

8 March 2023

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Submitted via online portal (<https://pp.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/sydney-terminal-building-revitalisation>)

Dear Mr Kelly,

**Re: National Trust submission relating to Sydney Terminal Building Revitalisation (SSI-45421960)**

The National Trust of Australia (NSW) make comment on the currently advertised Sydney Terminal (Central Station) Revitalisation proposal. We thank the project team for engaging in consultation with us regarding this proposal, firstly with a site tour on 30 November 2022, and also with a further presentation on 2 March 2023. These meetings have provided an opportunity to comprehensively understand the proposal, as well as clarify a number of queries and discuss heritage opportunities for the site revitalisation.

**The National Trust support, in principle, efforts to renew and conserve the historic Sydney Terminal. We acknowledge that Central Station can and should benefit from comprehensive renewal, and genuinely would support appropriate efforts in this regard.**

In the following submission we make a number of points which clarify our position and which we hope can be considered as the project progresses. We have focused our comments on various “zones” of the proposal to give them context.

**Comment on the wider 2022 SSP rezoning proposal for Central Station**

As per our extensive submission dated 4 October 2022 in relation to the *Central State Significant Precinct Rezoning Proposal*, the National Trust remain deeply concerned about the context in which this Sydney Terminal Revitalisation project sits.

While efforts to “revitalise” the station terminal may be considered a positive heritage outcome in and of itself, such works must be considered in terms of the entire Central Station heritage precinct. In our submission we noted that the National Trust object in the strongest possible terms to the Central State Significant Precinct Rezoning Proposal in its current form, and that we agreed with the Statement of Heritage Impact (p.164) for that project that *“Overall, the proposed masterplan development would have a cumulative major and detrimental impact to the significant cultural landscape of the Central Station Precinct.”*

We maintain that if the rezoning proposal is accepted in its current form, and it is seriously accepted that this NSW Government project achieves its stated heritage principle to *“maintain the State heritage-listing of Central Railway Station Sydney Terminal Group and its individual components,”* then the entire rationale for heritage listing in NSW must seriously be reconsidered.

Since that submission was made, the Consultation Summary (December 2022) for the Central State Significant



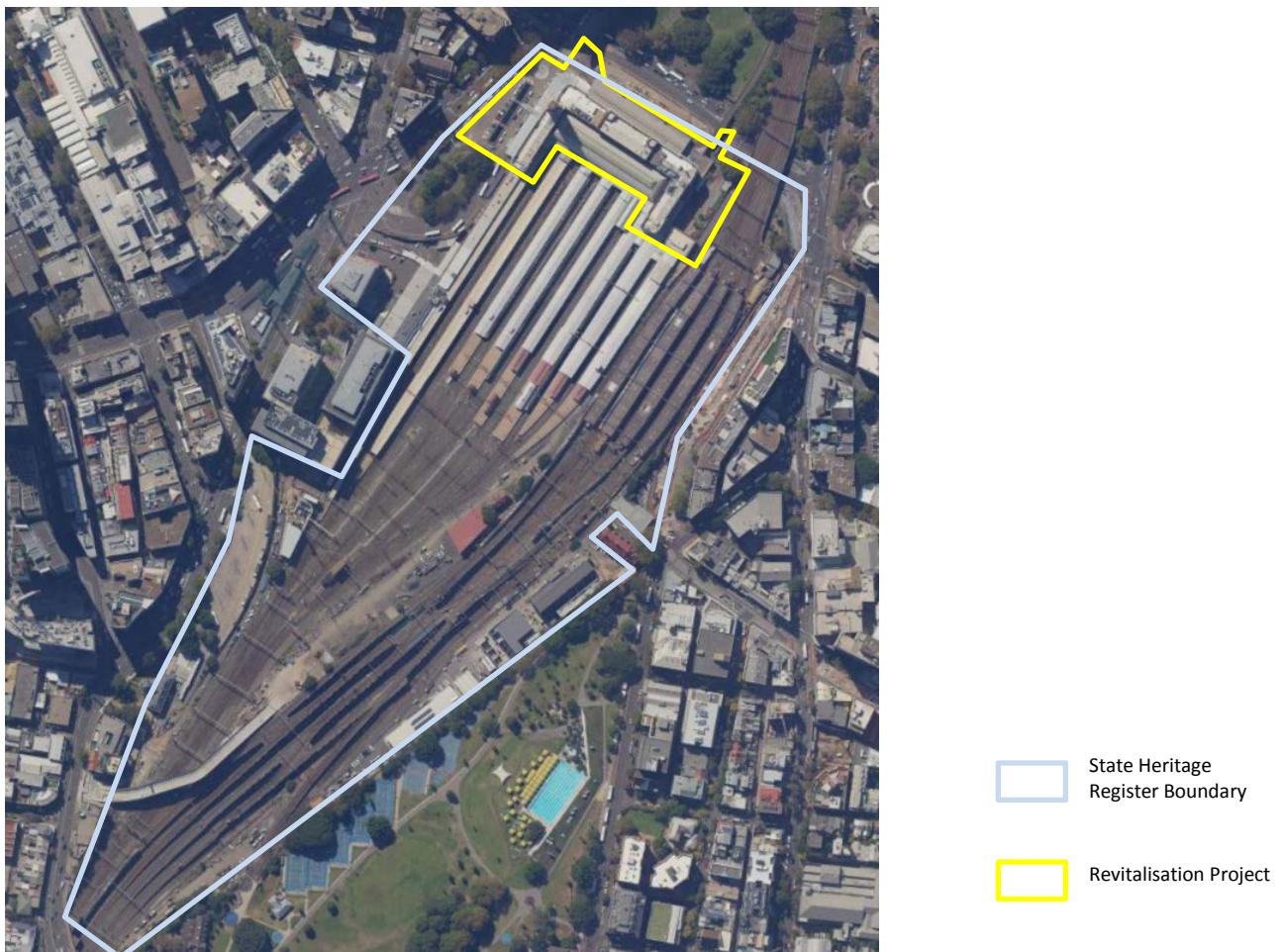
Precinct Rezoning Proposal has been issued. The Trust has reviewed that document and the public submissions made, and we note that of the 368 submissions made, 228 of them (almost 62%) were objections, with only 57 submissions (15%) in support. This remarkably low level of support illustrates the clear community concern with this project.

