



Sydney Zoo Modification 9

Increase Visitor Cap on Early Morning Group Tours
State Significant Development Modification Assessment
(SSD-7228-Mod-9)

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Glossary

Abbreviation	Definition
Applicant	Sydney Zoo Pty Ltd
Council	Blacktown City Council
Department	Department of Planning and Environment (DPE)
DPI	Department of Primary Industries, Department of Regional NSW
EP&A Act	<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i>
EP&A Regulation	Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021
LEP	Local Environmental Plan
Minister	Minister for Planning
Planning Secretary	Secretary of the Department
RtS	Response to Submissions
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy
Planning Systems SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021
TfNSW	Transport for NSW

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1 Introduction

This report provides the NSW Department of Planning and Environment's (the Department's) assessment of an application to modify the State significant development (SSD) consent for the Sydney Zoo (SSD-7228, as modified). The modification application seeks consent to increase the 300-person visitor cap on early morning group tours and private zoo experiences at the zoo.

Sydney Zoo has advised that increasing the number and variety of private zoo experiences and small group tours that occur outside the general opening hours of the zoo will allow additional tourists to experience the zoo through a range of small group activities. It is also an important part of the economic recovery of the zoo following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The application was lodged on 8 May 2022 by Sydney Zoo Pty Ltd (the Applicant) pursuant to section 4.55(1A) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act).

1.1 Background

The Applicant operates a zoo, known as Sydney Zoo, within the Bungarribee Precinct of the Western Sydney Parklands (WSP), in the Blacktown local government area (LGA) (refer [Figure 1](#)). The site (Lot 11 of Lot 101 DP 1195067) is located approximately 33 kilometres (km) west of the Sydney Central Business District and approximately 4.5 km south-west of the Blacktown town centre. Access to the site is off the Great Western Highway (GWH) to the south of the site.

The approved zoo comprises animal exhibits for a range of native and exotic animals and associated infrastructure, including a small farm experience (primarily for the purpose of holding sheep and goats). The zoo is spread over a 16.5 hectare (ha) area and has an emphasis on exhibiting exotic animals in a safari-like setting and integrates an Aboriginal cultural experience with its exhibition of native animals.

The zoo officially opened to the public on 7 December 2019 and has been shut on two occasions due to COVID-19 Government Health Restrictions from April 2020 to September 2020 and from June 2021 to October 2021.

Chapter 7 of State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts – Western Parkland City) 2021 (Western Parkland City SEPP) enables the Western Sydney Parklands Trust (WSPT) to develop the WSP into a multi-use urban parkland allowing for a range of recreational, entertainment and tourist facilities and commercial, retail and infrastructure uses. The zoo was approved as a recreational use in the WSP.

Industrial land uses surround the site to the immediate east and south and detached residential dwellings are located to the north and the west beyond the M7 Motorway. The Bungarribee Playground and Park form the northern and eastern boundaries of the site. The closest cluster of residential receivers is approximately 720 metres (m) to the north of the site in Bungarribee (refer to [Figure 2](#)).

