

Art Gallery of New South Wales Expansion Project – Sydney Modern

Public Submissions Overview

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Art Gallery of NSW

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Contact:

Linda Rodriguez

linda.rodriquez@elton.com.au

9387 2600

Sydney

02 9387 2600

Level 6

332 – 342 Oxford Street

Bondi Junction NSW 2022

www.elton.com.au

consulting@elton.com.au

Sydney | Canberra | Darwin

ABN 56 003 853 101

Prepared by	Linda Rodriguez
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1 Introduction

The Art Gallery of NSW (AGNSW) engaged Elton Consulting to undertake a review of the public submissions received during the formal public exhibition of the Sydney Modern Project State Significant Development (SSD) Application which occurred between the 16th November and 15th December 2017. The analysis is inclusive of the public submissions received outside of this prescribed notification period up until the time of reporting (21st March 2018)¹ and will support the Submissions Review Report undertaken by architectus.

The Department of Planning and Environment will be considering all submissions received during the public exhibition as part of its assessment process of the SSD. The next project milestone will be determination of the State Significant Development Application.

This report summarises the matters raised in the public submissions in order to obtain an overview of the public's perception of the project and key issues or themes which have emerged in the process. Each submission has been examined individually to understand the matters being raised which have been extracted, collated and individually coded to form the analysis. The submissions analysed include online submissions, email submissions and free-format submissions as made available on the Department of Planning and Environment's website (DPE).

1.1 Snapshot of key insights

- » A total of 282 submissions were received from the public (260) and organisations (22 excluding government authorities and agencies) in response to the EIS, at the time of reporting.
- » Of these submissions, 202 (72%) were in objection, 70 (25%) indicated support and 10 (3%) were lodged as a comment in relation to the proposal.
- » Of the 202 submissions received in opposition, the predominant 'key' themes which emerged include;
 - > The loss of public open space in 150 submissions (74%);
 - > Design of the new building and heritage in 86 submissions (43%); and
 - > Lack of transport and accessibility in 79 submissions (39%), visual impacts in 78 submissions (39%), followed closely by the loss of trees and vegetation in 76 submissions (38%).
- » Approximately 23 submitters (8%) identified as being from Woolloomooloo and thus are local residents to the AGNSW. Of these, two were in support of the proposal and 21 in objection or registered as making a comment.
- » A total of 22 submissions received from other (non-government) organisations including Foundation and Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Woolloomooloo Finger Wharf Building Management Committee and associated Strata Bodies who generally oppose the development (13 in total) and the Australian Institute of Architects who provided comments both in favour and against the proposal (2 in total). Submissions received from organisations in support of the proposal (7) include the Information and Cultural Exchange who viewed the project as a 'visionary opportunity' to upgrade the museum and the Tourism and Transport Forum who believe the project would boost tourism in the area.

¹ Total number of submissions provided by the Department of Planning and Environment



