

DESIGN 5

A R C H I T E C T S

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SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE VISITOR & INTERPRETATION CENTRE (SSD 6353)

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

1.0 Background

Design 5 - Architects has been engaged by the Sydney Opera House Trust to prepare an assessment of the Heritage Impact of proposed modifications and development of the Sydney Opera House, to construct a new Visitor Centre at the northern end of the Lower Concourse as well as a Welcome Signage Blade at the southern end of the Forecourt. The project is referred to as the Visitor & Interpretation Centre (VIC) Project.

The report has been prepared by Alan Croker (director) and Charlotte Simons, both of Design 5.

2.0 Purpose of report

The report has been prepared to assess the impact of the proposal on the cultural significance of the Sydney Opera House (SOH), and to address Key Issues 2 and 3 in the Director General's Requirements (DGR's) for Environmental Assessment, as set out in the letter from Department of Planning dated 31 January 2014. Key Issues 2 and 3 are as follows:

2. Heritage

National and World Heritage Matters

- *The application must include a Heritage Impact Statement prepared by a qualified Heritage Consultant which assesses the proposal against the requirement of the following documents:*
 - *Matters of National Environmental Significance: Significant Impact Guidelines 1.1;*
 - *Management Plan for the Sydney Opera House;*
 - *Conservation Management Plan Sydney Opera House: A Revised Plan for the Conservation of the Sydney Opera House and its Site (3rd Edition); and*
 - *Utzon Design Principles.*

State Heritage Matters

- Address the impact of the proposal on the heritage significance of any heritage items and/or conservation areas in accordance with the guidelines in the NSW Heritage Manual and relevant Council EPI's.
- Prepare an archaeological assessment (if relevant) of the likely impacts of the proposal on any Aboriginal cultural heritage, European cultural heritage and other archaeological items and outline any proposed mitigation and conservation measures.

3. Urban Design and Visual Impacts

The EIS shall address the height, bulk and scale and design quality of the proposed development within the context of the locality, specifically the Opera House, foreshore promenade and the Royal Botanic Gardens. In particular, detailed building envelope contextual studies should be undertaken to ensure the proposal integrates with the local environment. Design considerations aimed at mitigating any adverse impacts should also be demonstrated.

The EIS shall also include:

- View analysis to and from the site from key vantage points, including to and from the Opera House, East Circular Quay, the Tarpeian Wall and the Royal Botanic Gardens; and
- Options considered for the siting and layout of the building envelope, including justification for the preferred envelope.
- Details of the preferred materials palette.

3.0 Basis of assessment

The basis for this assessment is the James Semple Kerr Conservation Plan 2003,

- 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 above two documents are an integral part of the bilaterally accredited 'Management Plan for the Sydney Opera House' (August 2005) that has been prepared under Section 46 of the Australian Government's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

The documents and drawings used for this assessment are those prepared by Freeman Ryan Design, all dated 19 December 2014 and as follows:

Drg. No.	Revision	Title
210.DA.100	-	Site Location Plan
210.DA.200	-	Welcome Centre Plan
210.DA.201	-	Welcome Centre Isometric View
210.DA.202	-	Welcome Centre 3D View
210.DA.203	-	Welcome Centre Cloaking Elevations
210.DA.204	-	Welcome Centre Shop & Ticketing Counter Elevations
210.DA.205	-	Welcome Centre Interpretive Wall Elevations
210.DA.300	-	Welcome Point Location Plan
210.DA.301	-	Welcome Point Plan & Elevations
210.DA.302	-	Welcome Point 3D Views

3.1 Methodology

This Heritage Impact Statement has been prepared in accordance with the principles and processes of the *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter 2013*, including its accompanying 'Practice Notes'. 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.

3.2 Terminology

The proposed Welcome Signage Blade and Visitor Centre are referred to by a number of names in the reports and documentation of the VIC Project. The Welcome Signage Blade is known also as the 'Welcome Point', 'Welcome Blade', and the Visitor Centre is also referred to as the 'Welcome Centre' and 'Visitor & Interpretation Precinct'.

For clarity, the proposed works are referred to as the Welcome Signage Blade and Visitor Centre in this report.

4.0 The site

The Sydney Opera House (SOH) is located on Bennelong Point at the north end of Macquarie Street in Sydney. The proposed works will take place within the area of the site owned by the SOH in two (2) separate locations:

1. Southern Forecourt entry to the site – Welcome Signage Blade
2. Northern end of the lower concourse – Visitor Centre

Refer to site plan below (Figure 1).

5.0 Brief description of proposal

The Visitor & Interpretation Centre project has the following main objectives;

- Provide basic visitor orientation and information
- Create a welcoming 'touch' point on the visitor journey
- Present interpretive material to visitors and patrons to enhance understanding and appreciation of the cultural significance of the SOH
- Inform and encourage exploration of the SOH and its site
- Provide visitor ticketing and SOH gift shop in an appropriate location

These issues were identified in the CMP 2003 as being important in improving visitor engagement with the SOH site. The need for a contemporary Visitor Centre to welcome, orientate and engage with the 8.2 million annual visitors to the Opera House has been recognised and actively pursued over a number of years, with this current proposal a result of various investigations and stakeholder consultations. In particular the importance of delivering interpretation in a more engaging fashion across the site has also been identified.

This Visitor & Interpretation Centre Project proposal includes the following:

- Welcome Signage Blade on the Forecourt at the southern entry to the site incorporating:
 - o World heritage site identification
 - o Site map and way-finding
 - o Way-finding to the Visitor Centre located on the Lower Concourse
 - o A welcome to country and site – both in text and audio
- Lower concourse Visitor Centre incorporating:
 - o Interpretation panels and displays

- Information and ticketing counter
- Tour meeting points and associated amenities
- SOH retail and gift shop

