

REQUEST FOR SECRETARY'S ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

**Australia Habitat and Taronga
Wildlife Retreat**
TARONGA ZOO

On behalf of Taronga Conservation Society Australia.
NOVEMBER 2015



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1 Introduction

This report has been prepared on behalf of Taronga Conservation Society Australia ('the applicant') requesting that the Secretary issue environmental assessment requirements (SEARs) for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to accompany a development application for State significant development (SSD DA) for the development of a new Australian habitat exhibit and eco-tourist facility at Taronga Zoo, located at Bradleys Head Road, Mosman. The new exhibit will be known as the '*Australia Habitat*' and includes a new eco-tourist facility, known as the '*Taronga Wildlife Retreat*'.

Schedule 2 of *State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) 2011* (SRD SEPP) identifies development on the Taronga Zoo site with a capital investment value (CIV) of more than \$10 million as State significant development (SSD). As the proposed development will have a CIV greater than \$10 million, the proposal will be classified as SSD (see QS report at **Attachment A**).

To assist with this request for the SEARs, the following information is provided:

- Site details;
- An overview of the proposed development;
- A summary of the existing statutory planning framework;
- Identification of the key environmental assessment issues associated with the proposal and a brief examination of the likely extent and nature of any potential impacts; and
- Details of preliminary consultation.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Taronga Zoo is one of Australia's most popular attractions and together with the open range facilities of Taronga Western Plains Zoo attracts more than 1.7 million visitors annually and contributes an estimated \$249 million per annum to the NSW economy.

Taronga Zoo has a world class reputation in education and immersion of people with wildlife. A core function of the Zoo is to increase visitor understanding of conservation and change human behaviour to support the conservation and preservation of species.

Taronga Zoo has developed successful overnight accommodation on site with its '*Roar and Snore*' immersive interpretative offering. Immersive wildlife programs like Roar and Snore change people's attitudes and behaviours. The '*Roar and Snore*' programme caters for approximately 51 people to stay overnight in up-market tents at Taronga Zoo and runs on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights throughout the year. During school holidays and high tourist seasons, additional nights during the week are offered.

Building upon the success of the '*Roar and Snore*' program, the applicant is seeking to expand the existing immersive accommodation by making such experiences accessible to more people. By expanding immersive experiences across Taronga Zoo, the applicant seeks to build upon the accomplishments of conservation initiatives, reach a wider audience, and integrate the immersive experience with Australian wildlife exhibits.

Taronga Zoo anticipates that an eco-tourist facility on the site will be occupied by:

- Tourists and domestic residents wishing to visit, experience and stay within the zoo.
- International and interstate visitors looking for a unique nature-based experience close to the city.
- Mid-week corporate and business events market looking for a different and inspiring venue.
- Sydney residents and domestic visitors looking for a special night or weekend away.
- Function organisers and wedding parties looking for a venue with on-site accommodation.

- Regional and interstate school excursions to the zoo where on-site accommodation and meals are available.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF TARONGA CONSERVATION SOCIETY AUSTRALIA

The *Zoological Parks Board Act 1973* (Zoological Act) governs Taronga and Taronga Western Plains Zoos. A corporation named the “*Zoological Parks Board of New South Wales*” (the Board) is constituted under the Zoological Act. The Board may also be called the Taronga Conservation Society Australia and the use of that name has the same effect for all purposes as the use of its corporate name.

Under clause 5(2)(b) of the Zoological Act the Board shall, for the purposes of any Act, be deemed to be a statutory body representing the Crown.

Taronga Conservation Society Australia has a formal mandate, as defined in section 15 of the Zoological Act, to:

- a) carry out research and breeding programs for the preservation of endangered species;*
- b) carry out research programs for the conservation and management of other species;*
- c) conduct public education and awareness programs about species conservation and management;*
and
- d) display animals for educational, cultural and recreational purposes.*

Given the natural world under threat through habitat loss, population growth, deforestation and climate change, the issues facing wildlife are critical and require immediate action. With 1.7 million visitors annually, consisting of local, interstate and international guests, Taronga is uniquely placed to inspire the public to help make a difference to the conservation of wildlife and wild places. Taronga Conservation Society Australia also conducts significant education and conservation science activities at its two Zoos. The Taronga Zoo is home to over 4,000 animals belonging to 350 species, including iconic conservation breeding programs for species such as the Corroboree Frog, Tasmanian Devil, Regent Honeyeater, Sumatran Tiger, Asian Elephant, and African Bongo.

2 The Site and Surrounds

Taronga Zoo is located at Bradleys Head Road, Mosman in the Mosman Local Government area (LGA). The site is bounded by Bradleys Head Road to the east, Athol Wharf Road and Sydney Harbour to the south, Little Sirius Cove to the west and Whiting Beach Road to the north.

The legal description of the site is Lot 22 in DP 843294. Taronga Zoo is Crown Land managed by the Taronga Conservation Society Australia (the Zoological Park Board). That part of the site the subject of the proposal is bound by the Taronga Centre to the North, Bradleys Head Road to the east, the existing Tasmanian Devils Enclosure to the south, and the Wollemi exhibit to the West.

The proposed 'Australia Habitat and Taronga Wildlife Retreat' sits on a relatively steep portion of the site that falls to the south by approximately 20m from RL63 at the existing Taronga Centre to RL51 at the lowest point of the building works adjacent to the existing Tasmanian Devils enclosure. Rustic stone garden walling within the development area are identified throughout the effected site area are listed as having heritage significance under the Zoological Parks Board (ZPB) Section 170 Heritage and Conservation Register but are not listed under *Mosman Local Environmental Plan 2012 (MLEP 2012)*.

The 'Australia Habitat and Taronga Wildlife Retreat' site is located adjacent to several items that are listed as having heritage significance under the Zoological Parks Board (ZPB) Section 170 Heritage and Conservation Register but are not listed under *Mosman Local Environmental Plan 2012 (MLEP 2012)*. Such items include trees, retaining walls and footpaths and the Circular Kiosk.

The development site has significant mature sub-tropical vegetation, with dense tree canopies and foliage in and surrounding the site.

Immediate neighbouring land uses of Taronga Zoo are limited to single dwellings to the north and to the north-east, and west on the other side of Little Sirius Cove. The site of the proposed Australian animal habitat and eco-tourist facility is located towards the south-east of the site and is more than 250 metres from the nearest residential boundary.