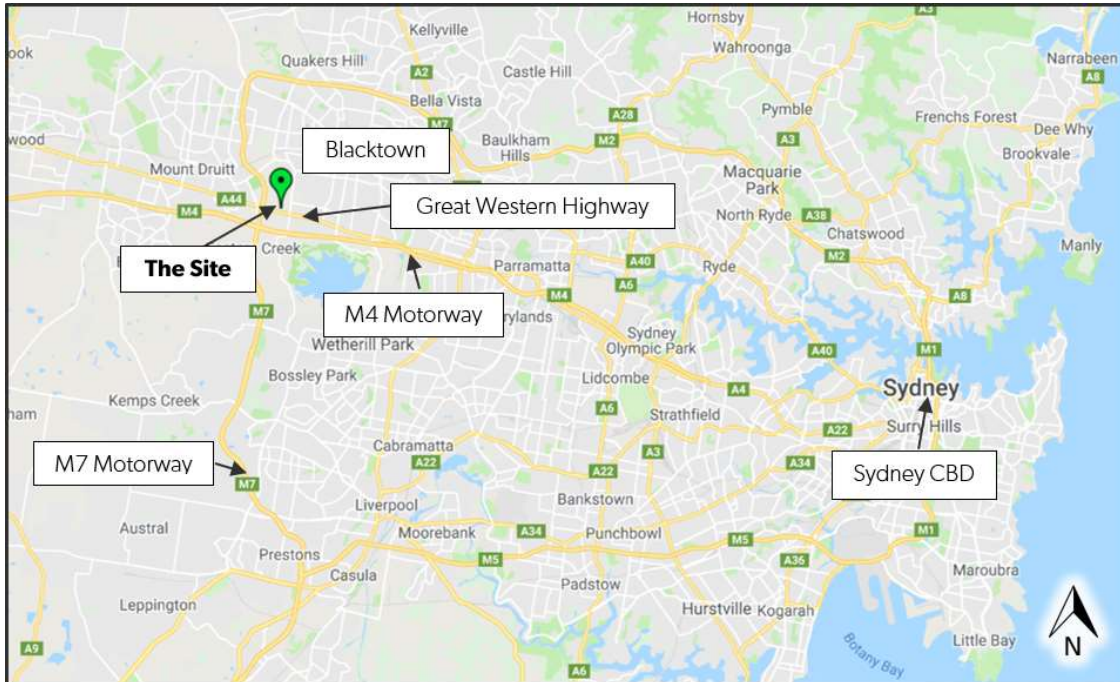


Figure 1 | Site Location

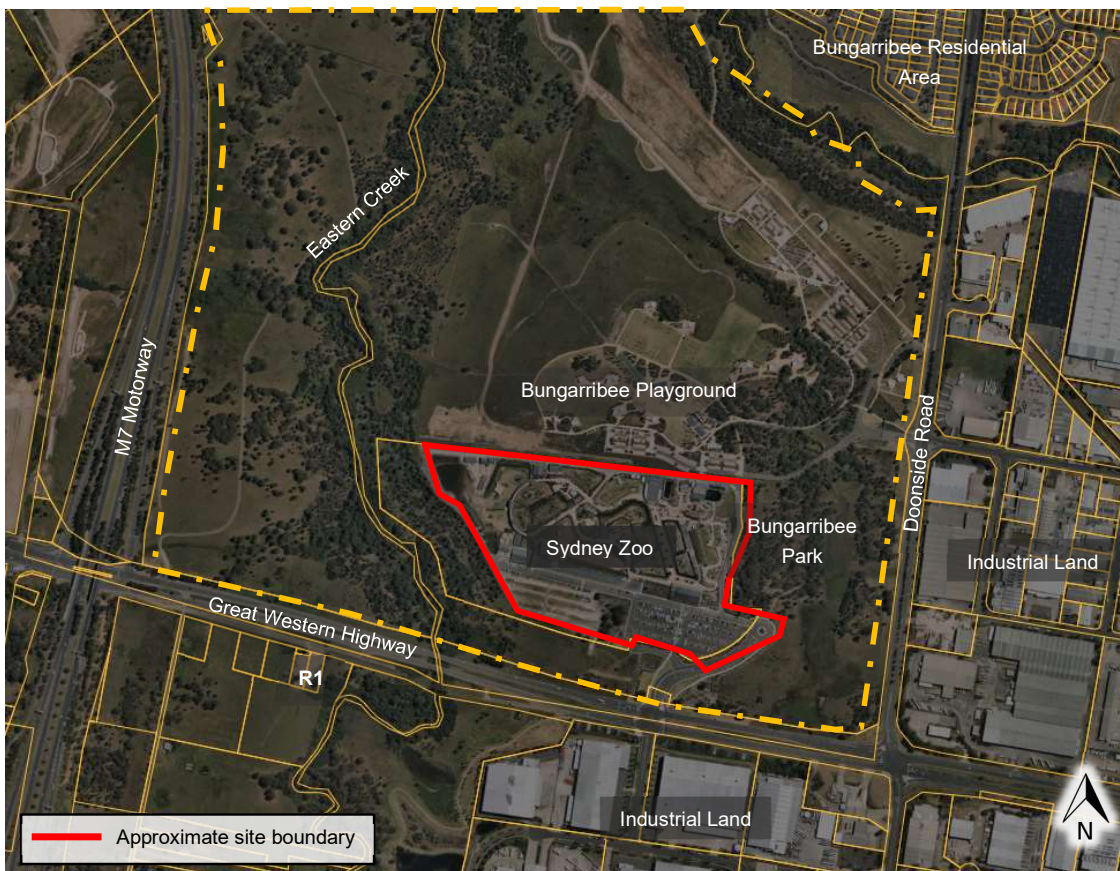


Figure 2 | Site Context

1.2 Approval history

Development Consent for SSD 7228

On 8 September 2017, development consent was granted by the former Planning Assessment Commission (the former Commission) for the following:

- subdivision of the site (current Lot 101 DP 1195067) into:
 - Lot 11 containing the proposed zoo development (16.505 ha)
 - Lot 10 containing the remainder of current Lot 101 (188.9 ha) (residual lot)
- site preparation works including bulk earthworks
- construction of a new zoo including:
 - animal exhibits for a range of native and exotic animals
 - entry/retail building
 - restaurant
 - administration, curatorial, and veterinary facilities
 - show arena
 - back-of-house buildings for exhibits and work depot buildings
 - other buildings including two kiosks and restroom facilities
- construction of vehicular access roads and parking
- installation of signage
- stormwater drainage and design and construction of site services
- landscaping.

The approved site layout, as modified, is illustrated in **Figure 3**, overleaf.

Modifications to SSD 7228

Since the consent was granted, eight applications to modify the consent have been lodged. Seven modifications have been approved and one was withdrawn by the Applicant prior to a determination being made (MOD 5) (refer **Table 1**).