### Heritage Significance

The National Trust is the State's leading advocate for the protection and conservation of heritage throughout NSW. We first listed Central Railway Station, including the building, ramps and bridges in 1976, and the associated Central Station/Haymarket Urban Conservation Area in 1981. We note the exceptional significance of Central Railway Station, its curtilage, and associated structures and landscapes, and the importance of maintaining this landmark collection as a publicly accessible cultural asset both now and for future generations.

When it was built, Sydney's Central Station was by far one of the largest public works ever undertaken in Australia. Described by noted architect Howard Tanner in the National Trust's own 1976 Heritage Register Listing as *"perhaps Walter Liberty Vernon's greatest design,"* it remains certainly the grandest railway station in Australia, and one of the largest sandstone buildings constructed in NSW. The State Heritage Listing expands upon this urban dimension and notes that the Sydney Terminal was *"the only major building of this period in Sydney where the urban setting was consciously designed to complement, and provide views of the main structure."* This included a garden and *"carriage loop"* for traffic approaching from Railway Square that has been described by James Broadbent as *"an integral part of the precinct."*

It is in this wider context that the National Trust has approached the Sydney Terminal Building Revitalisation. We note the project footprint is only a component of the actual State Heritage Register listing for the precinct.



The revitalisation project, although major, occupies only a small part of the entire SHR listing for the Central Precinct, and needs to be viewed in this wider context. (Source: SIXMaps, with NT overlay)



The Central Station precinct was listed on the NSW State Heritage Register under the NSW Heritage Act as *Sydney Terminal and Central Railway Stations Group* in April 1999. This listing gave extensive details as to why the place was of significance. It is important to note that this listing was **for an entire historic precinct**, and included not only the Sydney Terminal and Yards, but also the Western Yard, Darling Harbour Branch Line, Mortuary Station, West Carriage Sheds, Prince Alfred Sidings, the Railway Institute, and Parcel Post Office.

The Sydney Terminal and Central Stations Railway Group is closely associated with the nearby Eveleigh Rail Workshops precinct and Redfern Station to its south-east. Both precincts are incredibly important to the technological, industrial and social histories of both the City of Sydney and the whole of New South Wales.