FIGURE 1 – SITE LOCATION

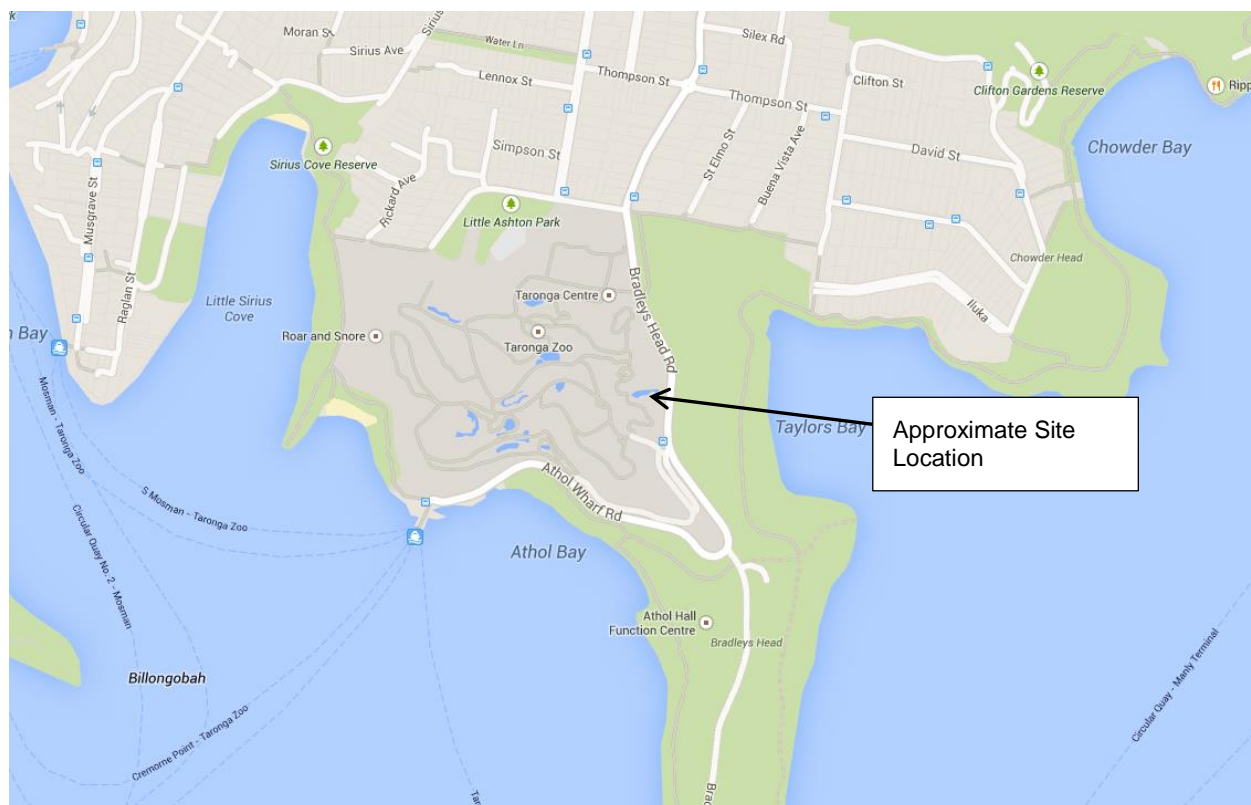


FIGURE 2 – SITE AERIAL (SOURCE: SIXVIEWER)



3 Development Description

3.1 OVERVIEW

The SSD DA will seek approval for the development of a new animal exhibit and eco-tourist facility to be known as the *'Australia Habitat and Taronga Wildlife Retreat'* at Taronga Zoo. Figure 3 below illustrates the proposal concept for an Australian animal exhibit and eco-tourist facility.

FIGURE 3 – PROPOSAL CONCEPT IMAGE



The works will be carried out in two stages and will comprise the following works:

Stage 1 – New Australia Habitat and Eco-Tourist Facility

- Demolition of existing structures;
- Construction of five connected accommodation 'pods' ranging between two and four storeys in height consisting of a total 58 rooms and four suites;
- Construction of a new four storey kitchen and dining facility adjoining the existing Taronga Centre to service the eco-tourist facility and existing Taronga Centre (to be no higher than the Taronga Centre);
- Construction of a new Guest Lodge to house reception, bar, guest interaction facilities with adjacent platypus exhibit and animal encounter facilities; and
- The existing Taronga Centre turning circle will be realigned and loading dock entrance improved to provide operational efficiencies to the existing Function Centre.

Immersed within the Australia Habitat exhibit, the *'Taronga Wildlife Retreat'* will wrap around a wildlife sanctuary housing animals such as wallabies, echidnas, bandicoots, platypus, koalas and freshwater eels. The Australia Habitat exhibit will comprise the following works:

- Construction of a new native Australian wildlife exhibition including:
 - A kangaroo habitat;

- New aviaries
- Walkthrough exhibition containing native Australian wildlife;
- Landscaping, including naturalistic and endemic native Australian vegetation;
- Interpretative and directional signage; and
- One new exhibit pedestrian pathway and public viewing platform.

The '*Taronga Wildlife Retreat*' will offer a unique overnight conservation experience supporting:

- Interaction with Australian animals in natural habitats,
- Understanding of the connections between Indigenous culture and the environment, and
- Changes to attitudes and behaviours around supporting conservation efforts and making sustainable product choices.

Stage 2 – Taronga Centre Master Plan

A master plan for the existing Taronga Function Centre has also been developed which provides improved access for guests with a new foyer and lift access within the buildings current footprint. Although the master plan will form part of the planning process, these works are not intended to be completed at the same time as the Taronga Wildlife Retreat.

3.2 BUILT FORM

The proposed works have been located and designed to respond to the existing topography of the site, location of heritage items and important heritage features, and mature vegetation. Fundamentally the proposed built form will be designed to:

- Maintain the scenic qualities of the site as viewed from Sydney Harbour. As such, the proposed built form will be between two and four storeys high, responding to the gradient of the site, minimising the visibility of the structures, the extent of cut and fill required, and removal of vegetation.
- Locate the highest point of the accommodation pods no higher than the first floor of the existing Taronga Function Centre.
- Be constructed with finishes and materials that will assist it to blend into the landscape when viewed both from within the Zoo's boundaries and from Sydney Harbour.
- Be positioned 'behind' the existing Taronga Centre and so form an extension of this existing function centre.
- Deliver accommodation 'pods' connected by open corridors to retain the openness and integration with the landscaping as would be anticipated for an eco-tourist facility. This structure also reduces the extent of vegetation required to be removed on the site.
- Four significant trees are required to be removed to facilitate this development. It is noted that the vegetation required to be lost as a result of the proposed eco-tourist facility will be largely replaced within the proposed Australia Habitat exhibit.