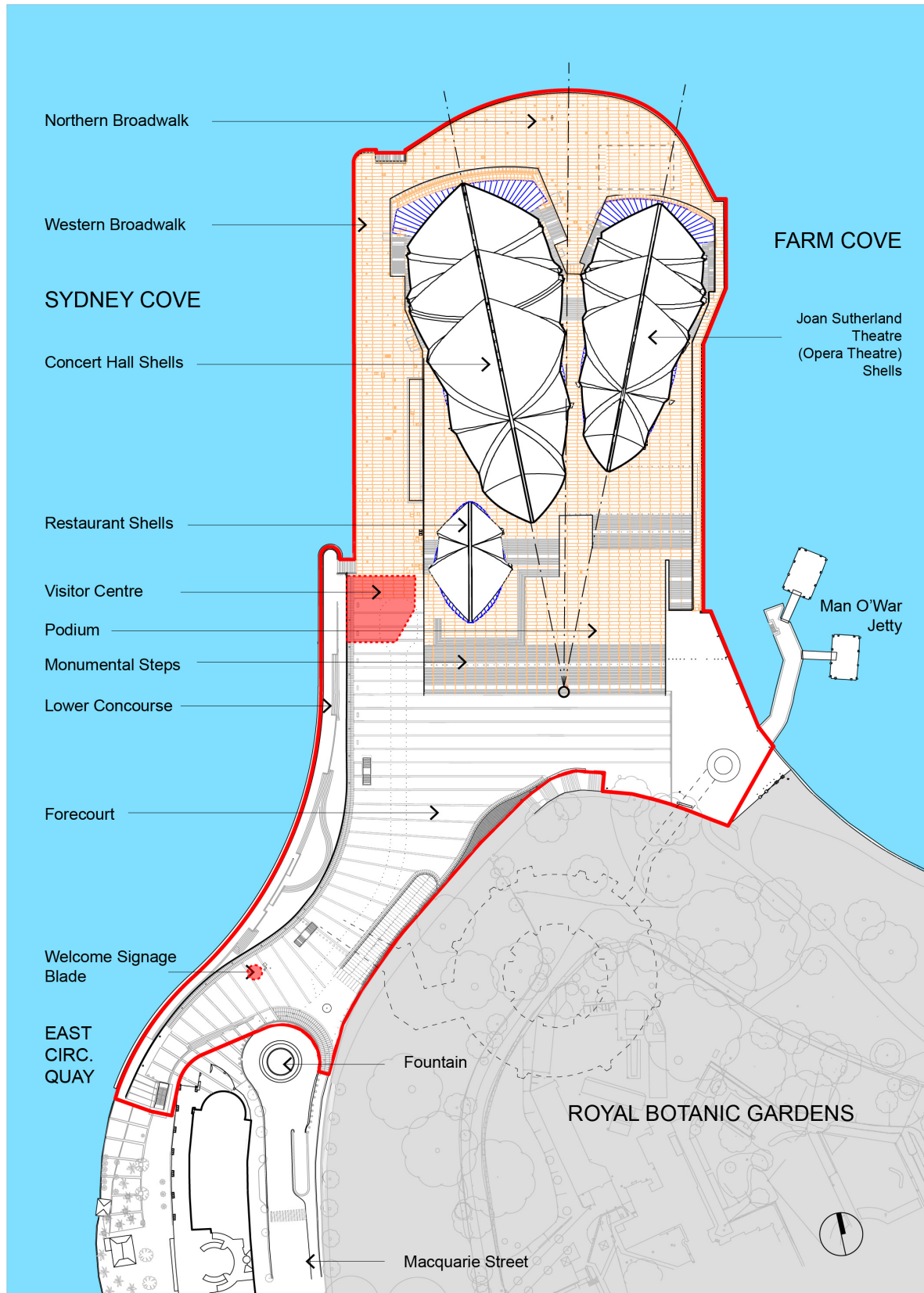


Figure 1: Site plan showing the extent of the SOH boundary under the *Sydney Opera House Trust Act 1961* (NSW), outlined by the red boundary line. Proposed VIC Project works are shaded red.

6.0 Consideration of alternative solutions

As part of the development of the present design for the VIC Project, a number of alternative solutions were explored to test which option would have the least impact on the site, particularly the Forecourt and the approach views across the Forecourt, and thus on the setting and presentation of this area and SOH itself. Design 5 were involved in providing comment and advice throughout this process.

Options considered prior to selection of present proposal focused on providing a visitor centre near the southern entry to the site at the following locations:

1. *Between Circular Quay and the southern entrance to the site*
2. *Adjacent to the southern escalators*
3. *On the southern Forecourt in line with the Macquarie St roundabout*

Refer to the plan below (Figure 2), which indicates these alternative locations for the proposed visitor centre.

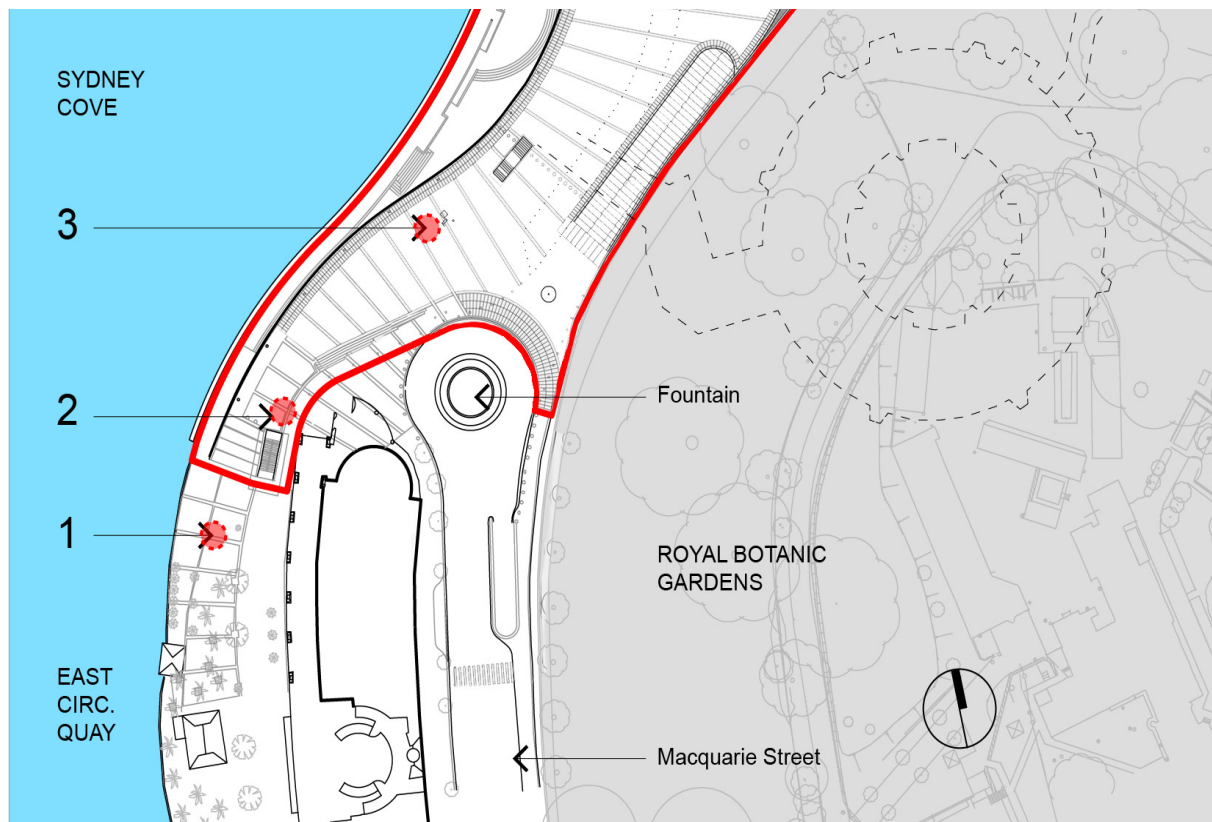


Figure 2: Plan showing the location of alternative solutions for the visitor centre.