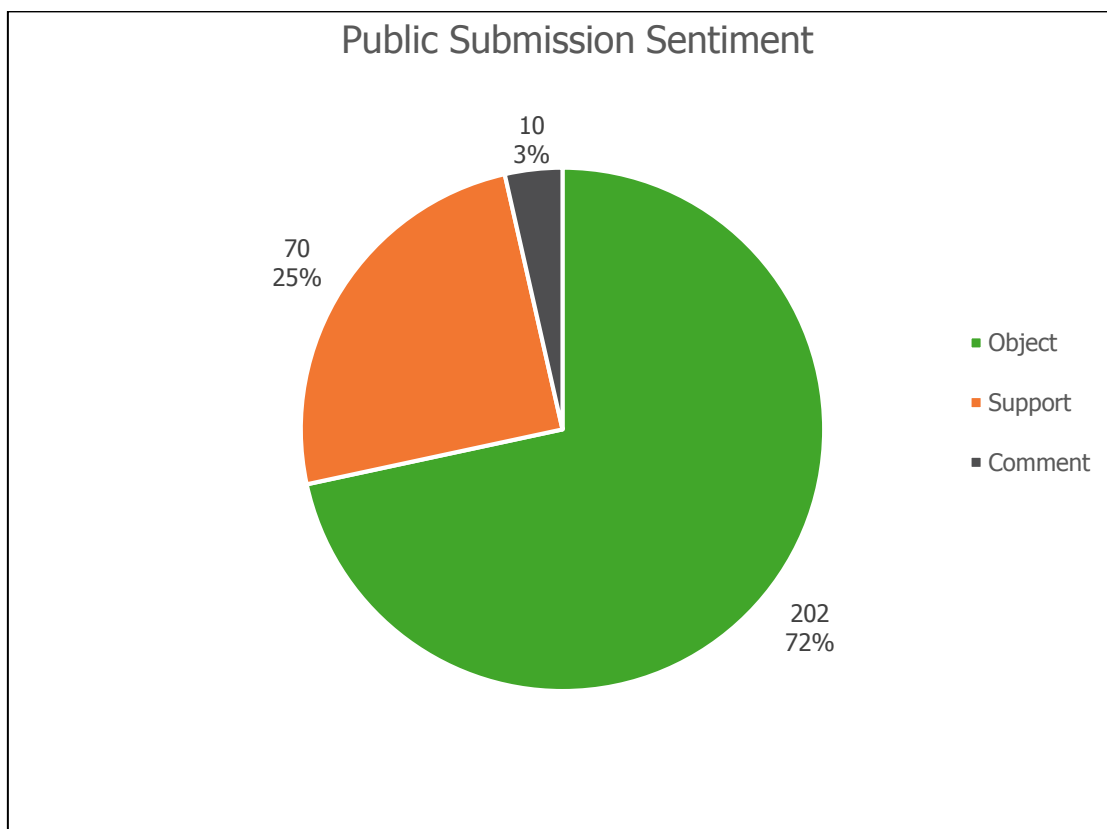
2 Submissions Sentimentality

The results of all the public submissions received by the DPE are collectively represented in the chart below (**Graph 1**). The graph is inclusive of submissions received from public organisations. The chart illustrates the overall sentiment conveyed in the public submissions in relation to the proposal (submitted via the DPE website, posted, emailed or otherwise). The online submission avenue via the DPE website required the submitter to directly indicate their view of the proposal. The options provided included;

- » *I'm just providing comments*
- » *I support it*
- » *I object to it*

These online submissions are also represented in the graph below.

Graph 1 Submission Sentiment – Public Submissions



As demonstrated above, the clear majority (72%) of the submissions were received in opposition to the proposal with a lower percentage (25%) of public submissions indicated support of the project.

Those using the online method of lodging a submission who didn't wish to support nor object to the proposal, were nonetheless able to provide an online submission registered as a 'comment' of which consisted of 3% of all submissions. The majority of these 'comment' submissions however, raised concerns in relation to the proposal which would otherwise indicate opposition.

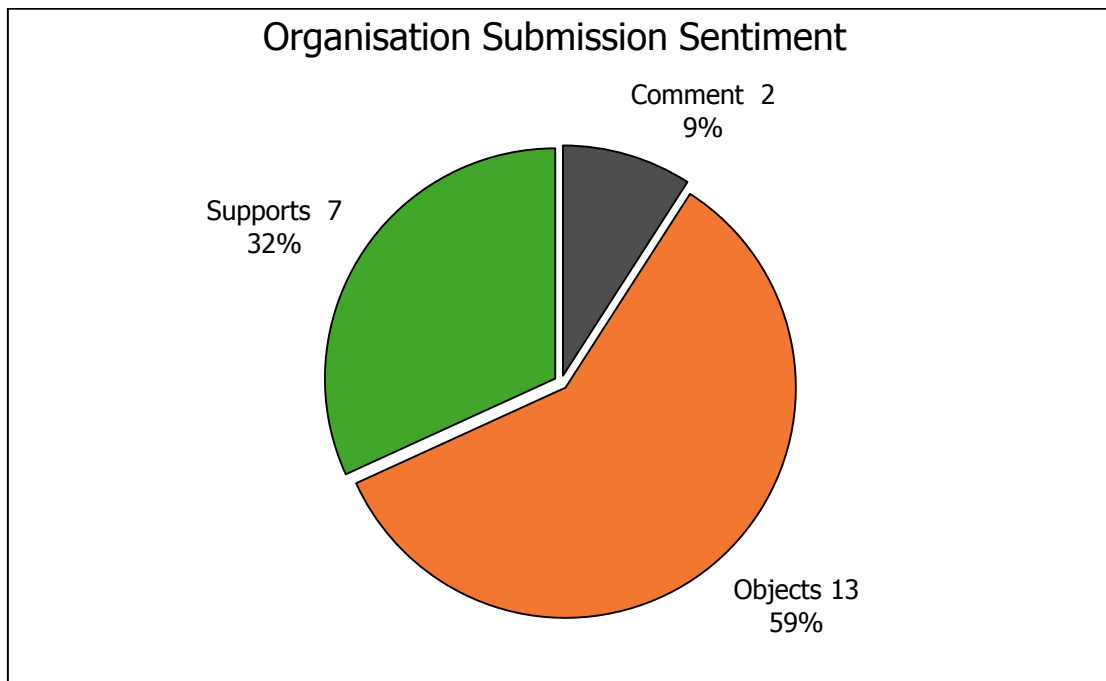
The issues raised in the 'comment' submissions have been captured in the overview of the issues raised, as discussed below.