The Indicative Architectural Plans prepared by Cox Architecture are attached at **Appendix C**.

3.3 OPERATION

The development will include the following operational outcomes:

- An increase of approximate 37.9 full time equivalent jobs during the operation of the Taronga Wildlife Retreat.
- The proposed dining room addition to the Taronga Centre and the bar within the guest lodge will have the capacity to accommodate approximately 100 guests.
- The Taronga Wildlife Retreat will be certified with Eco Tourism Australia.

3.4 DESIGN STATEMENT

The following design statement has been prepared by Cox Architecture

Taronga Wildlife Retreat

The overriding architectural design intent of the Taronga Wildlife Retreat is to minimise the visual impact of the built forms and maximise the sense of a natural environment and ensure that the Australian wildlife exhibit is the predominant focus.

The Retreat is broken up into seven relatively small built forms. This fragmentation allows the buildings to wrap around a central exhibit, while responding to: the fall across the site; major trees; and existing buildings and exhibit enclosures.

The outlook towards the harbour from the Taronga Centre, and also other areas further up the hill, is highly valued, and the proposed low scale and façade treatment of the proposed new buildings will minimise impact.

The accommodation pods include native planted “Green Screens” covering their northern facades and wrapping up over their roofs to effectively camouflage the buildings and preserve the outlook to the harbour. These screens shelter the open air access walkways connecting to the rooms while providing glimpses through to the wildlife exhibits below. Planters along the walkways provide access for maintenance to the plants that will climb up tensile stainless steel cables stretched across the façade.

The site is adjacent to Bradley Heads Road but a significant number of large existing trees will form a visual buffer between the road and the retreat. The new buildings are setback significantly from the road, with the closest building being 15m metres from the road edge. The façade facing the road of this closest building includes a planted Green Screen that will provide additional discretion.

Hardwood timber cladding to the accommodation pods also helps integrate them into their context and timber and perforated metal blades on south-westerly glazing minimises heat loads while again breaking down scale and reducing visual impact. These facades also include flexibility to open up in several ways and allow natural ventilation and engagement with the natural environment. This is achieved by the options of operable sliding doors and strips of operable louvres.

Other external materials include stone gabion walls used for the retaining walls and the bases of selected buildings, and vertical steel slat balustrading.

The shared public components of the Wildlife Retreat include the reception Guest Lounge and the Dining Facility. These buildings respond to the circular nature of the existing Taronga Centre and can be opened up in appropriate weather conditions to provide open air gathering spaces for guests. Roof forms incorporate pergola shading.

Terracing and steps down from the Guest lounge provide a venue for outdoor talks by Zoo staff with the Wildlife Exhibit in the background.

Australia Habitat Exhibit

The animal display within the Australia Habitat and Taronga Wildlife Retreat will showcase high conservation value animal species in an Australian landscape, based on the sandstone woodland of Mosman and its harbour shoreline, home to a diverse and complex range of wildlife. The Retreat provides unique immersive wildlife experiences where guests will experience conservation based encounters with Australian animals, and enjoy educational tours and talks within the Australian landscape.

- *For visitors to Taronga Zoo, a typical Australian landscape presents iconic species such as the Red Kangaroo, Tasmanian Devil and Koala. The Taronga Wildlife Retreat enriches this experience by introducing smaller threatened native animals, which are usually not seen. Conservation stories of these species can give visitors a better understanding of threats to wildlife and promote Australia's amazing biodiversity.*
- *A variety of native animals and their behaviours are hidden from view in the landscape - they burrow, create complex nests, or spend the majority of their lives underwater. Whilst amazing in their complexity and forms, these animals and behaviours are rarely seen by zoo visitors – but in the Australia Habitat this becomes possible, aided by innovative zoo design, keeper presentations and the opportunity for overnight encounters.*
- *The habitat design will create a free ranging exhibit area where animal behaviour is experienced first hand by guests, who can learn about their natural history, and the important ecological roles they play in the landscape.*

Species to be displayed in an open wildlife habitat are the:

- *Koala*
- *Brush Tailed Bettong*
- *Long Nosed Potaroo*
- *Red-Legged Pademelon*
- *Echidna*
- *Long Nosed Bandicoot*
- *Parma Wallaby and Bridled Nail Tailed Wallaby*
- *Platypus and Freshwater Eels (both these species are in built enclosures incorporated into a natural habitat landscape)*
- *Emu*
- *Yellow-bellied Glider and Feathered Glider*

Shelter: *All animals will be provided with a means of sheltering from wind, rain and extremes of temperature and sunlight. (Providing a combination of ground cover and external plantings to create natural habitat fulfils this requirement.) Enclosures will incorporate adjoining holding yard(s). Fencing will be minimised and restricted to the outer edges of the Taronga Wildlife Retreat. Suitable ground cover and/or other sight barriers are provided so that individual animals can isolate themselves visually from visitors and other macropods sharing the enclosure.*

Habitat: *The Australia Habitat is to be managed on a sustainable basis, including the maintenance of ecological processes, genetic diversity and geo-diversity. The vegetation planting will be consistent with the Sydney Sandstone Gully Forest/Coastal Sandstone Heath as found in the Mosman/Bradleys Head Bushland area. All natural features on site are to be retained, including the recycling and re-use of excavated site sandstone. Additional canopy tree planting will be added to provide shelter and habitat.*

4 Planning Framework

4.1 PREMIER'S PRIORITIES AND STATE PRIORITIES: 'MAKING IT HAPPEN'

The NSW Premier's Priorities and State Priorities: 'Making it Happen' guide policy and budget decisions for delivering community priorities. The Priorities contain key areas of focus including: transport, health, education, environment, police and justice, infrastructure, family and community services, economy and accountability.

One of the key Priorities is to improve the performance of the NSW economy, with a priority action being to accelerate major project assessment. This application is designated as State Significant Development, which will contribute to the growth of the NSW economy via enhanced tourism offerings in NSW for the international and domestic market.

4.2 PLAN FOR GROWING SYDNEY 2031

The Plan for Growing Sydney 2031 (the Strategic Plan) provides a framework for sustainable growth and development across Sydney over the next 20 years. The proposed eco-tourist facility will be consistent with various objectives of the Strategic Plan, with particular focus on:

- Developing Sydney as a premier visitor destination by enhancing tourist opportunities in Sydney and showcasing educational and cultural facilities.
- Enabling sustainable visitor and tourism experiences on the foreshores of Sydney Harbour National Park.
- Protection of Sydney Harbour and its foreshore through appropriate design of proposed structures.