Figure 3 | Approved Site Layout (as modified)

Table 1 | Summary of Modifications

Mod No.	Summary of Modifications	Consent Authority	Type	Approval Date
MOD 1	Amendments to the location and design of buildings on the site and the design of the stormwater management system (included an increase in the size of the Farm Experience exhibit)	Department	4.55(1A)	8 May 2018
MOD 2	Amendments to the boardwalk access path to the aquatic habitat and the layout and built form of the aquarium building	Department	4.55(1A)	20 September 2018
MOD 3	Clarify the public opening hours and to allow other activities associated with the operation of the zoo to be undertaken outside of the public opening hours	Independent Planning Commission	4.55(1A)	25 November 2019
MOD 4	Addition of two sheds at the rear of the Nocturnal and Reptile Building and Primate Back-of-House spaces	Department	4.55(1A)	4 July 2019
MOD 5	Modification to list of exotic species	Department	4.55(1A)	Withdrawn
MOD 6	Reduce the scale of the approved Farm Experience exhibit building and the overall exhibit space	Department	4.55(1A)	3 June 2020
MOD 7	Extend general hours of operation, remove limitation on number of temporary and community events and allow use of the site for corporate events and functions	Department	4.55(2)	28 June 2021
MOD8	Permanent installation and operation of a ferris wheel	Department	4.55(1A)	15 February 2022

2 Proposed modification

2.1 Proposed Modification

The modification is described in full in the Modification Application included in **Appendix A**. The Applicant initially sought to remove the 300-person visitor cap between the hours of 7:30 am and 9 am, stipulated in condition B10C of the development consent, as modified, which states the following:

B10C. The maximum number of visitors permitted on site for private zoo experiences / small group tours commencing between the hours of 7:30 am and 9 am is limited to a maximum total of 300 visitors.

To facilitate this, Sydney Zoo initially proposed to delete condition B10C in its entirety. However, the Department noted that the Applicant's assessment of traffic impacts was based on a maximum of 1,500 visitors, as such, Sydney Zoo agreed to retain the condition and instead seek to increase the cap to 1,500 visitors. Therefore, the modification seeks to amend condition B10C to delete the reference to '300 visitors' and replace with '1,500 visitors'. The early morning tours will be limited to organised tours and Sydney Zoo will not trade to the general public before 9 am.

Increasing the cap on visitor numbers will enable the zoo to:

- operate additional morning group tours and private zoo experiences which may vary in size and duration, which will allow the zoo to diversify its offering with respect to exclusivity and pricing
- provide for synchronisation with tour operators that would be visiting multiple attractions across Greater Sydney over the course of one day
- manage scheduling across the day more efficiently to accommodate an anticipated increase in overall visitor numbers as COVID-19 restrictions lift.

The Department understands the early morning activities have not yet commenced at the zoo. However, the Applicant assumed the proposed modification would attract up to 1,500 visitors to the zoo prior to 9 am given the level of interest from tour market operators and outputs from recent demand modelling. On this basis, the modification would generate up to 50 coach movements (25 inbound and 25 outbound) between the site and the surrounding road network. No change to the existing on-site car parking arrangements is proposed to facilitate the additional coach parking and movements.

2.2 Applicant's Justification for the Proposed Modification

Sydney Zoo has advised the proposed modification is a fundamental part of the zoo's broader post-COVID recovery plan, following closures of the zoo during 2020 and 2021 due to Government health restrictions during the pandemic. Noting financial hardship endured by the zoo due to these closures, additional revenue opportunities afforded by the proposed modification are considered essential to ensure the zoo remains competitive as a high-quality tourist attraction of regional significance, contributing to the broader tourism cluster of Western Sydney tourist facilities and attractions. Sydney Zoo advises it is aiming to increase overall visitation to Western Sydney, rather than build competition with existing services offered by other facilities.

It is also understood that Sydney Zoo is now able to make more accurate estimates for tour volumes given the level of interest from tour market operators to include the zoo as a recreational destination now the operators are familiar with its offerings and its popularity as a tourist attraction.

The Applicant states the proposed modification represents a suitable opportunity to contribute to a growing local tourism cluster that will provide leisure, employment and revenue opportunities across Western Sydney, alongside the expansion of entertainment, leisure and accommodation offerings at West HQ in Rooty Hill. Increasing the number of early morning group tours at Sydney Zoo will also generate additional employment opportunities which will provide local social and economic benefits.

3 Strategic context

3.1 Western Sydney Parklands Plan of Management 2023

The Sydney Zoo is located within the Bungarribee Precinct of the WSP, identified as Precinct 4 in the Western Sydney Parklands Plan of Management 2030 (the Parklands POM). The desired future character of the precinct is to be a regional recreation, entertainment and tourism destination, used throughout the week for unstructured recreation, tourism, community facilities and cultural events and activities. Key management priorities for the precinct include:

- expanding the precinct's regional recreation, entertainment and tourism
- creating an entertainment and tourism precinct with programs and events to attract a wide variety of future users and age groups.

The area upon which the site is located is identified as a 'Tourism Hub' in the Parklands POM. The approved Sydney Zoo development is consistent with the strategic intent for the site. The Parklands POM also includes strategic directions for the WSP which includes the promotion of the WSP as a visitor and tourist destination.