Comment

Issues identified and considered with each option included:

Between Circular Quay and the southern entrance to the site

- This location is not on the SOH site and presents numerous coordination issues with multiple external parties.
- It preferences the east Circular Quay entry to the site, missing the important Macquarie Street entry portal

Adjacent to the southern escalators

- Not preferred, as a location further north would capture/engage more visitors
- It preferences the east Circular Quay entry to the site, missing the important Macquarie Street entry portal

On the southern Forecourt in line with the Macquarie Street roundabout

- All possible locations here result in a significant additional structure on the Forecourt in a prominent location, impacting on important sightlines and entry views. This was considered not acceptable.
- Sight testing of various locations on this area demonstrated that any structure will impact on significant view lines unless it is of a very minimal form
- The existing information/ticket booth shed (identified as intrusive) and also the collection of signage pylons and stands demonstrate the potential negative impacts of an unsympathetic structure in this location

Considering the above options and their associated issues and limitations, the decision was made to provide a simple, slim pylon as a low-impact welcome and orientation point near the southern entry to the site in place of the existing three signage pylons, and locate a more comprehensive visitor centre in a less intrusive location i.e. the Lower Concourse. The aim was to minimise the visual impact of new structures on the Forecourt and primary views to the SOH, while providing essential orientation, information and interpretation for visitors to the site.

7.0 Heritage listings and statutory framework

The SOH is listed on the following statutory registers:

- World Heritage List (UNESCO)
- National Heritage List (Australian Government)
- State Heritage Register (NSW Government)
- State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) 2011 (NSW Government)
- State Regional Environmental Plan (Sydney Harbour Catchment) 2005 (NSW Government)
- Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 (City of Sydney Council)

The SOH is listed on the following non-statutory heritage registers:

- Register of Modern Movement buildings, sites and landscapes (Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement – DOCOMOMO)
- 20th Century Architectural Heritage Repository, International Union of Architects (UIA)
- Register of Significant Twentieth Century Australian Architecture (Australian Institute of Architects)
- Register of Significant Architecture in NSW
- National Trust of Australia (NSW) register
- Register of the National Estate (now replaced by the National Heritage list)

Part 3, Division 1 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) identifies Commonwealth obligations relating to World Heritage properties and National Heritage places.

The SOH 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 agreement has since expired. Under the terms of the agreement (Clause 8.1), an action taken at the SOH site does not require the approval of the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts where:

the taking of the action has been approved by the State of New South Wales or an agency of New South Wales in accordance with the Management Plan for the Sydney Opera House ...

As the SOH site is listed as a 'State significant site' under Schedule 3 of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Development) 2005, any proposed development on the SOH site would

require the approval of the NSW Minister for Planning. Under the expired agreement, such proposals would be subject to the assessment and approval processes outlined in Part 3A of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW) (EP&A Act) and the Sydney Opera House Management Plan under Section 46 of the EPBC Act submitted in August 2005.

The Management Plan referred to in the expired bilateral agreement provided a framework for protection of World and National Heritage values of the SOH site and was endorsed by the Heritage Division, Department of Environment and Heritage (formerly the NSW Heritage Office). The Management Plan stated that approval of actions in relation to the SOH site may only be made in accordance with the Management Plan, which deferred to the CMP 3rd edition for an assessment of heritage impact of proposals.

The Management Plan identified that any proposed development on the SOH site would require statutory approvals under both the EP&A Act and the *NSW Heritage Act 1977*, however it is anticipated that with the expiration of the bilateral agreement, the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts may defer to the NSW Department of Environment and Heritage.

8.0 Discussion of impact on World Heritage values of the Sydney Opera House

In 2007, the SOH was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List (WHL) for its Outstanding Universal Value and as a "masterpiece of human creative genius" under criterion (i) of the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. The SOH was inscribed on the WHL for the values seen below. *Emphasis added* on aspects of significance relevant to the assessment of heritage impact of the VIC Project.

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.

Comment

The VIC Project will not have a negative impact on the World Heritage values of the SOH but will retain and potentially enhance those values by improving way-finding and interpretation of the place.

The proposed works will improve site presentation with the removal of several intrusive items and replacement with a single pylon element on the Forecourt, and providing a less intrusive location on the Lower Concourse for visitor information, ticketing and associated retail, thus visitors' appreciation of the "great urban sculpture" from the Forecourt will be greatly enhanced.

The World Heritage status of the site will be made more evident to visitors by inclusion of the World Heritage logo and explanatory text on the Welcome Signage Blade.

The impact on various spaces, features and elements are discussed in detail below (compliance with CMP 3rd edition). The CMP 3rd edition was one of the primary documents supporting the nomination of the SOH to the WHL. The CMP includes comprehensive policies that will guide the long-term conservation of the World and National Heritage values of the SOH.¹ These policies are used as a basis for this assessment.

¹ Section 5b 'Heritage Framework', Management Plan for the Sydney Opera House, August 2005.

9.0 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 SOH. *Emphasis added* on aspects of significance relevant to the assessment of heritage impact of the VIC Project.

*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 SOH are primarily related to Jørn Utzon's outstanding design of the building, and the venue being a cherished performing arts centre. 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.

9.1 National Heritage criteria

The SOH is registered on the National Heritage List for meeting its listing criteria (a), (b), (e), (f), (g) and (h).

The values of the SOH 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 SOH 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 criterion below, summarise and draw attention to the aspects of significance that are relevant to the assessment of heritage impact of the VIC Project. 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:

- "a monumental sculpture in the round, and its inspired design solution in response to its prominent setting on Bennelong Point in Sydney Harbour"
- "the building's distinctive form"
- "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 VIC Project will not have any adverse impacts on these values and will improve site presentation with the removal of intrusive items on the Forecourt, thus enhancing the presentation and interpretation of the distinctive built form and setting of the SOH.

In addition the VIC facility will be an important part of the delivery of the site's interpretation, including SOH's 'seminal role in Australia's performing arts history', and will enhance the public's understanding of the building.

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:

- "distinctive sail-like concrete shell roofs standing boldly upon a massive granite-faced platform, located prominently on the Sydney Harbour foreshore"
- "a rare example of a national cultural centre that has gained widespread recognition and respect as a performing arts venue"

Comment

The VIC Project will not have any adverse impacts on these values and will improve site presentation with the removal of intrusive items on the Forecourt, thus enhancing the appreciation of the distinctive built form of the building and its setting, and the building's importance as a pre-eminent performing arts centre.

The VIC Project will be an important part of the delivery of the site's interpretation, including SOH's history, as well as its unique design and structure, and relationship to its site.

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"
- "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..."

Comment

The VIC Project will remove intrusive temporary signage stands, flag poles and the temporary ticketing/information shed from the Forecourt, and will redesign the existing three signage pylons into a single, tall, slender signage blade. The works will allow aesthetic values to be enhanced by improving the presentation of the Forecourt space and minimising interruption of important views

towards the SOH. Impacts on views to the SOH and its surrounds are further minimised by the utilisation of an existing space within the Lower Concourse for the Visitor Centre. Improvements in way-finding, and the provision of interpretive material and information as part of the VIC Project, will potentially increase understanding and appreciation of the SOH.

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:

- "a **sculptural form** that would be both a focal point in Sydney Harbour and a reflection of its character"
- "**finished in natural materials, textures and colours**"
- "the creation of sensory experiences to bring pleasure to the building's users, particularly the **experience of approaching**"

Comment

By removing intrusive mobile signage stands, flag poles and temporary information/ticketing shed from the Forecourt, and redesigning the existing three signage pylons into a single low-impact signage blade, the VIC Project will minimise visual intrusion, enhancing the approach experience for visitors and their appreciation of the setting and "sculptural form" of the SOH.