A total of thirteen (13) submissions identified as Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, ten (10) of whom were in opposition and three (3) who expressed support for the proposal. Many more submissions showed interest in the Royal Botanic Gardens and the impact of the proposal on the Gardens / Domain land.

2.1 Public organisation submissions

The results of the public organisation submissions are independently illustrated in the pie chart below (**Graph 2**). The chart illustrates the overall sentiment conveyed in the submissions in relation to the proposal based on the [22 submissions of this category](#);

Graph 2 Public organisation submission sentiment





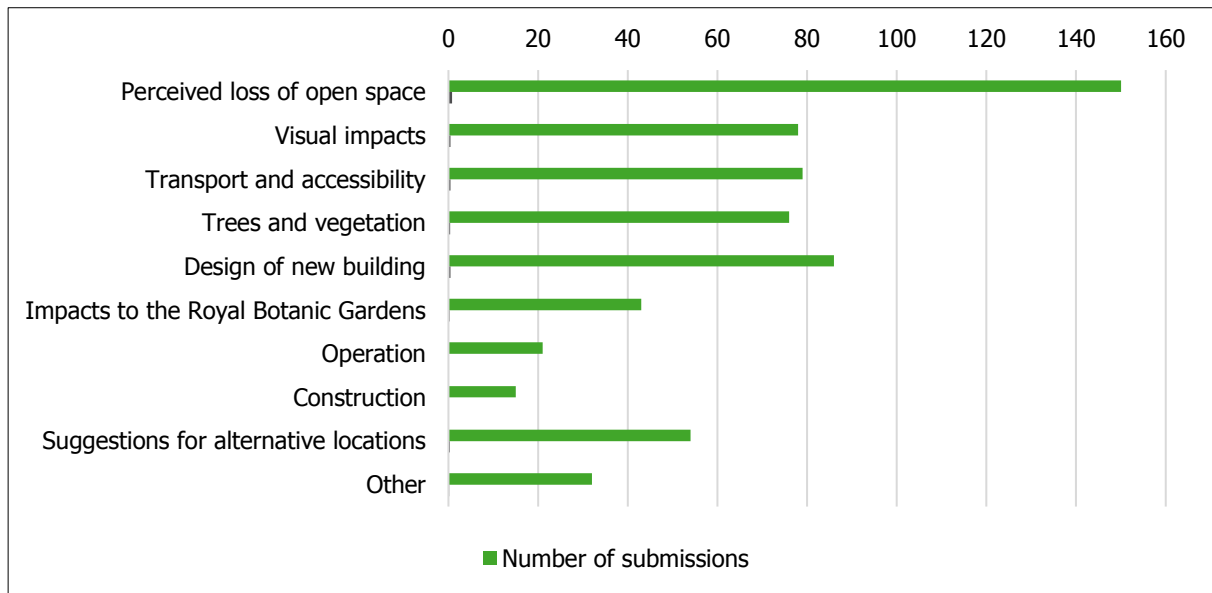
2.2 Overview of themes raised in public submissions

The exhibition of the SSD Application for the Sydney Modern Project raised a broad range of themes. These were able to be classified into **ten key themes** which are scheduled below and illustrated in **Graphs 3** (number of submissions theme raised) and **Graph 4** (percentage per theme).