The proposed modification seeks to maintain the existing approved public opening hours for the zoo, while allowing additional visitors to attend the zoo for certain small group activities. This will further enhance the zoo's offerings to a wide range of users and age groups and grow the tourism economy in Western Sydney within the WSP. It will support the successful operation of the zoo and therefore provide a greater opportunity for tourists to visit and enjoy the WSP. The proposed modification is therefore considered to be consistent with the Parklands POM.

3.2 Greater Sydney Region Plan

In March 2018, the Greater Sydney Commission released the 'Greater Sydney Region Plan: A Metropolis of Three Cities' (the Plan). The Plan is built on a vision of three cities, the Western Parkland City, the Central River City and the Eastern Harbour City. The 40-year vision to 2056 brings new thinking to land use and transport patterns to boost Greater Sydney's liveability, productivity and sustainability by spreading the benefits of growth. The Sydney Zoo site is located within the Western City District.

The proposed modification is consistent with the Plan as it will:

- provide for additional jobs closer to where people live to support the 30-minute city (Objective 14)
- support tourism, identified as a priority economic sector in NSW, particularly in Western Sydney, driven by the Western Sydney Visitor Economy Strategy (Objective 24).

3.3 Western City District Plan

The Greater Sydney Commission's 'Western City District Plan – connecting communities', released in March 2018, provides a guide for implementing the Greater Sydney Region Plan in the district. The proposed modification would assist in meeting one of the productivity priorities of the plan through supporting the growth of tourism infrastructure and growing the visitor economy in the Western Parkland City.

4 Statutory context

4.1 Scope of Modifications

The Department has reviewed the scope of the modification application and considers the application can be characterised as a modification involving minimal environmental impacts as the proposal:

- would not significantly increase the environmental impacts of the development as approved
- the primary function and purpose of the approved development would not change as a result of the proposed modification
- any potential environmental impacts would be minimal and appropriately managed through the existing or modified conditions of consent
- the modification is of a scale that warrants the use of section 4.55(1A) of the EP&A Act
- is substantially the same development as originally approved
- would not involve any further disturbance outside the already approved disturbance areas for the development.

Therefore, the Department is satisfied the proposed modification is within the scope of section 4.55(1A) of the EP&A Act and does not constitute a new development application (DA). Accordingly, the Department considers that the application should be assessed and determined under section 4.55(1A) of the EP&A Act rather than requiring a new DA to be lodged.

4.2 Consent Authority

Minister's delegate as consent authority

The Minister for Planning (Minister) is the consent authority for the application under section 4.5(a) of the EP&A Act. Under the Minister's delegation of 9 March 2022, the Team Leader, Industry Assessments, may determine the application under delegation as:

- the application has not been made by a person who has disclosed a reportable political donation under section 10.4 of the EP&A Act
- there are no public submissions in the nature of objections, and
- Council has not made a submission by way of objection under the mandatory requirements for community participation listed under Schedule 1 of the EP&A Act.

4.3 Mandatory Matters for Consideration

The Department undertook a comprehensive assessment of the application against the mandatory matters for consideration as part of the original assessment of SSD-7228 (under section 79C of the EP&A Act, as in force at the time). This modification application does not result in significant changes that would alter the Department's consideration of the mandatory matters for consideration under section 4.15(1) of the EP&A Act and conclusions made as part of the original assessment.

4.4 Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016

Section 7.17 of the BC Act specifies that if the determining authority is satisfied a modification will not increase the impact on biodiversity values, a biodiversity development assessment report (BDAR) is not required.

The proposed modification will permit additional visitors to the zoo and utilisation of the existing car park for additional coach and light vehicle movements. The modification will not involve any additional clearing of native vegetation or further expansion of the previously approved development footprint or disturbance area on the site.

For the reasons discussed above, the Department's assessment concludes a BDAR is not necessary for the proposed modification.

5 Engagement

5.1 Department's Engagement

Section 105(2) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021 (EP&A Regulation) requires a section 4.55(1A) modification application to be notified or advertised if specified by a community participation plan. The Department's Community Participation Plan notes the exhibition requirements for such modifications are discretionary, and based on the urgency, scale and nature of the proposal.

Given the proposed changes would result in minimal environmental impacts (see Section 4), the application was not notified or advertised. However, it was made publicly available on the Department's website on 10 May 2022 and was referred to Blacktown City Council (Council), Department of Primary Industries – Animal Welfare (DPI – Animal Welfare) and Transport for NSW (TfNSW) for comment.

5.2 Government Advice

A summary of the advice received from the government authorities is provided below.

Council did not object to the modification, subject to compliance with the noise limits specified in condition C32 of the development consent. Council noted that all activities at the zoo are required to comply with noise thresholds established under condition C32.

TfNSW requested additional information regarding the capacity of the coach layover area and coach parking.

DPI – Animal Welfare did not raise any concerns and advised it had no additional requirements for the proposed modification.