The Statement of Significance for the listing notes that the Sydney Terminal and Yards is significant:

- *As a major terminal by world standards, comparable with late Victorian and Edwardian metropolitan stations in Europe, Great Britain and North America;*
- *As a unique terminal, in NSW, not only in extent but also for the high standard of design of the associated buildings in particular the Mortuary Station, Railway Institute and the Parcels Post Office;*
- *As one of the two longest continuously operating yard/workshop complexes in Australia, dating from the 1850s. Although many of the original functions have been superseded, or operations transferred to other sites, evidence of the working 19<sup>th</sup> century yard remains extant;*
- *As a major multi-level transport interchange between pedestrians, vehicular traffic and trains and later trams and subsequently buses. Since its establishment in 1855 it has been one of the busiest transport interchanges in Australia;*
- *As the largest formally planned addition to the urban fabric of Sydney prior to World War 1, intended to form a gateway to the city;*
- *The railway yards, the Mortuary Station, Railway Institute Building, terminus and clock tower are familiar Sydney landmarks, particularly to rail travellers.*

#### **A note on the information supplied**

The Trust note the difficulty in presenting a project of this magnitude and complexity. We would note that the drawings prepared for this documentation should be commended on their clarity. The Trust was also greatly encouraged to note that the NSW Government Architect's "Better Placed" principles were assessed in this documentation, however we would recommend that the next iterations of this project also be specifically assessed against the "Better Placed Design Guide for Heritage"

#### **Grand Concourse and upper level**

- The Trust generally approve the design for this portion of the proposal, noting its aim to strike a balance between prioritising restoration and activation.
- We support the notion of exploring the potential for a new terrazzo floor to the main concourse which can form a significant "welcome to Gadigal Country" while at the same time responding to the qualities of this important space.
- While supporting the reinstated glazed central portion of the roof design, we would question its relevance as a connecting with country strategy for "connection to sky country and cosmology." When considered with the separate rezoning proposal to cover all of the platforms which currently enjoy open, unimpeded access to light and air, this gesture becomes meaningless, particularly on Platform 1.
- The Trust support measures to move the gateline and other measure more generally to restore the shape and symmetry of the room, however this gain must not be lost by introducing numerous other elements into this space. New elements such as planters and seating must be very carefully considered.
- We understand the desire to create new escalator entry points into this space, however caution that these must be very sensitively considered. There may be further ways to improve this interface and its relationship to existing circulation patterns, particularly the entry point to the booking hall.
- The connectivity between the port cochere and concourse now appear somewhat compromised with the introduction of a new escalator to Eddy Avenue. We note that the loss of this connection to the port



cochere is not the best heritage outcome for the building but understand the desire for an escalator. Given however that the majority of people are not approaching the station directly from the north, and the scheme involves provision of a new (better positioned) escalator from Eddy Plaza, this second new escalator makes a very significant intrusion into one of the major openings to the main concourse at a point where it connects directly to the Light Rail at the concourse level (noting the light rail stop at ground level is at Rawson Place). We feel that this element has one of the greatest heritage impacts of this proposal, for little benefit.

## Porte Cochere

### 348 Porte Cochere

Originally designed as a shelter for passengers transferring from the trains to train platforms via the Grand Concourse area. The floor of the space was asphalt with wood blocks laid alongside the train tracks. With the cessation of the train system in the late 1950s, the tracks became redundant and the space was subsequently used as car parking. The tracks were paved over in the 1960s. A new Metro Light Rail line was installed in 1996 which followed the path of the original train line but operated in the opposite direction.

#### Significance:

- Overall grading: exceptional
- Views and vistas: exceptional
- Context and setting: exceptional

#### Exceptional elements:

- Roof trusswork, valance and seismic bracing
- Main Terminus Building northern facade, windows and doors
- Passage connections to main concourse
- Sandstone colonnade, balustrades, parapet and coats of arms

#### High elements:

- Remains of early train tracks
- Clock, early signage, wayfinding

#### Life elements:

- Platform and tracks
- Current paving

#### Intrusive elements:

- Escalator and stair
- Introduced services, mechanical, electrical, lighting and data



119 The Porte Cochere depicted in a 1908 postcard.  
Source: State Archives and Records • 4359.



121 Undated (c. 1920s) stair exit to corner of Pitt Street and Eddy Avenue.  
Source: TKD Architects 2022.



120 The Porte Cochere today.  
Source: TKD Architects 2022



122 Stair exit to corner of Pitt Street and Eddy Avenue.  
Source: TKD Architects 2022.

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- The Heritage Opportunities and Constraints document does not mention the infill to the original glazing at each end of the porte cochere. The re-installation of the original glazed elements to each end, and the re-instatement of raised moulding to the valance boards, would add considerably to the appeal of this element.
- The numerous original photographs (sample above) may also influence the colour schemes for the building and some new elements. The images clearly show a lighter colour to the awnings, and it is also worth noting the original “white on black” signage (as opposed to the current “black on white”). These colour choices may of course influence new works and even elements such as directional signage and wayfinding.