4.3 STATE ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING POLICY (STATE AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT) 2011

Schedule 2 of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) 2011* (SRD SEPP) states development on the Taronga Zoo site with a CIV of more than \$10 million is identified as SSD. As the proposed development will have a CIV of \$44,013,000 (excl. GST) the proposal will be classified as SSD (refer to QS costing provided at **Attachment A**).

The *Determination of State Significant Applications Planning Circular PS 11-022* issued by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure on 30 September 2011 sets out the delegations of the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure to determine SSD DAs under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (the EP&A Act). All applications made by or on behalf of a public authority are to be determined by the Minister.

Taronga Conservation Society Australia is a public authority under the EP&A Act and consequently the Minister for Planning and Environment is the consent authority for any SSD DA lodged by or on behalf of the Taronga Conservation Society Australia.

Section 78A(8A) of the EP&A Act requires that all SSD DAs must be accompanied by an EIS prepared by or on behalf of the applicant in the form prescribed by the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000* (EP&A Regulations). Schedule 2 of the EP&A Regulations identifies that a written application must be made to the Secretary for the environmental assessment requirements with respect to the proposed EIS. Accordingly, this report provides documentation in support of the application for SEARs.

4.4 STATE ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING POLICY NO.55 – CONTAMINATED LAND

Clause 7 of State Environmental Planning Policy No. 55 (SEPP 55) requires that prior to the issue of consent; the consent authority must be satisfied that the site is suited to its intended use in terms of any potential soil or ground water contamination. Given, the site is being used for back of house facilities and recreation areas, it is unlikely the site is contaminated. Notwithstanding, the relevant provisions of SEPP 55 will be considered as part of the SSD DA.

4.5 SYDNEY HARBOUR CATCHMENT REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN 2005

The Sydney Harbour Catchment Regional Environmental Plan 2005 (SHREP 2005) is a deemed State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) and applies to the Sydney Harbour, foreshores and catchment. SHREP 2005 provides planning principles to guide future development and a range of matters when considering DAs within the foreshores and waterways of Sydney Harbour, including planning controls for strategic foreshore sites.

The site is identified within the Foreshores and Waterways Area and as a “Strategic Foreshore site”, however does not have any heritage listing under SHREP 2005.

Development listed in Schedule 2 of the SHREP 2005 is required to be referred to the Foreshores and Waterways Planning and Development Advisory Committee (Foreshore Committee) prior to determination. An “eco-tourist facility” is not listed in Schedule 2 as development to be referred to the Foreshore Committee. Despite this, as part of the development falls within the definition of a “flora and fauna enclosure”, listed in Schedule 2, the proposal may require referral to the Foreshore Committee.

Given the integration of the “flora and fauna enclosure” with the proposed eco-tourist facility, its location, materiality and ‘stepping’ of the proposed structures, it is not anticipated that it will have any significant visual, scenic or environmental impacts on Sydney Harbour and its foreshore, and any potential adverse impact to the visual quality of the site will be minimised and mitigated where possible. Further the design aspects of the proposal will be carefully devised to blend the facility with the surrounding landscape. This will ensure that the proposed works are recessive in nature and maintains the sensitive amenity of the foreshore locality.

The potential visual, scenic and heritage impacts, as well as managing construction impacts to mitigate impacts on downstream water bodies will be subject to further assessment and documentation as part of the EIS.

Furthermore development consent must not be granted for development on the site, being a strategic foreshore site, unless there is a master plan for the site and consideration has been made to this master plan. The Taronga Zoo has an approved master plan “Zoo 2000 – The view to the future” (the Master Plan). As part of the preliminary consultation held with the Department of Planning and Environment planning officers, it is agreed that the Master Plan will not be required to be updated in response to this application.

Notwithstanding the above, we note that there is the ability to waive the requirement for a Master Plan under clause 41 of the SHREP 2005, if this is considered necessary.

4.6 MOSMAN LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN 2012

The *Mosman Local Environmental Plan 2012* (MLEP 2012) is the principle local environmental planning instrument applying to the site. Given, Taronga is seeking to provide short term accommodation to visitors, is located and adjacent to an area with special ecological and cultural features and will be designed and managed to minimise any adverse environmental and visual impacts, the proposed use more accurately falls within the definition of “eco-tourist facility” as defined in MLEP 2012. Furthermore, the development will provide education opportunities to guests on wildlife conservation, which will foster their understanding and appreciation of the natural environment. An “eco-tourist facility” is defined as follows:

“eco-tourist facility means a building or place that:

(a) provides temporary or short-term accommodation to visitors on a commercial basis, and

(b) is located in or adjacent to an area with special ecological or cultural features, and

(c) is sensitively designed and located so as to minimise bulk, scale and overall physical footprint and any ecological or visual impact.

It may include facilities that are used to provide information or education to visitors and to exhibit or display items.

Note. See clause 5.13 for requirements in relation to the granting of development consent for eco-tourist facilities

Eco-tourist facilities are not a type of tourist and visitor accommodation—see the definition of that term in this Dictionary.”

4.6.1 LAND USE AND PERMISSIBILITY

The site is zoned ‘SP1 Special Activities’ under MLEP 2012 and is identified on the zoning map as “Zoological Gardens”. The objectives of the SP1 Special Activities zone are:

- *To provide for special land uses that are not provided for in other zones.*
- *To provide for sites with special natural characteristics that are not provided for in other zones.*
- *To facilitate development that is in keeping with the special characteristics of the site or its existing or intended special use, and that minimises any adverse impacts on surrounding land.*

The proposed animal exhibit and eco-tourist facility is consistent with the zone objectives in that:

- It will provide an iconic and innovative, wildlife-based, eco- accommodation that is not specifically permissible in other zones in the MLEP 2011.
- It will be sensitively integrated with the natural bushland, heritage items, significant trees and sloping, harbour-side location of the site.
- It will provide an immersive zoo experience that will create a unique opportunity for people to engage with wildlife, and to appreciate the night time zoo environment, with minimal impact on surrounding land.
- It will facilitate the development of a new animal exhibit, in keeping with the existing special use of the site as a world class Zoo.

The only uses permitted on the site with development consent is for the purpose shown on the Land Zoning Map including any development that is **ordinarily incidental** or ancillary to development for that purpose.