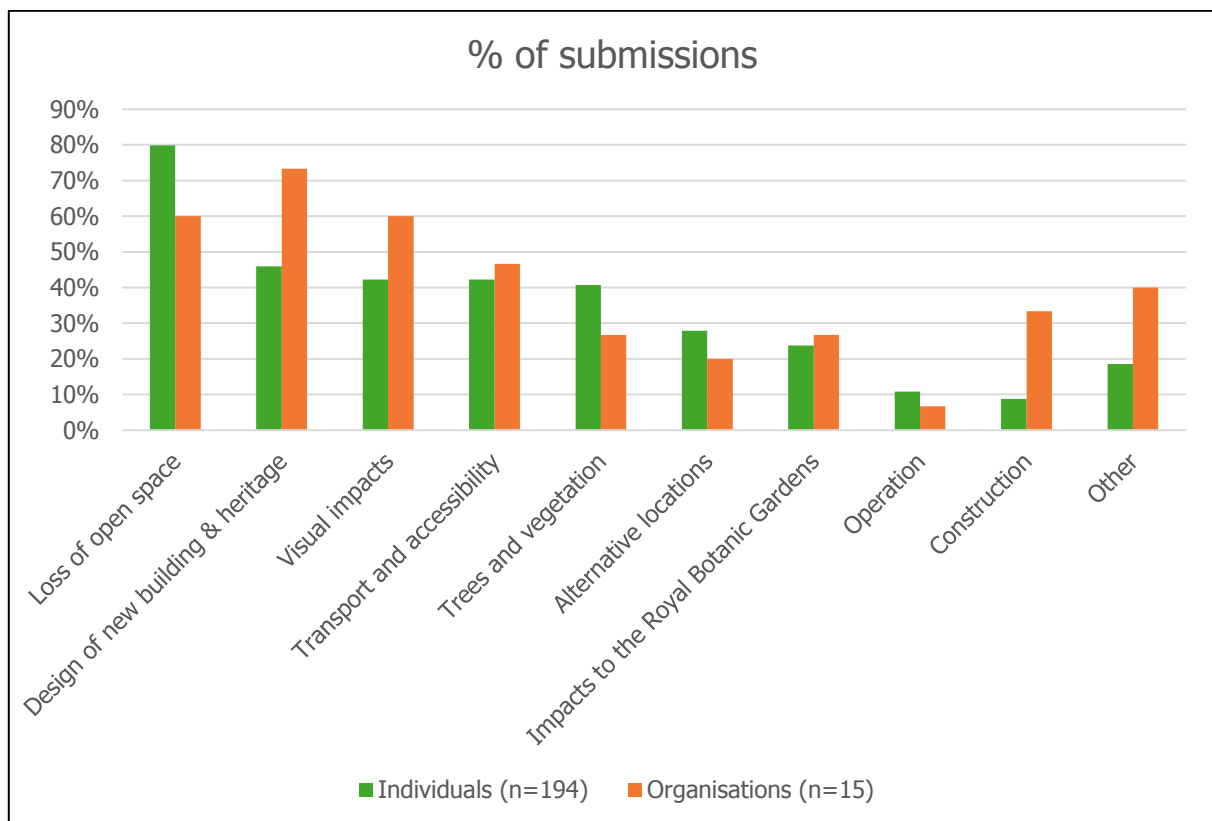
1. Loss of public open space (55%)
2. Design of the new building (30%)
3. Visual impacts (29%)
4. Transport and accessibility (29%)
5. Trees and vegetation (28%)
6. Alternative locations (19%)
7. Impacts on the RBG (16%)
8. Operation of the Gallery (7.5%)
9. Construction Impacts (6%)
10. Other Issues (12%)

Percentages above are reflective of the total (282) submissions received.