The VIC Project, by respecting the existing exterior and interior palette of the building, continues the language of honest expression of natural materials, textures and colours evident on site.

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 VIC Project presents an opportunity to explain and interpret the place's associations with Jørn Utzon and Bennelong, as well as other stories and values, to the general public, enhancing understanding of the cultural significance of the SOH.

9.2 Summary assessment of heritage impact on National Heritage values

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

By removing clutter in the form of intrusive items such as mobile signage stands, flag poles and the temporary ticketing/information shed, and replacing the existing three signage pylons with a single, slim blade, the VIC Project will improve the presentation of the Forecourt and enhance appreciation of the setting and significance of the SOH for the millions of people that visit the place each year.

The VIC Project presents an opportunity to strengthen visitors' experience, interpretation and understanding of the SOH by providing better designed and sensitively located information about the site's significance, including its history, meaning, associations and significance, than is currently available. Improvements in the orientation and understanding of the SOH, as a result of the Visitor Centre and Welcome Signage Blade, will potentially encourage visitors to explore, experience and appreciate more of the site.

In summary, the VIC Project will not have a negative impact on the National Heritage values of the SOH but will retain and enhance those values by removing many intrusive elements, and improving the orientation and understanding of the significance of the place.

10.0 Discussion of impact on State Heritage values of the Sydney Opera House

The following is the Statement of Significance of the State Heritage values of the SOH. *Emphasis added* on aspects of significance relevant to the assessment of heritage impact of the VIC 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 SOH on the NSW State Heritage Register (SHR), on 3 December 2003. Hence, the discussion of compliance with the CMP 3rd edition below is deemed to also satisfy as an assessment of heritage impact of the VIC Project on the State Heritage values of the SOH.

10.1 State Heritage Register criteria

The SOH is listed on the SHR for meeting all its listing criteria (a)-(g). The values of the SOH that meet the SHR criteria are set out in full in the NSW Heritage Database, available online at http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/07_subnav_01_2.cfm?itemid=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 VIC Project. Design 5's assessment of heritage impact 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"
- "furthermore enhanced by the extensive **associations of the site with** major themes in Australian history such as **Aboriginal and European contact**, scientific investigation, **defence**, picturesque planning, marine and **urban transport, popular recreation and cultural icons**"

Comment

The VIC Project will not have any adverse impact on the above values and associations of the SOH. It will engage with these values and potentially strengthen them by removal of detracting elements, and incorporation of appropriate and better-designed way-finding and interpretation.

A main aim of the proposal is to better engage visitors by providing a dedicated facility to introduce the site's history, meaning and associations. Much of this is currently not evident to the casual visitor,

and this proposal represents an opportunity to bring interpretation of the significance of the SOH to the forefront of the visitor's experience of the site.

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 associations with people prominent in NSW's history including ... the Aboriginal man Bennelong, the architect Francis Greenway ..."
- "many significant people are associated with the construction of the Sydney Opera House, including ... Jørn Utzon ... and Ove Arup"
- "its success as a performing arts centre has been described as 'spectacular' partly because of the building's 'ability to attract great artists from all over the world'"

Comment

The VIC Project will potentially enhance visitors' understanding of the building's associations with historical persons associated with the site, including Utzon and others involved with the design and construction of the SOH, as well as important associations since its opening. It presents an opportunity to strengthen the interpretation of these associations to the general public and reveal more information than is currently available on site.

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:

- "its quality as a monumental sculpture in the round"
- "its public spaces and promenades have a majestic quality"
- "its aesthetic quality is largely attributed to the 1957 prize-winning design by Jørn Utzon"

Comment

By removing intrusive elements from the Forecourt, the VIC Project will minimise clutter and potentially enhance visitors' appreciation and experience of the SOH and its setting, particularly from the south (Forecourt).

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**"
- "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 proposed works will enhance visitor and patron appreciation and experience of the Forecourt and approach to the SOH by removing intrusive items. Way-finding material and interpretive information will improve visitor orientation and information, and potentially encourage greater appreciation and further exploration of the site.

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:

- "research potential in investigating Utzon's design motivations and methods"
- "it is unlikely that much archaeological potential is retained in relation to its historical associations with famous people and important themes in Australian history"

Comment

The improved design and location of interpretive material for the site should provide a better appreciation of the significance of the SOH and potentially encourage visitors and patrons alike to explore aspects of this significance further, including its history and associations.

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:

- "a twentieth century architectural masterpiece sited on a prominent peninsular in Sydney Harbour"
- "an exceptional landscape (and seascape) monument"
- "an internationally recognised symbol of Sydney and Australia"

Comment

The VIC Project will not have a negative impact on the values that make the SOH a rare item. The proposal includes the removal of existing intrusive elements that presently obscure an appreciation of the exceptional significance of the SOH and its site.

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:

- "an internationally recognised building representative of major performance arts centres"
- "its success as a performing arts centre has been described as 'spectacular' partly because of the building's 'ability to attract great artists from all over the world'"

Comment

The VIC Project will not have a negative impact on the values that make the SOH an internationally recognised performing arts centre. The VIC proposal includes better-designed and better-located orientation and information, as well as interpretation for the site, and this will potentially enhance visitor and patron appreciation of the place, including its use and the performances which take place there.

10.2 Summary assessment of heritage impact on State Heritage values

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

By removing intrusive elements and clutter including mobile signage stands, flag poles and the temporary information/ticketing shed, and replacing the existing three signage pylons with a single, slender signage blade, the VIC Project will improve the presentation of the Forecourt space and enhance visitor and patron appreciation of the approach experience of the SOH and its extraordinary setting. The incorporation of better designed and more effectively located way-finding and interpretive material on the Welcome Signage Blade will potentially enhance understanding and appreciation of the significance of the SOH and encourage further exploration of the values, meanings and associations of the site, as well as the site itself.

As part of the VIC Project, the Visitor Centre on the Lower Concourse provides an opportunity to more effectively provide orientation, information and understanding of the site by presenting and

better explaining the site's history, meaning and important associations. The proposed Visitor Centre, which utilises and modifies an existing space, provides associated ticketing and visitor facilities in an accessible and appropriate location.

In summary, the VIC Project will not have a negative impact on the State Heritage values of the SOH but will retain and enhance visitor and patron experience and appreciation of those values by removing many intrusive elements and providing better-designed interpretive and way-finding material to patrons and visitors.

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

The CMP identifies and defines the significant values of the SOH and then formulates policies framed to retain these values. The following discussion assesses the impact of the proposed VIC project, firstly on the relevant significant values and elements of the place, and then against the relevant policies.

Significant values and elements – discussion of impact

The following Statement of Significance from CMP 3rd edition summarises the significant values of the place:

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 dépôt); 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 VIC proposal. Taking each of them separately, the following comments are made:

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

Comment:

On a long-term basis, the VIC Project will help to de-clutter and simplify the broad open platform on which the spectacular sculptural form of the SOH sits. It will do this by removing intrusive items (mobile signage stands, flag poles and temporary ticketing/information shed) currently on the Forecourt that impede primary sightlines to the 'sculpture' of the SOH and thus improving the original approach experience for patrons and visitors.