An eco-tourist facility, as defined under the MLEP 2012 is a development that is ordinarily incidental to a ‘zoological garden’. The Land and Environment Court judgement in *Health Administration Corporation v Ryde City Council & Anor [2005] NSWLEC 507* found that for a land use to be “ordinarily incidental” to another use, it does not have to be “ordinarily incidental” to **that particular development**, but rather to the **type of development generally**. The Court also found in the same matter that a land use that is “ordinarily incidental” can be a **separate** and **significant** use of the site.

Taronga has a world class reputation in education and immersion of people with wildlife. A core function of the Zoo is to increase understanding of conservation and change human behaviour to support the conservation and preservation of species. One of the ways they do this is through overnight experiences such as the ‘Roar and Snore’ program at Taronga Zoo and the Zoofari Lodge at Western Plains Zoo. The overnight experiences create direct and positive connections between wildlife and people. It provides an opportunity for visitors to learn first-hand about conservation and the revenue helps support conservation projects.

As stated above, in order to determine whether a type of use is ‘*ordinarily incidental*’ to another, the test is whether **that type** of development is ordinarily incidental to “*zoological gardens*” generally, rather than looking at the **particular** site or development. This means it is necessary to consider whether visitor accommodation naturally or commonly arises in conjunction with zoological gardens. In that regard there are numerous examples of overnight accommodation at zoos in NSW, other states in Australia and overseas, including:

- Taronga Zoo ‘Roar and Snore’ overnight accommodation programme. Mosman Council approved the relocation of the existing ‘*Roar and Snore*’ programme including new tents, tent platforms, amenity block and lighting in December 2006. At the time of the approval the site was zoned 5(a) Community Uses under *Mosman Local Environmental Plan 1998* (MLEP 1998). The land use table permitted uses identified on the zoning map. The site was identified on the zoning map as “*Zoological Gardens*”. In review of the Council Planning Officer’s report that went to Council on 22 December 2006, the ‘Roar and Snore’ overnight accommodation proposal was considered to be ancillary to the “*zoological gardens*” use and permissible with development consent.
- The Taronga Western Plains Zoo at Dubbo has two types of overnight accommodation: the Zoofari Lodge (cabins) and Billabong Camping (tents), which have both been approved by Dubbo Council. Self-contained (two bedroom and bathroom) permanent cabins have been approved by Dubbo Council and opened earlier this year, providing three-tiers of overnight experiences at Taronga Western Plains Zoo.
- National Zoo and Aquarium Hotel (ACT) – Ushaka Lodge, giraffe tree houses, and jungle bungalows.
- Werribee Open Range Zoo (Victoria) –up-market safari tents.
- Mansfield Zoo (Victoria) – tent camping.
- Monarto Zoo (South Australia) – tent camping.
- Wellington Zoo (New Zealand) – communal lodge.
- Auckland Zoo (New Zealand) – communal lodge.
- Dallas Zoo (USA) – tent camping.
- Livingstone Lodge at Port Lympne (United Kingdom) – lodge.
- ZSL Whipsnade Zoo (United Kingdom) – lodge.

This list is not exhaustive and there are many other examples. The provision of immersive overnight experiences is a growing trend in zoos worldwide, as it has been found it can provide a better connection between people and wildlife than a standard day visit. Overnight accommodation in the form of an eco-tourist facility is therefore considered to be “*ordinarily incidental*” to ‘Zoological Gardens’ generally and is a natural extension of the current ‘*Roar and Snore*’ accommodation offering at Taronga Zoo.

4.6.2 ECO-TOURIST FACILITIES

Clause 5.13 of the *Standard Instrument—Principal Local Environmental Plan* has not been adopted by Mosman City Council as part of the MLEP 2012. Despite this, given the definition of the proposed use, the EIS will address the relevant provisions of Clause 5.13 of the *Standard Instrument—Principal Local Environmental Plan*, including demonstrating that:

- (a) *there is a demonstrated **connection between the development and the ecological, environmental and cultural values of the site** or area, and*
- (b) *the development will be **located, constructed, managed and maintained so as to minimise any impact on, and to conserve, the natural environment, and***
- (c) *the development will **enhance an appreciation of the environmental and cultural values of the site** or area, and*

(d) the development will **promote positive environmental outcomes** and any impact on watercourses, soil quality, heritage and native flora and fauna will be minimal, and

(e) the site will be maintained (or regenerated where necessary) to ensure the continued protection of natural resources and enhancement of the natural environment, and

(f) waste generation during construction and operation will be avoided and that any waste will be appropriately removed, and

(g) the development will be **located to avoid visibility** above ridgelines and against escarpments and from watercourses and that any visual intrusion will be **minimised through the choice of design, colours, materials and landscaping** with local native flora, and

(h) any infrastructure services to the site will be provided without significant modification to the environment, and

(i) any power and water to the site will, where possible, be provided through the use of passive heating and cooling, renewable energy sources and water efficient design, and

(j) the development will not adversely affect the agricultural productivity of adjoining land, and

(k) the following matters are addressed or provided for in a management strategy for minimising any impact on the natural environment:

(i) measures to remove any threat of serious or irreversible environmental damage,

(ii) the maintenance (or regeneration where necessary) of habitats,

(iii) efficient and minimal energy and water use and waste output,

(iv) mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing the effect of the development on the natural environment,

(v) maintaining improvements on an on-going basis in accordance with relevant ISO 14000 standards relating to management and quality control. (Our emphasis)

The matters above will be outlined within the EIS for the SSD DA as a matter for consideration. Management and mitigation measures will also be prepared as part of the EIS.

4.6.3 HERITAGE

Taronga Zoo site contains several locally listed heritage items under the MLEP 2012, identified as Item I34 being the "Rainforest Aviary", "Elephant House", "bus shelter and office", "floral clock" and "upper and lower entrance gates". None of these items are located in or directly adjacent to the proposed development.

Taronga Zoo site also contains a number of archaeological items listed in MLEP 2012. These items are:

- Item A494 "Sites of Curlew and Mia Mia Camps" at Sirius Cove Road on Bushland between Little Sirius Cove and Whiting Beach. This item is situated on Lot 22 DP 843294 but is located outside of the Zoo's perimeter fence line.