Graph 3 Number of submissions in which themes were raised



Graph 4 Total percentage of submissions per key theme (Public and Public Organisations)



2.3 Summary of key themes

The table below provides a more detailed breakdown of the ten key themes and the number and percentage which the themes were raised in the 202 objections received;

Key theme	Summary of concerns/matters raised	Number of submissions	%
1. Loss of public open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Loss of open, green space » Impacts on general amenity of the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney and Domain » Use and scale of the proposed Entry Plaza. 	150	74%
2. Design of new building & Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Heights, bulk and scale impacts on heritage significance and amenity of existing Gallery and Domain » Choice of building materials and finishes. » Preserving heritage significance and status of existing Gallery » Connection between the new development and existing building. 	86	43%
3. Visual impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Visual impact on historic setting of existing Gallery and surrounding area, including Domain and Royal Botanic Garden » Impact on view corridors and vistas from the public domain » Visual impact on surrounding residential and commercial properties. 	78	39%
4. Transport and accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Public transport is considered insufficient to accommodate the expansion » No transport plan or traffic study has been undertaken and parking is perceived to be insufficient to accommodate to the proposed expansion » Road network improvements (e.g. roundabout at Woolloomooloo Gates) were seen as both positive and negative » Increased road traffic and pedestrian movements on Art Gallery Road Access into and out of Lincoln Crescent due to increased vehicle movements were also considered issues 	79	39%

Key theme	Summary of concerns/matters raised	Number of submissions	%
	» Inadequate Accessibility (particularly for people with a disability).		
5. Trees and vegetation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Tree and vegetation clearing, lack of natural shading in recreational areas of the park » The planting of endemic species should be maximised » Landscaping/replacement trees will take a long time to become established to develop a canopy sufficient to offset the loss of trees. 	76	38%
6. Alternative locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Site should be in Western Sydney or regional NSW location. » Site should be in alternative location in proximity to existing Gallery 	54	27%
7. Impacts on the Royal Botanic Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Loss of carparking revenue for RBG if a civic area is established in front of existing building where there are existing parking metres. » Access to the RBG may be restricted by the development » Easements / rights of way across RBG governed land for maintenance and repair of air conditioning ducting » Changes to utilities and services shared with the RBG 	43	21%
8. Operation of the gallery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Increased impacts on neighbours (antisocial behaviour, noise etc) » Risk of vandalism to the public domain including art garden and entrance plaza » Studio spaces and their relationship with artists » Increased noise transmission especially during events » Perception that the expansion will be utilised for functions rather than additional exhibition space 	21	10%
9. Construction impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » General concerns from local residents regarding construction of the development, including noise and hours of construction » Traffic management during construction, including access along Art Gallery Road, Mrs Macquarie's Road, Access Road and Lincoln Crescent » Disruption to access to the Royal Botanic Garden and Mrs Macquarie's Chair along Art Gallery Road » Impacts of proposed works on the land bridge, Cross City Tunnel and M1 Eastern Distributor. 	15	7%

Key theme	Summary of concerns/matters raised	Number of submissions	%
10. Other issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » A number of miscellaneous issues were raised in the submissions, thus have been categorised as 'other'. These themes are listed below. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Sea water heat exchange – environmental impacts > Stormwater management > Existing Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) is sufficient to accommodate provisions for exhibiting modern art (i.e no need for the expansion) > Visitor and member amenities including toilets, cafes and seating > Insufficient consultation provided > Inappropriate expenditure of government funding 	34	17%

3 Main themes summary

As indicated under Part 2 above, **four strong key themes** emerged from the public exhibition of the SSD Application for the Sydney Modern Project and have been below to provide further overview, supported by verbatim quotes;

3.1 Loss of public open space

As indicated in the data stipulated within this summary report, loss of public open space was a strong common theme throughout the submissions received, occurring within 55% of the total submissions received. Preserving green space, maximising public open space were common issues raised in the submissions of this nature. Submitters conveyed a variety of reasons including the inappropriate location, with suggestions it should instead be located in Western Sydney or Barangaroo and population growth also a justification to preserve open space pockets, particularly in the city where it is perceived to be ever diminishing.



"The need for additional space for the beleaguered art gallery is not contested. However, it is not acceptable to insert buildings to the north of the Art Gallery, on what is a healing landscape: after the Domain and the RBG were originally one connected landscape until 'torn' apart by the wounding Cahill Expressway-Eastern distributor." – Australian Garden History Society.