- *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:

The VIC Project presents a unique opportunity to provide better-designed information and interpretation close to the entry point to the site and a centrally located facility to further inform and enthuse visitors about the significance of the SOH and its site. Interpretation of the significance of SOH, including its meanings, associations and stories, is identified in the CMP as requiring more effective implementation. This project, via the Welcome Signage Blade on the Forecourt and Visitor Centre on the Lower Concourse, will clarify orientation, information and interpretation of many aspects of the site's significance, and its development into the cultural icon it is today to performers, patrons and over 8.2 million visitors to the site each year.

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 affected to varying degrees by the proposed construction and completion of the works:

- Topographic setting
- Forecourt
- Lower Forecourt (lower concourse)
- Original concept of sequential experiences on arrival, entry and circulation

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 and their significance as listed in the CMP, with and 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

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 and surrounding features are an important part. The VIC Project will have a positive impact on this immediate setting by removing intrusive elements from the Forecourt area (including mobile signage stands, flag poles and the temporary ticketing/information shed) and replacing the three existing signage pylons with a single, slim and low-impact Welcome Signage Blade. This feature of the proposal improves the 'open relationship' of the Forecourt space with the setting of the SOH by removing unnecessary clutter. This is discussed in greater detail under 'Forecourt'. The utilisation of an existing space within the Lower Concourse for the Visitor Centre further minimises impacts of potentially larger structures on the setting of SOH.

Refer to earlier discussion on 'Consideration of alternative solutions'.

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, Bradley's Head, Cremorne Point, Kurraba Point, Kirribilli, Milson's Point and McMahan's Point; the waters of the harbour, city buildings and the harbour bridge;	a	Positive	Removal of a number of visually intrusive items on the Forecourt and replacement with a single pylon that minimises distractions and interruptions of important views to the Forecourt and SOH on this primary approach path. Location of Visitor Centre in existing space on Lower Concourse conceals potentially intrusive facilities from impacting on important views to the SOH.

Forecourt

A number of intrusive items, including mobile signage stands, flagpoles and a temporary ticketing/information shed, currently clutter and obscure the sense of openness of the Forecourt area, a key space in Utzon's vision of the approach experience for patrons and visitors.

The VIC Project proposes the removal of these intrusive elements and their replacement with a single, slim, low impact Welcome Signage Blade that will provide essential orientation, information on the World Heritage listing, and a traditional 'welcome to country'. This will enhance the role of the Forecourt in the approach experience.

The careful placement and considered design of the tall, slender signage blade ensures minimal obstruction of views into and across the Forecourt. The signage blade has been designed using a palette of materials, finishes and details that are in keeping with Utzon's design language and honest expression of natural materials that is evident across the site.

The incorporation of the World Heritage listing, and traditional 'welcome to country' on the Welcome Signage Blade, both in text and audio, along with way finding information will clarify orientation of the site and enhance visitors' appreciation of the significance of the SOH and its setting.

The Forecourt area, with its sense of openness and lack of clutter, is ranked as A (exceptional significance). Various elements assessed by the present author as intrusive include mobile signage stands, flag poles, and the temporary ticketing/information shed. These intrusive elements will be removed – a positive impact.

The present group of three bronze signage pylons are not assessed as intrusive, however their replacement with a single signage blade is considered a positive impact.

Element	Significance	Potential impact of proposal	Comment
Forecourt	A		
Openness and freedom from impedimenta;	a	Positive	Sense of openness and clarity maintained and enhanced by the removal of intrusive items that clutter the southern end of the Forecourt and replacement with a single, slim, low-impact Welcome Signage Blade.
Paving of fan pattern granite setts and solid granite strips	b	Neutral	Small area of existing granite setts will be replaced with solid granite band where presently interrupted by group of signage pylons.

Flag poles beside Macquarie Street roundabout and eastern harbour parapet	intrusive	Positive	Flagpoles beside Macquarie Street roundabout are removed with this proposal.
Impediments to pedestrian vision across and into Forecourt	intrusive	Positive	Proposed VIC Project involves minimisation of clutter, including numerous signage elements, which may otherwise impede views across the Forecourt. Intrusive items removed and replaced with a single, slim, low-impact Welcome Signage Blade that minimises interruption of views.

Lower Concourse

The proposal will impact on the Lower Concourse by the removal of the 1988 curved glass wall enclosure to the Sydney Opera House Shop, and replacement with a freestanding enclosed timber and glass information, ticketing and SOH retail facility. This will involve repair of the ceiling to remove fittings and associated infrastructure for the present shop, and modification of the floor finish to provide integrated granite paved finish across the space. The east and south walls of the space are to be refurbished and fitted as interpretation panels with concealed storage. The project includes revised configuration of the present ticketing and cloaking facility south of the escalators to provide new cloaking and visitor facilities.

The timber and glass design of the new information, ticketing and SOH retail facility, with its indirect lighting, has been informed by the language of the Hall designed interiors of the SOH, providing visitors with a 'taste' or 'glimpse' of Hall's design ideas. The 'internal' material language of this facility is considered appropriate in this location which is deeply sheltered from external views and weather.

Services to this freestanding facility will be via the sub-floor space, with the present slab soffit (ceiling) visually continuing above the freestanding facility.

The removal of the present temporary information/ticketing facility on the Forecourt and relocation in the Lower Concourse is considered a very positive impact on the site overall. The only potentially negative impact of this proposed location is that it will possibly divert visitors away from Utzon's primary approach sequence of Forecourt / Monumental Steps / Box Office.

The impact on the 1988 configuration of the glass wall enclosure is high however the mushroom columns and louvered circular ceiling lights are retained and not altered with this proposal. The bronze band at the top and bottom of the glazed wall will be removed, along with the glass. This bronze should be set aside for repair of bronze elsewhere. Any staining or other marks on the concrete finish of the columns from the present shop use should be removed. No louvered ceiling lights were fitted in the shop, and all those outside it are not affected. Shop fitout including ceiling lights and surface conduit to be removed and the ceiling slab repaired.

The existing black painted granosite type finish on the floor of the existing shop is of low significance and will be removed and replaced with a pink granite paved finish that repeats the configuration of the external paving, if possible, retaining a shadow of the perimeter of the existing shop.

Element	Significance	Potential impact of proposal	Comment
Lower Concourse (1988)	B		
Concealment of concourse and shops from forecourt level and from West Circular Quay	b	Neutral	Proposed Visitor Centre will occupy the space currently used as the Sydney Opera House Shop and will still be substantially concealed.

Unimpeded sheltered access to Opera House in wet weather	b	Neutral	Proposal will provide sheltered access to ticketing/information and associated amenities in the Lower Concourse and will not further impede the sheltered access to the SOH.
Paving, steps and walls of solid granite	b	Neutral	Present internal paving will be modified to provide greater consistency with the finish outside the shop. The floor of the new ticketing, information and SOH retail facility will float slightly above the existing granite paving and be fully reversible.
Concept of shops, toilets, passage to parking station, and escalators to vehicle concourse and East Circular Quay.	c	Neutral	This concept is retained and respected. The present shop (considered significance 'c') is completely removed and the space reconfigured to accommodate the freestanding ticketing, information and retail facility.
Bronze framed poster vitrines	c	Neutral	Poster vitrines on the north wall will be removed and wall panels modified to incorporate interpretation panels and displays.
Any items obscuring column bases	intrusive	Positive	Present retail displays surrounding columns within the present shop will be removed and columns left free of clutter.