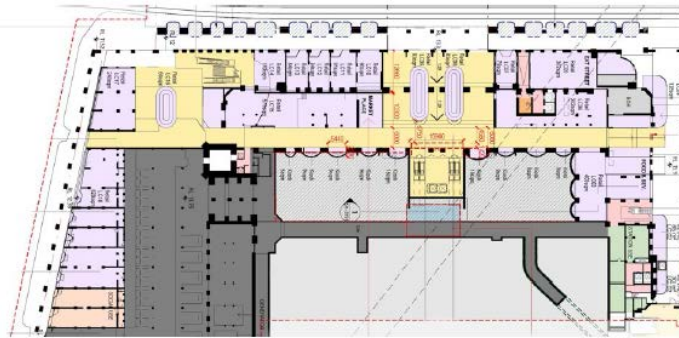
## Northwest Entry

- We agree that there is a potential to alter or reconstruct the modified components, including openings and ceilings, in this area, however would urge caution when doing so. This is a highly unsatisfactory part of the site and while the Trust would agree that some elements can be “opened up” this needs to be very selectively done so as to retain the authenticity of the space.
- The preliminary Architectus concept and the “current” Grimshaw scheme (shown below) that are illustrated in the Non-Aboriginal Heritage Assessment do not involve the removal of the final shop closest to this corner, and seem to make an improved connection to the loading dock.
- There is a very real concern that if too many (irreversible) changes are made to this space, it can never be recovered. It is a dangerous notion to pin the hopes for success on this space on the basis that it will



have a lively coffee shop or restaurant, when the history of retail in this area is known to be difficult. The currently empty “coffee shop” area in the brand new Clarence Street entrance to Wynyard Station is a testament to this fallacy for a place whose primary purpose is as a commuter environment.

- We strongly feel that the current proposal does not yet reach the appropriate balance between heritage and “revitalisation” and would urge further design interrogation of this most important space. The clarity with which many other parts of the station have been resolved is not yet apparent here.



70 Preliminary Architectus concept scheme, ground floor (lower concourse) plan, 2021.  
Source: Architectus, supplied by Transport for NSW.



71 Current scheme, ground floor (lower concourse) plan, 2022.  
Source: Grimshaw Architects.

Previous alternative schemes shown on p.150 of the Non-Aboriginal Heritage Assessment. The Trust do not consider the current solution to be the optimal outcome for this important part of the site.



The current proposal for this portion of the site has “hollowed out” this important space and risks making an important, heavy, corner entry appear to feel like facadism. In order to obtain the desired connections, there are other alternatives available in term of design approach than simply *removing* fabric, and in some instances it may in fact be a case of *adding* fabric (as has been proposed in Eddy Plaza) in the spirit of the original design to help make a more legible space. A creative approach is needed.