The Department requested additional information regarding the following matters:

- consideration of an alternate cap, consistent with the worst-case traffic impact assessment (1,500 visitors)
- additional detail to justify the proposed scale of the early morning activities in comparison to other zoo offerings and the overall scale of visitation to Sydney Zoo during general opening hours
- additional details and commentary regarding the capacity of the coach layover and parking area, on-site traffic management, and evidence that the assessment scenario represents worst-case having regard to the potential mode split between cars and coaches.

5.3 Response to Request for Information

On 22 July 2022, the Applicant submitted a Response to Request for Information (Response to RfI) responding to the matters raised by the Department and TfNSW. The Response to RfI was made publicly available on the Department's website and referred to TfNSW for comment. As part of the Response to RfI, Sydney Zoo agreed to retain condition B10C and increase the visitor cap to 1,500 persons, as requested by the Department. The Response to RfI also included:

- confirmation that the types of activities proposed for the early morning tours would remain the same as those approved under Mod-3 to the consent
- additional details and justification for the quantum of visitors proposed as compared to other zoos and wildlife parks and the positive social and economic benefits the modification would support
- additional details of how Sydney Zoo would manage the additional 25 coaches arriving and departing the site between 7:30 am and 9 am for the early morning group tours, including a bus circulation and layover plan
- additional sensitivity analysis which examined traffic impacts associated with increased buses and a more conservative mode share between coaches and cars, as well as additional staff vehicles, representing a conservative worst-case scenario.

TfNSW noted the additional information provided on the coach layover arrangements and agreed conditions were appropriate to manage on-site traffic movements.

6 Assessment

The Department has assessed the merits of the proposed modification. During this assessment, the Department has considered the:

- Modification Application and Response to RfI provided to support the proposed modification (see **Appendix A**)
- documentation and Department's assessment report for the original DA and subsequent modification application(s) (see **Appendix A**)
- advice from the State government authorities and Council (**Appendix A**)
- relevant environmental planning instruments, policies and guidelines
- requirements of the EP&A Act, including the objects of the EP&A Act.

The Department considers the key assessment issue is traffic generation and parking. The Department's assessment of social and economic impacts is provided in **Table 3**.

6.1 Traffic Generation and Parking

Traffic Generation

Increasing the number of visitors from 300 to 1,500 persons for early morning small group activities at the zoo may result in up to 25 coaches (assuming each coach holds 60 persons) and 55 light vehicles (including 50 visitor and 5 staff vehicles) onto the road network prior to 9 am. This has the potential to reduce the level of service at the intersection of the Sydney Zoo access road and the Great Western Highway (GHW).

To assess the potential traffic impacts, the Applicant prepared a Transport Impact Assessment (TIA), including SIDRA traffic modelling, to determine the existing and post-modification level of service (LoS) and average delay at the GWH / Rudders Street / Sydney Zoo Access intersection.

The Applicant's assessment assumed that all 1,500 visitors for the early morning tours would arrive within the morning peak hour, that is, between 7:30 am and 8:30 am. It was also assumed the majority of visitors would be as part of organised tours and would be transported to and from the zoo by private coaches. In response to a request by the Department to consider the potential for some visitors to arrive by private vehicle for some of the morning group tour activities and for additional staff to manage the additional tours, the Applicant submitted a revised TIA. The revised TIA included a sensitivity analysis to examine traffic impacts relating to 90% of visitors arriving by coach, 10% of visitors arriving by passenger vehicle and an additional 10 staff vehicles. To ensure a worst-case scenario was assessed, the Applicant assumed the number of coaches would remain at 25 in the sensitivity analysis.

The Applicant's assessment concluded the GWH / Rudders Street / Sydney Zoo Access intersection would continue to operate satisfactorily with LoS B and a delay of no more than 23.5 seconds (refer **Table 2**) for all scenarios. This represents good operation with acceptable delays and spare capacity in accordance with the TfNSW 'Guide to Traffic Generating Developments' (2002).

Table 2 | Existing and Post-Modification Intersection Operating Conditions

Scenario	No. of Additional Vehicle Movements	Average Delay	Level of Service
Existing (base case)	-	22.5 seconds	B
Predicted	50 coach	22.8 seconds	B
Sensitivity Analysis	50 coach 110 light	23.5 seconds	B

The Applicant's assessment concluded the proposed development would be acceptable from a traffic impact perspective and is not expected to result in a noticeable adverse traffic impacts on the surrounding road network.

TfNSW and Council did not raise any concerns regarding the potential impacts on the safety or efficiency of the surrounding road network.

The Department is satisfied the Applicant's assessment presented in the revised TIA represents a reasonable prediction of the traffic impacts of the proposed modification, including a conservative worst-case scenario (the sensitivity assessment). The Applicant's traffic modelling demonstrates the proposed increase in visitors between 7:30 am and 9 am is unlikely to reduce the LoS of the Sydney Zoo Site Access intersection with the GWH and Rudders Street, with the average delay increasing by less than one second.