Original concept of sequential experiences on arrival, entry and circulation

This aspect of the SOH is ranked as being of exceptional significance and is one of the primary principles of Utzon's design.

The clarity and appreciation of Utzon's concept of an unobstructed approach as a key element in the patron and visitor experience will be enhanced by single, tall, slim Welcome Signage Blade component of the VIC Project, as this involves the removal of many intrusive items that presently clutter the Forecourt.

The relocation of the ticketing/information facility to the Visitor Centre in the Lower Concourse will potentially distract visitors from approaching the SOH via the Monumental Steps, a key element in Utzon's concept of the approach and arrival experience. This could be ameliorated by modifying the tour route and emphasising the role of the Monumental Steps in any interpretation material.

Element	Significance	Potential impact of proposal	Comment
Original concept of sequential experiences on arrival, entry and circulation Forecourt, podium steps, podium deck, box office foyer, stairways,	A	Positive	Removal of many intrusive items that clutter the Forecourt and obscure and hinder the approach experience.

level 30 foyers, auditoria		Negative	Potential diversion of visitors from approaching the Podium via the Monumental Steps.
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12.0 Compliance with CMP policies

The Statement of Significance in the CMP demonstrates that the SOH 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 1.1 *All work on the Sydney Opera House should be carried out within the framework of Jørn Utzon's design principles as endorsed in 2002.*

Comment

It is the opinion of Design 5 that the VIC Project and its proposed works respect, retain and in a number of respects enhance the concepts underpinning Utzon's Design Principles, particularly in terms of design, form, materials, scale and function, and therefore complies with this policy. Aspects of the proposal that enhance Utzon's concepts include the removal of many intrusive items, the repetition of pre-fabricated components, honest use of bronze, timber and glass, fine design and detailing, and indirect lighting.

Policy 1.2 *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

All of the fabric and attributes noted above are retained and respected in the proposed works of the VIC Project.

The open and uncluttered character of the Forecourt is enhanced in the proposed works by the removal of many intrusive items. Unnecessary clutter in the southern Forecourt area is removed and replaced with a single, slim signage blade that minimises obstruction of views into and across the Forecourt towards the Monumental Steps and shells above.

The utilisation of the space currently occupied by the Sydney Opera House Shop in the northern end of the Lower Concourse for use as the Visitor Centre minimises intervention to the building and will remove the intrusive ticketing/information shed on the Forecourt. This intrusive element impedes important sightlines towards the SOH from the southern Forecourt entry and adds to unnecessary clutter. The relocation of this function to the Lower Concourse will improve the presentation of the Forecourt and is considered a positive impact.

The 'natural' palette of external materials that is evident on site is retained and utilised in the proposed works. Refer to 210.DA.203 'Welcome Centre Cloaking Elevations', 210.DA.204 'Welcome Centre Shop & Ticketing Counter Elevations', 210.DA.205 'Welcome Centre Interpretive Wall Elevations', and 210.DA.301 'Welcome Point Plan & Elevations'.

Policy 2.2 *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 removal of intrusive items from the Forecourt and the existing three bronze signage pylons, and their replacement with a single, slim, tall, signage blade, is considered a very positive impact on the views and vistas to and from the Opera House.

Policy 3.3 *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

It is worth quoting J.S Kerr in the discussion preceding this policy:

“The forecourt, broadwalk and podium have been, and will be, seen as a splendid place for a whole range of impedimenta: freestanding sculptures, planter beds, statues to benefactors, memorial tablets on plinths, avenues of flag standards, and a surfeit of bollards, railings and directional signs to guide the unwary have all been, or are likely to be, proposed. In order to preserve the stark and dramatic presentation of the Opera House, the unnecessary should be resisted and the necessary kept to an absolute minimum.”

The completion of the Vehicle and Pedestrian Safety Project removes the bulk of traffic and a major pedestrian hazard from the Forecourt. The major hazards that remain comprise the plethora of permanent and temporary signage elements and the information shed, which now clutter the Forecourt.

The VIC Project removes these intrusive elements on the Forecourt area as well as the three existing bronze signage pylons towards its south end, and therefore enhances the open sweep and uncluttered setting of the Forecourt in accordance with this policy.

There remains a necessity to communicate a number of fundamental messages to patrons and visitors to the site. These include a traditional ‘welcome to country’ to the place, its World Heritage status, and basic orientation and way-finding. These messages are incorporated into a single, slim signage blade that minimises impacts on important views into and across the space. Positive impact.

The audio component with the ‘welcome to country’ on the Welcome Signage Blade will establish a tangible and powerful Indigenous presence near the entry to the site.

It is essential that this single blade remains as a single solitary element on the Forecourt, and is not further accompanied by a collection of signage stands and pylons, temporary or permanent, as is the present situation. Less is more.

Policy 11.1 *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:

Refer to comments on Policy 3.3 above.

The finely detailed bronze finish for the Welcome Signage Blade is consistent with Utzon’s honest expression and palette of natural materials used elsewhere on the site. Positive impact.

Policy 15.1 *The fan pattern granite setts or cobbles and the high quality solid granite strips and paving on the forecourt and lower forecourt should be retained and conserved.*

Comment:

The paving beneath the existing group of three signage pylons on the southern end of the Forecourt has been modified to emphasise their location. Their proposed removal necessitates the reinstatement of the continuous solid granite strip dividing the fan pattern granite setts. This is shown on the documentation and is considered a neutral-positive impact. The proposed location for the new signage blade is within the area of the granite setts and they will remain unaltered, except for temporary removal and reinstatement to allow installation of services. It is essential that care is taken with this work to avoid a 'repaired strip' effect.

Policy 17.1 *Both original arrival sequences with their different and changing experiences should be retained:*

- *forecourt, grand staircase, podium, box office foyer, and auditoria foyers;*
- *vehicle concourse, stairways, box office foyers, and auditoria foyers.*

Comment:

J.S Kerr notes that both approaches are important visitor experiences, however the approach via the 'grand staircase' (Monumental Steps) was considered by Utzon to be the primary approach. The proposed location of the VIC Project's Visitor Centre will attract visitors away from this primary approach and inevitably direct them into the building via the Vehicle Concourse.

Design 5 considers that it is important for visitors to experience the primary approach as this is a fundamental part of Utzon concept. In order to address this, we recommend that guided tours try to facilitate approach via the Monumental Steps (where possible), and make its significance clear to visitors and in interpretation material.

Policy 22.3 *In any major redesign of spaces in which architectural character is important, the emphasis should be on concealed or unobtrusive light sources that reveal or reinforce that character, in addition to illumination for the safe and effective function of the space.*

Comment:

This policy applies also to the lighting of the new Visitor Centre. As such, lighting as part of this facility should adhere to this policy. From the documentation provided, it is clear that this is the intent of the designers.

Documentation for the proposed signage blade on the Forecourt indicates that information is to be backlit. This will minimise distracting glare and is considered appropriate.