"Our main objection is to the loss of green space in The Lungs of Sydney. The Development involves substantial loss of 18,742 sqm of green space, most of which is owned by RBGDT. Foundation & Friends considers this unexpected and an unnecessary proposal for our members, the Sydney community and our environment." - Foundation and Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens.

"I think in such a large city with many residents and visitors it is imperative to try and keep green spaces for all. Perhaps there are alternatives to the loss of this green space or other areas that could be made into green spaces nearby to the RBG Sydney." - Wollongong Resident

"Its construction requires the removal of invaluable parkland adjacent to the Royal Botanic Gardens, which also is an integral part of green curtilage around the existing Art Gallery building" - Annandale Resident.



3.2 Design of new building & heritage and visual impacts

Many submitters (31% of all submissions) were concerned that the new building detracts from the existing building and considers it does not fit harmoniously with its surrounds, including the garden setting, physical environment and impact on the existing museum's heritage context and curtilage. Many emphasised the architectural significance of the existing building and perceived the Gallery as one of the state's most important cultural institutions which needed to be preserved.

“ *This is a State Significant Development, which means that this a hundred-year opportunity. It is important that this fact not be forgotten in the face of the variety of challenges that any project of this scale and public importance will inevitably experience.*” - [Australian Institute of Architects](#).

“ *Concrete retaining walls, which are very unattractive, could be the subject of vertical garden schemes which would bring much needed greenery to the (Lincoln) street, which is also to lose some trees along its length and in the median strip*” - [Woolloomooloo Resident](#)

“ *We recommend that the Department of Planning refuse this current proposal and preserve the significance of the open landscape and landscape context of this exceptional heritage item.*” - [Australian Garden History Society](#).

3.3 Transport and accessibility

Transport and accessibility was also a key issue raised in 29% of the total submissions. Concerns most commonly centred on accessibility in terms of getting to the Gallery as well as moving in and around the new building. Improving public transport connections by increasing buses from the train stations or creating a ferry wharf nearby were popular suggestions. There was also demand for more parking as well as concerns for loss of parking within the RBG resulting in loss of revenue for the RBGDT and inaccessibility, particularly for volunteers.

“ *This will take away a significant walking and cycling thoroughfare to the city. It is one of the few pleasant green spaces one can commute through.*” - [Elizabeth Bay Resident](#)

“ *Parking revenue would be lost, which would put financial pressures on other areas of RBGDT*” - [Foundation and Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens](#).

“ *As Mrs Macquarie's Road is the sole means of approach for all but pedestrians, there is a major risk that some of the Domain would later be carved off for a road. That would be another tragedy, to cotify a green space and create air and noise pollution*” - [Potts Point Resident](#).

3.4 Submissions in support

Despite the majority of submissions conveying opposition to the project, a number of submissions (25%) were received in support. Many of these submissions were centred around the design of the development, the much-needed expansion of the gallery, welcomed boost to tourism and the economy as well as utilisation of the disused oil tanks.



"We are pleased to see accessible landscaped roof terraces and the external circulation paths in the project. They seem to deliver on one of the site's best potentials and will provide a completely unique gallery experience for the public. They must be retained." – Australian Institute of Architects.

"The new building will enable increased tourism, the opportunity to showcase larger blockbusters which currently can't be shown in the existing building, a safer more inclusive thoroughfare between the city and Woolloomooloo and give more space for the collection to hang (the majority which is in storage) to be enjoyed by the public." - North Turrumurra Resident

"The Sydney Modern will provide a long overdue opportunity to establish a world class art gallery in Sydney". Huntley's Cove Resident.



4 Conclusion

Consultation continues to be an important aspect of the Sydney Modern Project during the planning, construction and operational phases as well as to inform the future of an expanded and transformed Art Gallery of New South Wales. This report summarises the submissions received during the formal exhibition period of the SSD application for the Sydney Modern Project, following on from the extensive engagement undertaken by the Gallery, with key stakeholders and the broader community, prior to the lodgement of the Application.

The submissions received in support of the proposal generally praised the design of the extension and conveyed the importance of heightening Sydney's cultural significance, perceiving the project to be a landmark opportunity to achieve this. Notwithstanding, a strong key theme which emerged from the analysis was the perceived loss of public open/green space and the negative impact upon the Domain and RBG.



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