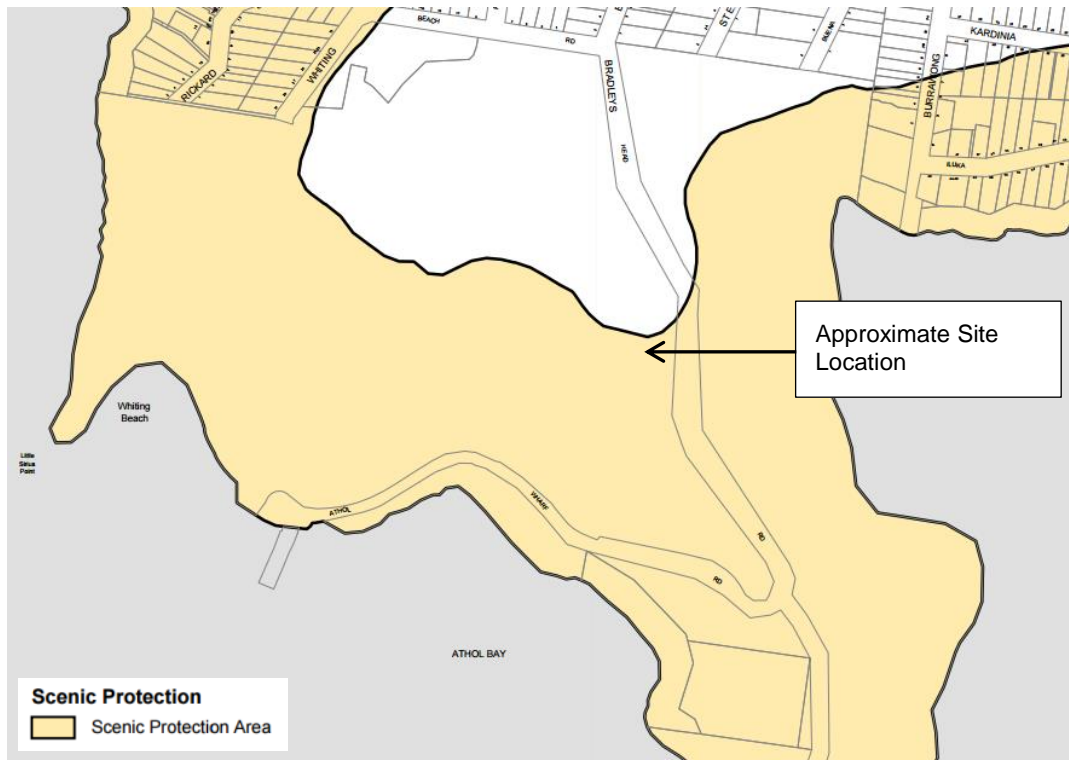
Adjacent to the site are the following heritage items listed in MLEP 2012:

- Item A482 "Former Athol Wharf Tram Terminus, including escarpment and retaining walls" on Athol Wharf Road and is described as "Road Reserve adjacent to Taronga Zoo Ferry Wharf".
- Item A483 "Site of first wharf serving Taronga Zoo" on Athol Wharf Road and is described as the Taronga Zoo Ferry Wharf.
- None of these items are located in or directly adjacent to the eco retreat site.

4.6.4 MISCELLANEOUS DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

- There are no building height or floor space ratio controls that apply to the site.
- The site is identified as a “*Scenic Protection Area*” under clause 6.4 of MLEP 2012, as illustrated in the figure below:

FIGURE 4 – MLEP 2012 SCENIC PROTECTION AREA MAP EXCERPT



- Clause 6.4(3) identifies that development consent must not be granted to any development on land in a Scenic Protection Area unless the consent authority is satisfied that:
 - a) *measures will be taken, including in relation to the location and design of the proposed development, to minimise the visual impact of the development to and from Sydney Harbour, and*
 - b) *the development will maintain the existing natural landscape and landform.*
- These items will be addressed within the EIS.
- Clause 6.4 and clause 5.9 of MLEP 2012 require consideration of the preservation and protection of existing natural landscape and landforms, as well as the clearing of vegetation to make way for the new eco-tourist facility and new Australian wildlife exhibition. These matters will be addressed in the EIS. An Arborist Report will be prepared to demonstrate the impact of the proposed development on any significant trees. A Landscape Plan will also be prepared for inclusion in the EIS demonstrating any trees and planting to be removed, as well as any replacement trees which will be planted as part of the proposal.

5 Key Issues for Consideration

5.1 SECRETARY'S REQUIREMENTS

The key issues arising for consideration in relation to the proposed development are discussed below and presented to assist the Department of Planning and Environment in the SEARs for preparing the EIS. The key considerations associated with the project are as follows:

- Built form, design and visual impact;
- View impacts;
- Heritage and archaeological impacts;
- Car parking and traffic impacts;
- Bushfire;
- Acoustic impacts;
- Stormwater management;
- Utilities and services;
- Building Code of Australia;
- Accessibility;
- Operational Management;
- Construction Management; and
- Waste Management.

5.2 BUILT FORM, DESIGN AND VISUAL IMPACT

The proposed site plan and site sections prepared by Cox Architecture (**Appendix C**) provide an indication of the preliminary proposed built form. As demonstrated on the plans, the maximum height of buildings proposed is four storeys.

The development site is located more than 250m from the nearest residential boundary, however may be visible from Bradleys Head Road. The highest point of the proposed accommodation pods will be no higher than the first floor of the existing Taronga Function Centre. The highest point of the dining hall pod will be no higher than the existing Taronga Centre. As such the proposal will be of a commensurate scale as the existing development on site.

The location of the proposed development adjacent to existing buildings also 'steps' down to RL51 at the existing Tasmanian Devil enclosure. Furthermore, by the retention and replacement of significant trees and vegetation any potential visual impact as a result of the development will be mitigated or minimised when viewed from Sydney Harbour, Bradleys Head Road and surrounding land uses.

The EIS will address the height, bulk and scale of the proposed development within the context of the locality. The EIS will also address the design quality with specific consideration of the use of colours, materials, finishes and landscaping. Furthermore, the EIS will be accompanied by a visual impact assessment.