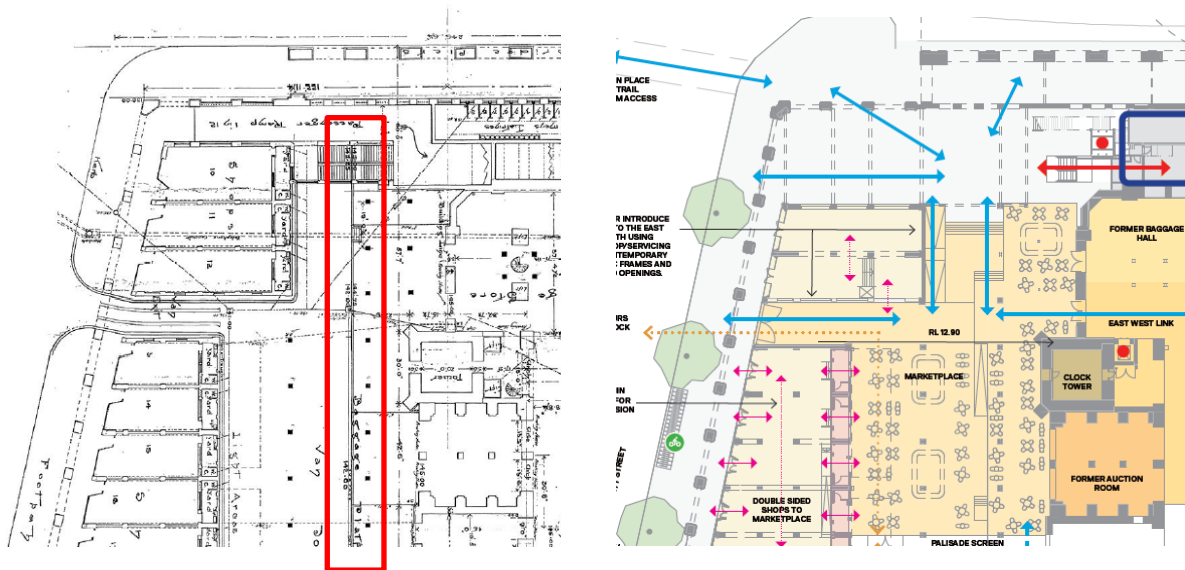
## Booking Hall

- The proposal to reinstate the original dimensions of this space are supported.



## Loading Dock

- The Loading Dock is one of the more interesting, and to date largely inaccessible, parts of the site. Activating this space is supported, along with the resultant east-west connections through the former Electrical Department space.
- It has been highly modified and (while understanding the need to create an accessible space) we would suggest the original levels be recovered wherever possible. This would ideally result in less level changes and the clarity of alignment of the original baggage platform (as shown below) can be better understood. The currently proposed arrangement of ramps and stairs is not highly resolved, particularly where it approaches Eddy Avenue.
- The encasing of steel columns should be reversed wherever possible in this space.



The definition of the original baggage platform (outlined in red at left) is not as clear in the proposal (right) and should be reviewed. We note that the scheme at right is different to the “current scheme” shown on p.150 of the Non-Aboriginal Heritage Assessment.

## Eddy Plaza and Eddy Avenue

- The desire for more active street frontage is supported. Original shops (including their spiral stairs) should be reinstated.
- The new awning to the original building is well considered. Although the Burra Charter urges for new work to be distinguishable, in this case there may be some merit in simply extending the original awning and valance design as found on the western side. The integrity of the original station design should be maintained in this special place.
- The above suggestion may then provide an interesting counterpoint to the new infill below and the two storey structure on the opposite side of the plaza.

## Plantings

- The Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment should consider further the actual nature of the historic plantings at Central Station. The Trust note the way that the landscaping, particularly the western garden, was an intrinsic part of the original design.
- New plantings offer the opportunity to engage with historic plantings, as well as the wider flora of NSW and indigenous connection to country.



Central Station with its landmark clock tower in 1952, with the western garden and street trees well-defined. (NAA A 1200 L 14553)

### Central Electric Building

- The Trust support removing the current mezzanine in the Central Electric Building to restore the original volume of that space.
- Opportunities to remove the current rooftop accretions to this building should also be explored.

### Conclusion

The National Trust (NSW) genuinely support the vision of the Sydney Terminal Revitalisation Proposal, and understand that this is a rare opportunity to invest in the restoration and renewal of the Sydney Terminal. We hope that our above comments can be utilized to help strike a constructive and complementary balance between both heritage conservation and revitalisation of the site.

The Trust continue to note, however, that the Sydney Terminal Revitalisation Proposal project does not exist in isolation, and that outcomes of this project are intrinsically linked the Central State Significant Precinct Rezoning Proposal, to which we remain fundamentally opposed. The Trust are deeply concerned by the overwhelming impacts of the directly adjoining development proposals, especially the enclosure of the historically open air country platforms, which will forever alter both the overall character of Central Station, as well as specifically changing the heritage and aesthetic value of the main concourse.

To ensure that the Central Station Revitalisation Project reaches its full potential for this important place, the Trust will continue to advocate against the proposed rezoning masterplan development which would have a cumulative major and detrimental impact to the significant cultural landscape of the Central Station Precinct.

Yours sincerely,

David Burdon  
Director, Conservation