



Mosman Parks & Bushland Association

TARONGA ZOO SKY SAFARI

Application Number SSD-46807958

Assessment Type State Significant Development

Development Type Museum, Gardens & Zoos

Local Government Areas Mosman Municipality

Exhibition Start-End Date 24/09/2024 - 21/10/2024

The Mosman Parks & Bushland Association (MPBA) was formed in 1964 to protest against bushland being bulldozed on Bradleys Head, Mosman for the development of a road. Among the founding members of the Association were Joan and Eileen Bradley, (the Bradley sisters) who developed a method of bush regeneration which is still being used today.

The continuing concerns of Mosman Parks & Bushland are the protection of public land, bushland, parks, open space and natural features in the Municipality of Mosman and to encourage the restoration and regeneration of bushland areas in Mosman.

For many years the Association has advocated the retention of views of the harbour foreshores **from the harbour**. We advocated and supported Mosman Council's rezoning of properties within the Mosman Scenic Protection Area to C4 Environmental Living.

Mosman's location on Sydney Harbour, its headlands and its topography, its foreshore recreation areas, its bushland, its parks and National Parks all contribute to the visual amenity of a nationally and internationally recognized icon.

Bradleys Head on which Taronga Zoo is situated is one of those headlands.

OBJECTION

The Sky Safari, as proposed, has a visual Impact on Sydney Harbour that is unacceptable.

MPBA is a genuine admirer of the conservation work of Taronga Zoo and its research. We also appreciate its indigenous consultation, program and staffing.

Engagement with MPBA:

While the Sky Safari project was being developed, MPBA attended three meetings with Zoo personnel. We appreciated that our comments were noted, and that where possible within the scope of planning, they achieved positive results.

However, although there is much to like in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS,) the proposal as now exhibited requires significant change.

Positives

1. Larger gondolas increase accessibility and accommodate more visitors The Association understands the need for larger and more accessible cable cars which will reduce queuing time and will allow the accommodation of prams and wheelchairs.

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2. The proposed route of the new Sky Safari We are very pleased that earlier plans for the route of the Safari were abandoned in favour of the currently proposed route which follows the same route as the retired Sky Safari.
3. The impact on trees has been carefully and responsibly considered. The larger gondolas for prams and wheelchairs necessitate a wider route than that of the old Sky Safari. The loss of trees for the construction of this wider route has been minimised. The retention of the heritage *Araucaria cunninghamii* (Hoop Pines) at Pylon 5 is appreciated. The greatest loss is at the proposed Lower Entrance - 2 *Botryoides* (Southern Mahogany) and a *Banksia Integrifolia*. A further 79 High category trees and 9 low category trees, largely outside the directly affected zone will avoid possible damage if they are properly managed. The loss of trees is further mitigated by replacement plantings of native trees at a 2:1 ration. Remnant bushland at the Southern section near the Lower Entrance has been avoided by the Sky Safari's route. This is a result we had hoped for. Further comments are in the section "Suggestions, Recommendations and further Comments" below.
4. The landscaping plans are sensitive to the need for shade and heat mitigation at the Upper Station where *Angophora costata* and *Banksias* will be the principal plantings. At the Lower Station they will be endemic and will harmonise with the Sydney Coastal Sandstone Foreshores Forest. The intention is to soften the built infrastructure of the arrival station so that it "nestles into the setting".
5. Respect for First Nation inclusion into the design and ambiance.

Negatives

1. The Height of the pylons. The reduction to 6 in the number of pylons (the old safari's number of pylons was 9) is an advantage that is entirely counteracted by the height of the proposed Sky Safari. Pylon 3 is 26.2m, Pylon 4 is 35.7m, Pylon 5 is 36.5m. These will be highly visible when viewed from various points around the Harbour and from the Harbour itself. We understand that the height of a 10-storey building is approximately 33m. The cable and gondolas along the route of the Safari will also be highly visible from the Harbour. Why do the pylons, cable and gondolas need to be so high? Clearance of the heritage listed Hoop Pines may be necessary for their protection, but is the principal objective the provision of key views of Sydney Harbour and the Heads? The visual impact on views from the nation's iconic Sydney Harbour will be highly detrimental. Our suggestions are noted in the section below, "Suggestions, Recommendations and further Comments"
2. The process of Community Engagement
We note the engagement with various stakeholders, and we appreciate the changes brought to the project during the planning process. As previously stated, MPBA appreciated the meetings held with zoo personnel to discuss the project. Discussions were informative and we had the impression that our concerns were heard and noted.
However, we noted the following statement in the EIS at 5.3. Community Engagement to be carried out: **"If the SSDA exhibition coincides with school holidays it would be within DPHI's discretion to extend the exhibition period to ensure maximum community participation."**
The exhibition *did* occur during a school holiday period, and it occurred during a period of local government elections and swearing in, making it impossible for the elected representatives of the Mosman Community to discuss the EIS before the closing date for submissions. MPBA was most disappointed therefore, that our request for an extension of the exhibition period was refused.