Policy 38.1 *Any proposal to remove or alter original and/or significant fabric should:*

- *have regard to the level of significance of the fabric and to the impact on the character and quality of the place affected;*
- *be checked to ensure that there is no feasible alternative;*
- *only be considered in the context of an overall plan.*

Comment:

The existing group of three bronze signage pylons on the Forecourt are relatively recent and are of little significance. Their removal is therefore of low impact.

Refer to section 6.0 for discussion on 'Consideration of alternative solutions'.

The original fitout of the 1988 Lower Concourse is considered of some significance (c), however its removal and replacement with the proposed configuration is considered to have an acceptable minor impact. This impact is ameliorated by the quality of design for the new fitout. It is therefore essential that the original integrity and design intent of the proposal is followed through to construction.

Policy 39.1 *Items identified as intrusive in this conservation plan should be removed.*

Policy 39.2 *Priorities and a time based program for the removal or modification of intrusive items should be established and incorporated into any program of works.*

Comment:

Several intrusive items, plus others installed since the 2003 CMP assessment, in the areas affected by the VIC Project will be removed or modified as part of the works. These include:

Forecourt	Mobile signage stands Flagpoles Temporary ticketing/information shed
Lower Concourse	Any items obscuring column bases

Comments on the potential impact of the VIC Project on these intrusive items are found in the tables in Section 10.0 'Discussion of compliance with Sydney Opera House Conservation (CMP) 3rd edition' above.

Policy 41.1 *Interior and exterior surfaces of unpainted concrete ribs, pedestals and beams should remain unpainted and their details unobscured.*

Comment:

While this policy refers to the highly significant roof shell ribs, pedestals and beams, it is applicable to the 1988 unpainted concrete mushroom columns in the Lower Concourse. The design of the Visitor Centre has been carefully considered to ensure that these columns remain free of obstruction and can be appreciated. It is important that they also remain unpainted.

Policy 46.3 *Exterior signs should be kept to the minimum and, as far as possible, given common design and graphic characteristics.*

Comment:

A revised Signage Manual is currently in preparation for the site. In the absence of this revised Signage Manual, it is essential that any new signage should adhere to the design regime established by the 1970s work, under the leadership of Peter Hall.

The proposed Welcome Signage Blade and Visitor Centre incorporate materials and design features based on existing original work at the SOH. This is consistent with this policy.

The typeface of any signage in the entire VIC Project should follow the original Helvetica font or relate closely to it. This would ensure compliance with this policy.

The replacement of the three existing signage pylons with a single signage blade is consistent with the policy intent of minimising exterior signage. This is a very important principle that must be respected.

While the Visitor Centre is sheltered, it is still external and the policy intent of minimising signage should apply in this area as well. Repetition of signs to increase visibility **must** be avoided.

Policy 49.3 *Proposed changes of use to any part of the building should only be considered in the context of a co-ordinated plan for the whole building, and priorities established to determine which functions must be kept on site and which may be located elsewhere.*

Comment:

The proposed Visitor Centre in the Lower Concourse is a revised version of the existing Sydney Opera House Shop and Tour Centre. It is not really a change of use, but it is important to note that such a facility is essential on site and this proposal to combine the shop with an information and ticketing facility addresses a necessary visitor function in an appropriate and relatively discrete location. Refer to section 6.0 for discussion on 'Consideration of alternative solutions'.

Policy 51.1 *The more significant a concept, fabric, relationship, space or vista, the more should care be exercised in preparing proposals that may affect the place—the objective being to ensure that the work will not reduce, and may reinforce, the identified significance.*

Comment:

The impact of the VIC Project on affected spaces, qualities, features and components of the SOH is discussed in more detail in the tables in Section 10.0 'Discussion of compliance with Sydney Opera House Conservation (CMP) 3rd edition' above.

Policy 52.1 *The future conservation and development of the place should be carried out in accordance with the principles of the Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (Burra Charter), as revised in 1999.*

Comment:

The proposal has been developed and documented with a clear understanding by the designer, of the significance and sensitivity of the spaces affected, and is considered an appropriate response to this significance. Therefore, we consider it has adhered to the principles and processes espoused by the Burra Charter.

Policy 55.1 *All staff and consultants should have access to a copy of this Conservation Plan.*

Comment:

The designers were provided with a copy of the 3rd Edition CMP, as well as a draft copy of the 4th Edition (not yet adopted).

Policy 56.1 *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:

Design 5, as heritage architect and consultant, has been involved since 2004 in investigating options and assessing proposals affecting the SOH, including this current VIC Project. Refer to section 6.0 for discussion on 'Consideration of alternative solutions'.

Design 5 has extensive knowledge and understanding of the significance of the place in whole and in parts. Design 5 is currently in the final stages of completing the 4th edition of the Conservation Management Plan for the SOH.

Policy 60.1 *Existing interpretive facilities should be reviewed and a co-ordinated strategy developed for presenting and interpreting the Sydney Opera House and its site.*

Policy 60.2 *The program outlined in Policy 60.1 should be progressively monitored and adjusted to ensure that it increases the number of people who visit, understand and enjoy what they are seeing.*

Comment:

The Opera House Tour has been a major success as a major means of interpretation. Its success has prompted the proliferation of uncoordinated signage, both fixed and mobile, throughout the building and across the site. This has unfortunately resulted in unnecessary clutter and numerous intrusive items that require urgent removal or modification.

The VIC Project has been designed to replace this clutter with a single signage blade on the Forecourt and a better designed and integrated Visitor Centre, including information, ticketing and SOH retail, in the Lower Concourse. This Visitor Centre incorporates interpretive material and displays which have the potential to considerably enhance visitor understanding and experience.

It is essential that the interpretation material present a comprehensive and meaningful selection of stories about the place, and that these are presented using the highest quality of interpretation design.

This should be a fully integrated part of an overall interpretation strategy and design for the whole site. This proposed facility will provide a focus for the coordination and presentation of interpretation across the site.

Policy 60.2 is important and requires that the proposed facility and the interpretation is progressively monitored and adjusted to ensure efficiency and relevance, and thus avoid repetition of the current proliferation of unnecessary duplicated signage, etc. This new facility should allow the revision and possible reduction of visitor related signage and associated facilities within other areas of the site, especially the Box Office.

13.0 Compliance with Utzon Design Principles

The Utzon Design Principles (UDP) published in 2002, provide a clear insight into the Utzon's design intent and the ideas that inspired him. They also provide ongoing guidance and inspiration for any proposed changes to the place as well as for its ongoing management, conservation and use.

The third edition CMP includes a shortlist of elements and attributes that are essential to Utzon's design concept for the SOH and are embodied in the UDP. These are described in Policy 2.1 of the CMP and have already been addressed in the discussion above in relation to this particular policy.

Extracts from the UDP that are relevant to this VIC Project are quoted below. These are followed by comment as to how the proposal complies with each of them.

"One of the great features of the Opera House is the approach, the openness, the fluidity of people's movements through the house, and once you clutter this you have a problem." UDP p49

Comment:

The removal of many intrusive items and clutter from the Forecourt as part of the VIC Project will potentially reinstate the openness referred to by Utzon. This is consistent with the UDP. The importance of adhering to this important principle into the future cannot be overstated and should be a primary management objective across the site.

