strategy, with developments in the precinct required to have regard to this sensitive and important environment. Approval for SSD- 10456 was partly granted on the basis that the development has minimal impact to the heritage significance of the precinct.

The proposed modifications will not cause any additional impacts to surrounding heritage items and will not detract from the heritage amenity of the zoo.

While the Upper Australia Precinct does not include any locally listed heritage items, the approved development did result in minor impacts to heritage items identified as having heritage significance under the Zoological Parks Board (ZPB) Section 170 Heritage and Conservation Register.

A review of the proposed modifications has been undertaken by Urbis (**Appendix D**) to assess any additional impacts on Section 170 Register items within the precinct. Overall, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable from a heritage perspective as the trees proposed for removal do not constitute significant cultural plantings within the Taronga Zoo grounds and are not identified on the Section 170 register for the site. While the trees do contribute to the overall Australian Landscape character of the site, significant trees are not proposed to be impacted by the development and will be retained. This will ensure a continuation of the overall Australian character of the site. Furthermore, trees proposed for removal will be replaced at a 2:1 within the Zoo site.

In summary, the proposed modifications have no detrimental impacts on the heritage significance of the subject site.

6.4. SECTION 4.55 OF THE EP&A ACT

The proposal has been assessed to determine whether the modified development would be substantially the same as the approved development.

The proposed modification does not result in any changes to the following key features of the approved development:

- The proposal does not deviate from the key purposes of the Zoological Act and continues to provide opportunity for the public to view animals.
- The proposal will ensure the redevelopment of the Zoo's Australian Precinct is complete, which is a major focus of the TSCA Centenary Plan and a key attraction for international visitors to the Zoo.
- Amendments to conditions reflect the approved use of the site and ensure that the development can successfully reflect the approved vision and design by providing a range of Australian animals for public display and improved exhibits and areas for Zoo visitors.
- As demonstrated in this report, no significant additional environmental impacts are expected compared to the approved development with additional tree replanting proposed across the site to offset loss of additional trees.

Based on the above, the proposed modifications do not substantially change the development for which consent was originally granted are substantially the same under section 4.55(2) given the modifications do not change approved use of the precinct as an animal exhibit.

7. EVALUATION OF MERIT

7.1. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The modifications will result in improvements to the Upper Australia precinct within Taronga Zoo, an iconic tourist destination within Sydney and NSW and will have the following social and economic impacts:

- Ensures the ongoing animal welfare requirements within the Precinct are met to reflect the Zoo's reputation as a world-class animal welfare and conservation centre.
- The modifications will ensure the safety of existing trees by ensuring their root systems are not damaged by construction.
- New trees will be planted to replace the removed trees to ensure the overall tree canopy of the Zoo is retained without impacting on existing bushfire protection measures.
- The Upper Australia Precinct will display critically endangered Australian animals that form part of Taronga's wildlife conservation and education programs and upgrade "star" attractions including the kangaroo, koala, platypus, wombat and emu exhibits.

7.2. SUITABILITY OF THE SITE

The site is considered highly suitable for the proposed development for the following reasons:

- The proposed works are permitted with development consent.
- The proposed works are compliant with the relevant state and local planning instruments.
- The site provides a continuation of the current use of the site for Zoological Gardens and will provide an improved visitor experience.

7.3. PUBLIC INTEREST

The proposed development is considered in the public interest for the following reasons:

- The project will reinforce Taronga Zoo's position as a major tourist attraction and therefore improve NSW tourism sector when it recovers after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- It will create approximately 800 jobs including design, project management and construction over the 18-month design development and construction period and will sustain direct and indirect jobs during its ongoing operation.
- During the preparation of the EIS, no feedback was received from the general public.

7.4. CONCLUSION

This Modification Report has been prepared in support of SSD-10456 to assess the environmental, social and economic impacts of the Upper Australia Precinct for Taronga Zoo. The EIS has addressed the issues identified in the SEARs and has been prepared in accordance with Schedule 2 of the EP&A Regulation. For the reasons outlined in this report, the site is suitable for the proposed development for the following reasons:

- The proposed removal of additional trees will still maintain the existing landscape character of the locality.
- The proposed amendments will facilitate the continued use of the site as an animal exhibit, which is permissible with consent and consistent with the zone objectives.
- The proposed works will not cause any additional impacts to surrounding heritage items and will not detract from the heritage amenity of the zoo.
- The proposed removal of additional trees will not have any significant detrimental impact on the scenic, visual and natural bushland setting of Sydney Harbour and will result in an increase of trees across the Zoo site.

- The proposal has been prepared having regard to State and Council planning policies and complies with the aims and objectives of the controls for the site.
- Subject to the various mitigation measures recommended by the specialist consultants, the modified proposal does not have any unreasonable impacts on adjoining properties or the public domain in terms of views and environmental impacts.
- The project will continue to deliver genuine economic benefits in these challenging times, particularly in creating full-time jobs during construction, and will sustain direct and indirect jobs during its ongoing operation.

This project is fully funded and 'shovel ready' for commencement of construction already begun. Given the site is suitable for the development and the modified proposal has minimal environmental impacts and is in the public interest, this modification application should be subject to a fast-tracked approval by the Minister or his delegates.

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This report has been prepared with due care and diligence by Urbis and the statements and opinions given by Urbis in this report are given in good faith and in the reasonable belief that they are correct and not misleading, subject to the limitations above.

APPENDIX A

ARCHITECTURAL PLANS

APPENDIX B

ARBORICULTURAL ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX C

**BIODIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT
APPLICATION REPORT**

APPENDIX D

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