Existing condition C5A requires the Applicant to update the approved Operational Traffic Management Plan (OTMP) prior to the commencement of any of the activities approved under Mod-3 to the consent, which includes management measures specific to the early morning group tours and private zoo experiences. Similarly, condition C5C requires the Applicant to prepare and submit a traffic verification report within six months of the commencement of the early morning tours and experiences to quantify the mode share between coaches and private vehicles and verify intersection performance. In a response to a query from the Department, the Applicant confirmed that the zoo has not yet commenced any early morning tours or experiences, and as such, it has not updated the OTMP to satisfy condition C5A or verified the impacts.

The Department has not recommended any additional conditions as the existing conditions are considered appropriate to ensure operational traffic is appropriately managed to facilitate the proposed modification and verify predicted impacts. It is, however, recommended that condition C5A also refer to the activities approved under Mod-9 to ensure the greater number of visitors and coaches is addressed in the OTMP. Similarly, it is noted condition C5C requires the verification report to provide details of any additional management or mitigation measures required, if actual impacts occur, which is still considered appropriate. It is recommended this condition be amended to specifically relate to the commencement of operation of the activities approved under both Mod-3 and Mod-9 to ensure consistency between the requirements of conditions C5A and C5C. It is also recommended the Applicant be required to provide a timetable of when these actions will be implemented as part of the verification report.

The Department's assessment concludes traffic generated by the proposed modification is unlikely to have an adverse impact on the efficiency of the surrounding road network and no upgrades or additional management or mitigation measures are required. Existing conditions are appropriate to manage and verify predicted impacts.

Parking and Coach Layover

The Sydney Zoo car park has been designed to cater for up to 1,053 car spaces, comprised of 476 formal car parking spaces and 577 unmarked spaces in an overflow car park. Six coach parking spaces are provided along the western and southern boundaries of the formal car park within two coach layover areas, as illustrated in **Figure 4**. As such, the existing arrangements may not provide sufficient parking for the 25 coaches anticipated as a result of the proposed modification.

To cater for the 25 coaches predicted to arrive and depart the zoo before 9 am, the Applicant had initially stated the current coach layover area was sufficient on the basis that coaches would have an average dwell time of 10 minutes. In response to concerns raised by the Department and TfNSW regarding the capacity of the coach layover area and the very short dwell time, the revised TIA confirmed coaches would remain on site for approximately one hour before departing to other destinations. As such, the Applicant proposes additional coach layover areas within the existing formal car park, as set out in a preliminary coach layover plan (refer **Figure 5**).