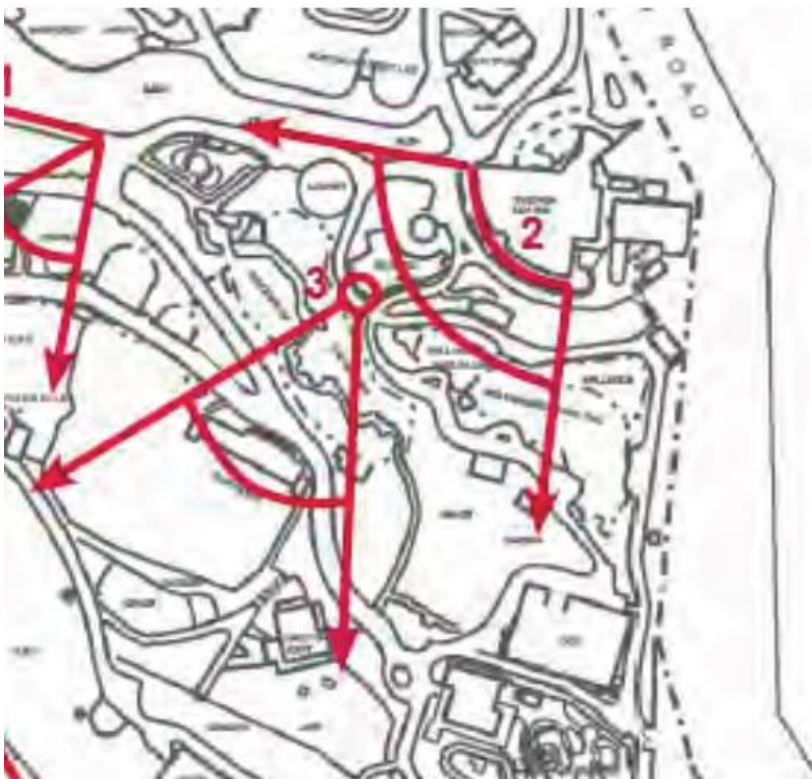
5.3 VIEW IMPACTS

The site is situated in the eastern portion of the site, identified as “Upper East” in the “Taronga Zoo Master Plan Urban Design Principles and Visual Analysis, May 2001”. This document describes this precinct as having a “significant consistent slope. This means that some existing development is visible when viewed from the water, such as the Taronga Centre. The precinct also has significant exposure in that it is viewed from afar, as it addresses the broad eastern expanse of Sydney harbour more so than the other precincts”.

Views from the site constitute an important part of the visitors’ experience of the place and create vistas that assist in providing orientation for visitors. The vistas of Sydney Harbour and the Sydney CBD from the site were an original design intention in the development of Taronga Zoo and continue to be a driving consideration for the development of the Zoo.

Given the proposed scale and location within the “Upper East” landscape precinct adjacent to the Taronga Centre, the future development has the potential to impact view corridors within Taronga Zoo and from Sydney Harbour. The following image identifies that the proposed location of three of the accommodation pods are within a significant view corridor from the Taronga Centre.

FIGURE 5 – EXTRACT OF THE MAP IN THE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY SHOWING SIGNIFICANT VIEWS IN THE VICINITY OF THE SITE (SOURCE: GODDEN MACKAY LOGAN)



The design of the proposed accommodation pods, extension to the Taronga Centre for the purpose of a new kitchen and guest dining room, and proposed landscaping will be informed in significant part by mitigation of view impacts. An assessment will be made as part of the EIS of the impact on any significant views to, from and through the site. Photomontages will be prepared to demonstrate the potential impact of the proposal.

5.4 HERITAGE AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACTS

Whilst Taronga Zoo is identified as a heritage item under the Section 170 register of the Zoological Parks Board, it is not listed on the State Heritage Register.

As stated, whilst the site contains a number of locally listed heritage items and archaeological items, none of these items are located on or directly adjacent to the proposed development site. However, the Section

170 Register of the Zoological Parks Board identifies additional heritage items in the Zoo. The following heritage items in the Section 170 Register are located on the site and may be impacted by the proposed development:

- **07L** Sandstone perimeter wall. Incorporates east, south, west and north walls (Items 47B, 72B, and 81B)
- **32B** Former Jungle Cats enclosure, now Tasmanian Devils Enclosure.
- **82A** Taronga Zoo – Greater
- **96B** Circular Kiosk (Fountain base 1917 kiosk 1930s)
- **99L** Original and Early Pathway Layout, including stairs linking levels
- **123L** Australian Sections 1 and 2 landscaping
- **137L** Rustic stone seat adjacent to stair at SE corner of Taronga Centre.
- **139L** Concrete stair with roughcast balustrade
- **149L** Rustic stone garden walling (below Taronga Centre)
- **152L** Rustic stone garden walling near *gardenia thunbergia*.
- **165L** *Gardenia thunbergia* (Tree Gardenia)
- **173L** *Eucalyptus Botryoides* (Bangalay)
- **197L** *Murraya paniculate* (Orange Jessamine)
- **216L** *Ficus macrocarpa var. Hillii* (Hill's Fig Tree)
- **218L** *Acmena smithii* (Lillipilli tree) – Proposed to be removed through separate application
- **219L** *Ficus rubiginosa* (Port Jackson Fig Tree) – Proposed to be removed through separate application
- **290L** Wisteria at Beastro

The proposal has been designed to avoid impact on the key heritage items in the vicinity of the proposed development, however the proposal will impact on items 96B, 149L, and parts of the original and early pathways at 99L. The applicant intends to lodge a separate application to the NSW Heritage Council for the removal of items 218L and 219L.

In accordance with Clause 5.10 of MLEP 2010, a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) will be prepared as part of the EIS to assess the impact of the proposed development on European and Aboriginal heritage items on the site. The *Taronga Zoo Conservation Strategy July 2002* was endorsed by the NSW Heritage Office and provides the policy framework for the conservation, interpretation, management and use of the Zoo as part of the implementation of the Master Plan. This document will be a key consideration for the preparation of the HIA.

5.5 CAR PARKING AND TRAFFIC IMPACTS

It is anticipated that local parking and traffic conditions will not be significantly altered by this proposal.

An additional 37.9 full time equivalent jobs will be created by the operation of the Taronga Wildlife Retreat. This will marginally increase the car parking demand on the site to accommodate these additional employees and guests. It is however noted that the peak demand for the Taronga Wildlife Retreat is likely to be dissimilar from the wider zoo.

Given the current parking spaces provided on the site (approximately 846 spaces), it is however anticipated that the existing multistorey car park and staff car park will accommodate this additional demand. Furthermore, should groups visit the Taronga Wildlife Retreat, the existing bus parking area will satisfactorily accommodate associated parking requirements.

A Car Parking and Traffic Impact Assessment will be prepared by a suitably qualified consultant for inclusion in the EIS. It will demonstrate that the existing parking and public transport arrangements and altered servicing arrangements will be sufficient to service the proposed eco-tourist facility.

5.6 BUSHFIRE

Under the Draft Bushfire Risk Management Plan 2015-2020 the site is designated as bushfire management zone. Preliminary advice has informed the proposed location and design of the accommodation pods to ensure that it can integrate within the existing evacuation zones and emergency procedures currently utilised across the site. Furthermore, the design of the buildings has been informed by the relevant Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) requirements, specifically for BAL 29 and BAL 40.

A bushfire report will be included in the EIS, which will provide details regarding any proposed bushfire management or mitigation measures required for the new facility.