"Forecourt should not be cluttered with new buildings at any size." UDP p50

Comment:

The alternatives considered for the visitor information and ticketing facility included options for new structures (buildings) on the Forecourt. These were rejected. The VIC Project will remove the presently very intrusive ticketing shed near the southern end of the Forecourt, that has been in place now since the end of 2011. It demonstrates the importance of adhering to Utzon's dictum.

*"The large staircase at the Sydney Opera House was made 100 metres wide and the plateau on top became a very important feature for the feeling of being in another world."
"I also have had so many reactions the moment I put a foot on a staircase with steps a hundred metres wide something happens to you, something like climbing a mountain." UDP p59*

"In the Sydney Opera House you are aware of your orientation at all times. It is important that each member of the audience has a simple, easily understood tour, from the entrance to his or her seat and out again." UDP p67

Comment:

Utzon's comments underline the important role of the Monumental Steps in the experience of approaching the building. The proposed location of the visitor information and ticketing facility at the north end of the Lower Concourse will potentially draw visitors away from these steps. This should be addressed in any tour and interpretation material.

"For patrons arriving on foot, it is possible to walk in the open right up to the moment they will enter the foyers of the Auditoria."

"It is very important that the audience does not enter and walk through the building along dark corridors to a dark hall." UDP p69

Comment:

These statements by Utzon relate closely to the issues regarding the Monumental Steps. It is important that any tour commencing from the new visitors centre, not approach the building entirely within enclosed spaces, a situation that already exists with many of the tours. This would be in contradiction to the above statements and should be rectified.

"The walls will show the concrete as it was constructed, contrasting with the moulded plywood panels which form the components of the furniture and fixings." UDP p71

Comment:

The proposed use of prefabricated timber and plywood components to construct the visitor centre space, sitting as a freestanding element against a backdrop of unpainted concrete mushroom columns and pink granite panels is consistent with Utzon's idea and relates to the honest expression of natural materials.

"...the only way to attack the ...major parts of the building would be to bring them under control by a strict geometry and then divide them into uniform components, which can be produced by machine under strict control both as regards dimensions and quality." UDP p75

"Like the other components - the shells, the glass walls etc. - the layout of the halls is based on a strict geometrical system. The layout consists of a series of radial sections all fanning out from a focal point in the stage area." UDP p75

Referring to ply corridor lining:

"Thus mass manufacturing production of simple elements gives an economical solution providing the required aesthetics and with ease of access for maintenance." UDP p77

Comment:

The use of mass produced prefabricated units with a common geometric order that are then assembled to make a larger element is the idea behind the proposed use of timber and glass prefabricated components to construct the visitor centre space. This is consistent with Utzon's ideas.

Referring to external materials:

"All the materials are non-corrosive, weather resistant, durable and will age and acquire a patina without changing their character. Thereby preserving the character of the whole building through the ages." UDP p79

Comment:

The proposed use of bronze for the blade sign on the Forecourt will be entirely consistent with the use of this material for other external elements at the Opera House. This principle was adhered to by Peter Hall, and is again followed in this proposal.

The choice of timber and plywood for the visitor facility in the Lower Concourse was based on the idea of providing the visitor with a glimpse of the materials and design ideas used for the interiors. As this location is deeply sheltered and not seen as an external element, this approach is considered appropriate and is supported.

Referring to public and working areas:

"Lighting in these areas will be generally of an indirect nature although there will be situations where specially designed direct lighting fittings will be necessary." UDP p82

Referring to bar and lounge areas:

"The walls will be covered wholly or in part by modular sized moulded, plywood panels, finished in the natural colour of the wood. The panels are stopped short of the ceilings and the floors, where they form a continuous fitting for concealed lights." UDP p83

Comment:

The principle of indirect lighting is common to all areas of the Opera House, both external and internal. The proposed use of indirect lighting within and around the visitor facility in the Lower Concourse is entirely consistent with this principle. This is reinforced by the design of the timber panels appearing to 'float' below the concrete ceiling and above the pink granite floor. This design is consistent with Utzon's design principles and is supported.

14.0 Summary impact of VIC proposal

In summary, the VIC Project will have a positive impact on the setting and significance of the Sydney Opera House, and will enhance visitor and patron experience and appreciation of the values of the place. The proposed design is generally consistent with the policies in the CMP and with the Utzon Design Principles.

By removing a number of intrusive items on the Forecourt and replacing the three existing signage pylons with a carefully designed Welcome Signage Blade, the VIC Project will improve appreciation of the Forecourt as a crucial component of the setting of the SOH and in Utzon's vision for the approach experience. The incorporation of way-finding and interpretive material on the signage blade, including the World Heritage status of the place and a traditional 'welcome to country', will potentially encourage further exploration of the site and the values that underpin it.

The proposed Visitor Centre on the Lower Concourse offers ticketing, information and SOH retail facilities in an appropriate and relatively discrete location. Better-designed interpretive displays and panels in and around the centre will deliver important information to visitors and patrons on the significance of the site, including its history, meaning and important associations, and provide necessary orientation and way-finding material. The details of these are yet to be clarified.

Aspects of the VIC Project will potentially enhance some of Utzon's concepts, including repetition of pre-fabricated components, fine design and detailing, an honest use of materials including bronze, timber and glass.

Overall, the proposal has been developed and documented in a manner that demonstrates a clear understanding of the exceptional significance of the place, and the sensitivity of the spaces affected. In the preparation of this report, a number of issues have been discussed which should be considered and implemented, and are included in the following recommendations.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are made for consideration as part of the approval conditions:

1. In order to ensure the quality and sensitivity of the concept design of the VIC Project is properly and effectively implemented, it is crucial that the quality and detail described in the documents are not diminished, or 'costed out' of the project during the detailed design or construction process.

The documentation and construction process should be reviewed at regular and/or significant points to ensure that the quality of the project is maintained, and if possible enhanced. The original designers of the project should be part of this quality control and checking process through to completion, and their recommendations properly considered and implemented.

2. In accordance with Policy 56.1 of the CMP 2003, specialist heritage conservation advice should continue during the design development and documentation stages for the VIC Project and continue through to completion of the project to ensure the conservation objectives are achieved.
3. The proposed Visitor Centre in the Lower Concourse will potentially have the affect of diverting visitors away from Utzon's vision of the primary approach experience via the Monumental Steps. To ameliorate this impact, the tour route should be modified (if

possible) and interpretation material provided to emphasise the significant role of the Monumental Steps in the sequence of spaces approaching the SOH.

4. In order to strengthen visitor's understanding and appreciation of the significance of the site, it is essential that the interpretive material provided offer a meaningful and comprehensive selection of stories about the place.
5. In keeping with the exceptional significance of the SOH, interpretive material must be presented using the highest quality of interpretation design. To ensure consistency with other signage on site, interpretive material should use font styles that are consistent with site wide style guides, such as the Signage Manual or its successor, and complement the original Helvetica font used at SOH.
6. The removal of a number of intrusive items and reduction in clutter is an important positive impact of the VIC Project. The minimisation of clutter and reduction of repetitive or unnecessary signage must continue to be of the highest priority for SOH management to ensure that the significance of the place is not diminished.
7. As part of the certification of completion of the project, the heritage architect is to provide written verification for the removal of the temporary ticketing/information shed and mobile signage stands from site.



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