Figure 4 | Existing Coach Layover Arrangements

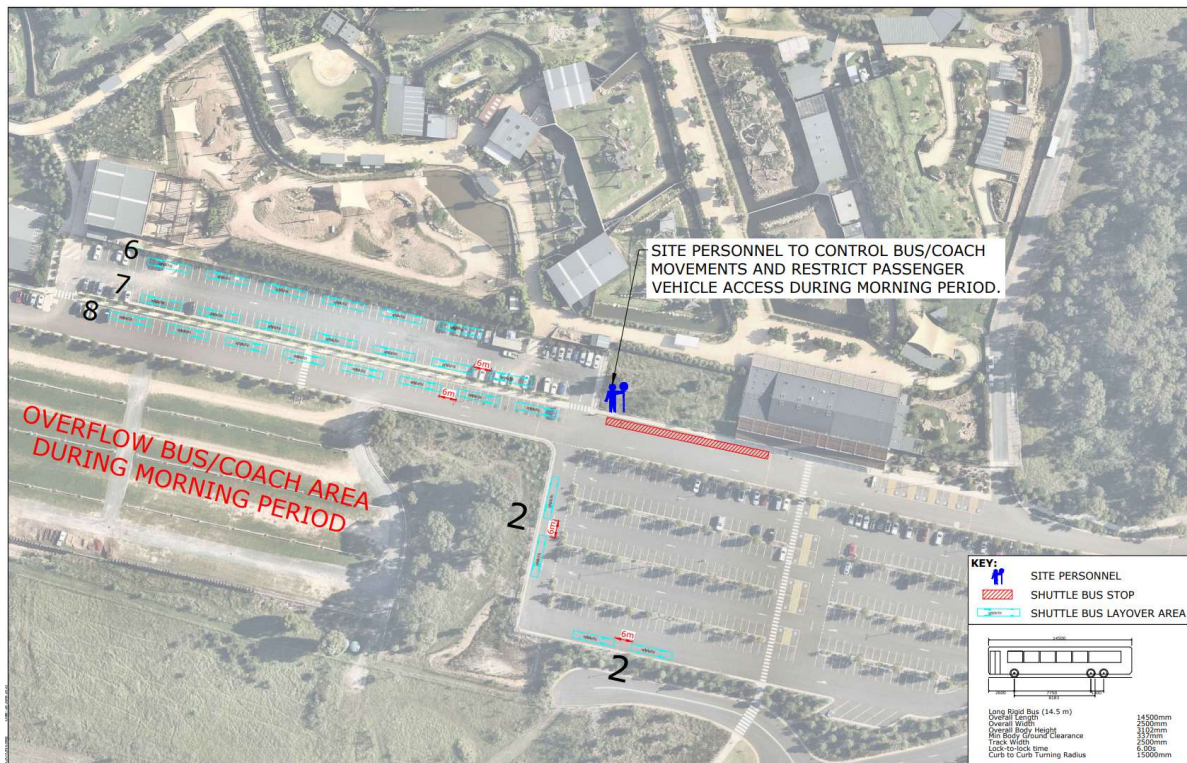


Figure 5 | Proposed Coach Layover Arrangements

The revised TIA also included a swept path analysis for a 14.5 metres long rigid bus (coach) which showed coaches would be able to adequately enter and exit the site and circulate within the car parks, even with the additional coach layover areas. The Applicant also noted additional coach parking could be provided in the overflow car park area during the morning period if required.

The Department notes that existing conditions require the Applicant to ensure heavy vehicles (includes coaches over 2.5 tonne) are not parked on roads or footpaths in the vicinity of the site and keep all proposed turning areas in the car park clear of any obstacles, including parked cars, at all times. These conditions are considered appropriate to retain in the consent to ensure coach movements are not impeded or obstructed.

The preliminary coach layover plan indicates that 21 of the 25 coach layover spaces will be located within the north-western portion of the formal car park, significantly reducing the available car parking spaces. The Applicant stated that as the car park is underutilised in the morning peak period, buses would not impact parking supply. While it is acknowledged this may be the case, the Department does not consider it appropriate for the bus layover areas identified in the north-western part of the car park or the overflow car park to be used for coach parking during general opening hours of the zoo (i.e. after 9 am), as this will reduce the total available car parking for zoo patrons. It is noted that the traffic assessment for the original DA noted that car parking demand would either just meet or potentially exceed the available spaces during the weekend in peak periods.

In response to these concerns, the Applicant confirmed the coach parking in the north-western portion of the car park will only be used between 7:30 am and 9 am for coaches transporting visitors for early morning group tours. On this basis, the Department recommends conditions to:

- limit the total number of coaches to be parked within the car park before 9 am (including both the formal and informal car parks) at any one time to 25 coaches
- restrict coaches arriving and departing the site before 9 am to the 25 spaces identified in the designated layover areas specified in the Applicant's coach layover plans
- restrict coaches from using the layover areas in the north-western portion of the formal car park after 9 am.

As previously noted, condition C5A requires the Applicant to update the OTMP prior to the commencement of any of the activities approved under Mod-3 and Mod-9 to the consent, this includes the private zoo experiences and small group tours between 7:30 am and 9 am. The Department recommends condition C5A be further amended to require the restrictions regarding the coach layover areas to be incorporated into the updated OTMP.

TfNSW noted the additional information provided by the Applicant regarding the coach layover dwell times and advised that adequate space should be provided on site whilst ensuring there is no conflict between coach and staff parking and manoeuvring areas or potential for queuing. TfNSW advised it was satisfied these matters could be appropriately managed via the Department's recommended modified conditions.

The Department's assessment concludes that with the implementation of the existing and recommended modified conditions will ensure the parking arrangements associated with the proposed modification can be adequately managed. The conditions and updated OTMP will ensure that parking demand does not exceed supply on the site during general opening hours of the zoo. Predicted impacts will be verified following commencement of the early morning group tours and activities, and if necessary, the Applicant is required to identify any additional management or mitigation measures required, including a timetable for implementation of any required actions.

6.2 Other Issues

Table 3 | Assessment of Other Issues

Issue and Findings	Recommendations
<p>Socio-Economic Impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the quantum of visitors permitted to participate in private zoo experiences and small group tours before 9 am at Sydney Zoo needs to be considered with respect to the potential impact this may have on the social and economic benefits provided by similar attractions in the locality and more broadly across Western Sydney and the Greater Sydney region. The Applicant advised there have been a range of social and economic benefits provided by the zoo since it was first opened in 2019, including significant visitation numbers (greater than Taronga Zoo), expanding the local tourism offering, growth in employee numbers, educational programs, involvement in community events and ongoing conservation efforts and recovery programs. The Applicant assessed the social and economic impacts of the proposed modification and found it would provide a range of benefits including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing enhancement and diversification of ‘anchor’ attractions across Western Sydney which would support the continued attraction of visitors to the area, maintaining the zoo as a high-quality regional tourist attraction and a catalyst for tourism and recreation in Western Sydney additional employment opportunities activation of the local visitor economy during periods of economic downturn additional revenue for conservation efforts and recovery programs collaboration and synergies between the zoo and other recreation facilities would enable tour operators to visit multiple attractions in a day promotion of the Bungarribee Precinct as an important recreational and tourist hub within the WSP. The Applicant also noted that to address growth in demand for unique visitor experiences, a number of other Australian zoos and wildlife parks are diversifying their offering through increasing the variety of private zoo experiences and tours offered outside of public opening hours. The Applicant’s assessment concluded that the modification represents an extremely minor change to the approved operational scope of Sydney Zoo and the proposal would have an overall positive social and economic impact with respect to the enhancement of regional tourism and the post-COVID-19 economic recovery of Western Sydney. Any reduction in the social benefits provided by similar attractions would be unlikely and would be outweighed by the significant positive social and economic impacts arising from the operation of the additional visitors to Sydney Zoo. None of the government authorities raised any concern regarding social and economic impacts from the proposed increase to the visitor cap. The Commission’s determination of the 300-person visitor cap in Mod-3 was on the basis of the Department’s view that the number of visitors permitted 	