5.7 ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The applicant is committed to delivering a facility that is economically, environmentally and socially sustainable. A number of initiatives will be implemented to achieve this vision which covers energy, water, material, user amenity, and social sustainability.

The sustainability vision for the Taronga Wildlife Retreat will be integrated and will optimise through life cycle considerations and it is the intent for the facility to be awarded a 5 Star Green Star rating under the Design and As Built V1.1 Tool.

The strategy will be to design, construct and operate the Taronga Wildlife Retreat to achieve a low impact on the environment and enhance social outcomes whilst being financially sustainable. The EIS will outline how the proposal will consider specific strategies such as passive design, low carbon/ renewal energy technologies, and sustainable waste and water systems to deliver such ESD objectives.

5.8 ACOUSTIC IMPACT

The Zoo has been operating on site for 99 years. The acoustic environment will remain unchanged as the facility will be integrated within the site. Whilst guests will have opportunity to view the Zoo during the evening to observe animal behaviour after hours, it is anticipated that acoustic impacts will be insignificant.

An Acoustic Assessment will accompany the EIS, which will assess the potential noise impacts on surrounding residential development and mitigation if required.

5.9 STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Stormwater and flooding impacts will be assessed by a qualified consultant and the assessment will be provided with the submission of the EIS. A Stormwater Management Plan will accompany the EIS submission and will provide details regarding proposed on-site stormwater management, as well as any proposed erosion and sediment control measures required to mitigate offsite impacts.

5.10 UTILITIES AND SERVICES

All required services for the proposed development are available, with some services being relocated from elsewhere within the Zoo. Some augmentation may be required however further information will be provided as part of the EIS.

5.11 BUILDING CODE OF AUSTRALIA

A Building Code of Australia (BCA) Report will be submitted as part of the EIS to confirm that the proposal will be capable of complying with the relevant provisions of the BCA. This will include an assessment relative to the requirements for eco-tourist facilities and tourist accommodation, under Class 3 and Class 6 of the BCA.

5.12 ACCESSIBILITY

An Access Statement will be prepared by a qualified accessibility consultant to demonstrate that the proposed development will be capable of providing universal access to all publicly accessible areas in accordance with relevant Australian Standards.

5.13 OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Taronga Conservation Society Australia will be operating the proposed Taronga Wildlife Retreat. The EIS will be accompanied by a plan of management for the overnight stay of guests and operation of the licensed premises (the bar and dining facility) and will identify practices to be adopted with respect to procedures, safety, evacuation, hours of operation, acoustic amenity, etc.

5.14 CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

A Preliminary Construction and Environmental Management Plan will be submitted with the EIS and will outline the key management measures to be implemented during construction of the proposed development.

5.15 WASTE MANAGEMENT

A Waste Management Plan will be submitted with the EIS to outline the management and monitoring of the waste generated as part of the proposed development. The Waste Management Plan will also outline storage, collection points and method for removal.

6 Preliminary Consultation

Consultation with Mosman Council, Rural Fire Service, and the Department of Planning and Environment has taken place in advance of this request. Specifically representatives of Taronga Conservation Society Australia and Urbis briefed Council Officer's from Mosman Council regarding the proposal, and secondly briefed key planning officers at the Department of Planning and Environment. The following matters were discussed during the preliminary consultation to be detailed within the EIS and SSD DA:

- The proposal is permissible under MLEP 2012 as it is ordinarily incidental to 'Zoological Gardens'.
- The Department recognised the status of the Taronga Zoo 2000 Master Plan and acknowledged the evolution of uses over time at the Taronga Zoo site.
- The proposed strategy of 'accommodation pods' to break up the built form and potential visual impact of the proposal.
- Extent of vegetation to be removed or impacted by the proposed development.

Further consultation will take place with government agencies and authorities following the issue of SEARs to ensure that the EIS responds positively to the key assessment matters. The applicant has briefed the Department of Primary Industries in respect of containment of animals and will continue to consult the Department throughout the application process.

Preliminary consultation also commenced with surrounding land owners and key stakeholders including local Aboriginal representatives in November 2015. This included targeted door knocking with information factsheets, the establishment of a website detailing upcoming capital works projects within the Australian Habitat precinct of the Zoo, and the invitation to two site tours scheduled within November 2015. A Community Information Session is also scheduled for December 2015. A number of interest groups were also briefed in November 2015 including the Mosman Chamber of Commerce and the Sydney Business Chamber.

In accordance with the EP&A Regulations, the EIS will be placed on formal public exhibition. Following this exhibition period, the applicant will respond to matters raised by notified parties.

7 Conclusion

This project represents a significant opportunity to promote and enhance Taronga Zoo as a place of conservation, education, and immersion in wildlife habitat, as well as an important tourism facility within Sydney Harbour. This proposal accords with the State, Regional and Local strategic initiatives to promote tourism in NSW whilst preserving the scenic qualities of Sydney Harbour.

The proposed development of an eco-tourist facility within an Australian habitat exhibit will integrate with the existing overnight accommodation on the site, and the existing facilities at the Taronga Centre, which is ordinarily incidental to the operation of the site a 'zoological garden'.

The proposal will require the submission of a State Significant Development Application and accompanying EIS. This report has been prepared in support of a request for Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements, as set out in Schedule 2 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000*.

It is expected that a range of matters will be required to be addressed which will be investigated and responded by a team of technical consultants to form the complete EIS package.

We would welcome the opportunity to provide a detailed briefing to you and the officers of the Department of Planning and Environment should you consider it warranted.

Disclaimer

This report is dated November 2015 and incorporates information and events up to that date only and excludes any information arising, or event occurring, after that date which may affect the validity of Urbis Pty Ltd's (**Urbis**) opinion in this report. Urbis prepared this report on the instructions, and for the benefit only, of Taronga Conservation Society Australia (**Instructing Party**) for the purpose of Request for SEARs (**Purpose**) and not for any other purpose or use. To the extent permitted by applicable law, Urbis expressly disclaims all liability, whether direct or indirect, to the Instructing Party which relies or purports to rely on this report for any purpose other than the Purpose, and to any other person which relies or purports to rely on this report for any purpose whatsoever (including the Purpose).

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All surveys, forecasts, projections and recommendations contained in or associated with this report are made in good faith and on the basis of information supplied to Urbis at the date of this report, and upon which Urbis relied. Achievement of the projections and budgets set out in this report will depend, among other things, on the actions of others over which Urbis has no control.

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

Appendix A

QS Report

Appendix B

Site Location Plan

Appendix C

Indicative Architectural Plans

Appendix D

Landscape Concept Plan

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