for the early morning out-of-hours tours should be consistent with the scale of similar out-of-hours offerings at other zoos in the Greater Sydney region. This was to ensure Sydney Zoo, as a new tourist offering, would not have an adverse impact on the potential social and economic benefits provided by similar attractions in the locality and across the Greater Sydney region.

- The proposed variety and frequency of the proposed private zoo experiences and small group tours is not inconsistent with or dissimilar to the range of activities offered at other zoos and wildlife parks. The relevance of the scale of these activities relates only to social and economic impacts in the community, and not to the competitive conflict between businesses, as this is not a relevant planning matter.
- The Department is satisfied the increase in the visitor cap to 1,500 persons is unlikely to have any adverse social or economic impacts in the locality, including any impacts on the social and economic benefits delivered by other similar facilities. The additional capacity would allow the zoo to respond to the predicted demand from tour operators seeking to visit multiple attractions across Greater Sydney in one day and support the zoo's aim to build the tour group market to increase the overall visitation to Western Sydney.
- The Department's assessment concludes the Applicant has demonstrated a suite of social and economic benefits delivered by the zoo since it first opened and the proposed modification would support and expand upon these benefits by increasing the number of visitors to the zoo, in turn having a range of positive social and economic benefits across Western Sydney, the Greater Sydney region, notably the Western Sydney visitor economy and regional tourism.

7 Evaluation

The Department has assessed the proposed modification in accordance with the relevant requirements of the EP&A Act. The Department considers the proposed modification is appropriate on the basis that it:

- will allow Sydney Zoo to continue to actively build the tour group market in Western Sydney with the aim of increasing overall visitation to Western Sydney
- is consistent with the strategic context within the Parklands POM, Greater Sydney Region Plan and Western City District Plan
- will result in minimal environmental impacts beyond the approved facility as demonstrated by the assessment of traffic and social and economic impacts in Section 6 of this report
- represents a suitable opportunity to contribute to the local and regional tourism economy, post-COVID-19 economic recovery and the range of leisure, employment and revenue opportunities across Western Sydney
- is a minor change (additional 800 persons) with respect to the overall operation and capacity of the zoo (8,000 persons)
- it does not change the nature of the development as originally approved.

The Department is satisfied that the modification should be approved, subject to conditions.

8 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Team Leader, Industry Assessments, as delegate of the Minister for Planning:

- **considers** the findings and recommendations of this report
- **determines** that the application SSD-7228-Mod-9 falls within the scope of section 4.55(1A) of the EP&A Act
- **forms the opinion** under section 7.17(2)(c) of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* that a BDAR is not required to be submitted with this application as the application will not increase the impact on biodiversity values on the site
- **accepts and adopts** all of the findings and recommendations in this report as the reasons for making the decision to approve the modification
- **modify** the consent SSD-7228
- **signs** the attached approval of the modification (**Appendix B**).

Recommended by:




19 August 2022

Sally Munk
Principal Planner
Industry Assessments

9 Determination

The recommendation is **Adopted** by:

 22 August 2022
Joanna Bakopanos
Team Leader
Industry Assessments

as delegate of the Minister for Planning

Appendices

Appendix A – List of Documents

The Department has relied upon the following key documents during its assessment of the proposed development:

Modification Application

- 'Section 4.55(1A) Modification Application to SSD-7228 Sydney Zoo – Modification 9' prepared by Ethos Urban dated 28 April 2022 -
<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-7228-MOD-9%2120220428T035749.094%20GMT>

Government Authority Advice

- <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/modification-9-pre-opening-hours-tours>

Responses to Request for Information

- 'SSD 7228 The Sydney Zoo Modification 9 – Response to Request for Information' prepared by Ethos Urban, dated 22 July 2022
- 'SSD 7228 The Sydney Zoo Modification 9 – Response to Request for Information' prepared by Ethos Urban, dated 5 August 2022

Department's Assessment Report for SSD-7228

- <https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-7228%2120190227T102048.334%20GMT>

Planning Assessment Commission's Determination Report for SSD-7228

- <https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-7228%2120190227T102129.946%20GMT>

Department's Assessment Report for SSD-7228-Mod-3

- <https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-7228-MOD-3%2120190731T230620.040%20GMT>

Independent Planning Commission's Determination Report for SSD-7228-Mod-3

- <https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-7228-MOD-3%2120191129T033457.532%20GMT>

Appendix B – Notice of Modification

Refer attached Modification Instrument

Appendix C – Consolidated Consent

Refer attached consolidated consent