3. A temporary negative - Impacts on the Community during construction especially the use of the Athol Wharf Ferry

This temporary problem is not one of MPBA's usual concerns of principle, but we include it because of the difficulties it will create for the community and visitors. It is assumed that the ferry will continue to operate, but regular size buses will not be able to use the turning area at the end of Athol Wharf Road.

- a. The 238 Bus will have to stop at the Upper Entrance with mini busses serving a link service to the ferry.
- b. The shuttle bus idea will add considerable time to regular users of the ferry
- c. The idea that Bus 238 travellers should use the 100 Bus service is ill conceived because the routes are different and have different destinations.
- d. A stated traffic management aim is to encourage future use the 100 bus in preference to the 238 service. This aim is not supported at all. The routes are different, have different destinations and serve different areas of Mosman.
- e. Visitors to the zoo will be equally inconvenienced. A large number of shuttle mini busses to transport visitors as well as regular ferry users to the Upper Entrance will be required.
- f. Members of the public undertaking the Bondi to Manly Walk will be affected. Alternative routes between Sirius Cove and Athol Wharf will require advice, community consultation and signage.

Although it is a stated intention in the EIS to use Zoo land for construction, the public road will have to be used for the transport of construction materials and the removal of demolition materials, particularly during the construction of the Lower Entrance.

Suggestions, Recommendations and further Comments

1. Suggestion for lowering the height of the pylons.

The height of the pylons 4 and 5. While judged to be of Moderate impact in the Visual Impact Assessment, if judged on the overriding importance of views from the Harbour to the bushland setting of its scenic foreshores, they are extremely high and too intrusive.

The reason for the pylon height appears to be the need to clear the twin Hoop Pines. These are special and listed trees, so any pruning must indeed be judicious. However, if the trees could be pruned at a lower level without damaging them, the greater width of cable and gondolas may be able to pass between the trees at that lower level. That would enable a reduction in the height of the pylon.

2. The Management of trees – extreme importance of the Assessor's advice

The Lower Station will be sadly and severely impacted by the loss of the existing large Eucalyptus botryoides. (Tree 468). It is recommended for removal due to its location next to the construction work site. This would be a severe loss for which replacement trees will not compensate until years later. Every attempt should be made to save it.

The 2:1 ratio of the replanting program with semi mature trees is very important to help the Skyway blend into its setting.

The assessor's advice on the management of trees to be retained in the area around the proposed Sky Safari **must** be followed especially during the construction period:

- a. The Arboricultural Method Statement must be applied so as to protect trees potentially subject to damage during construction
- b. Agreement between the arborist and the developer must be reached **before** work begins.
- c. Compliance must be monitored

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- d. These recommendations must also be followed in the implementation of the Landscaping Plan.

3. Biodiversity Report

The essential stipulation that a project ecologist must be assigned to supervise any vegetation clearing and to replace cleared logs and branches is supported.

4. Visual Impact and Design Features

We support the intention to include First Nations Peoples throughout all elements of design and construction of the project. This is to include Gondola Art to support the vision of the journey.

Advertising has no place on the gondolas. It would increase their visual intrusiveness.

5. The Construction Period

As previously stated, this will be lengthy and difficult for the community.

- a. For the sake of residents, construction vehicles should be banned at night, particularly in nearby streets.
- b. The community needs to be kept informed.
- c. The effects of construction on residents' and visitors' travel should be updated regularly. Some suggestions as to how this could be achieved – signage, the zoo website, letterbox drops in areas affected, the Council website when appropriate, the Mosman Daily and where relevant, the Bondi to Manly website.

CONCLUSION

There are many positives to the proposal for a replacement Sky Safari. The Sky Safari will add to visitor enjoyment of the zoo experience and the concept is supported.

Our objection is to the height of the pylons which have an unacceptable effect on our nationally and internationally significant Sydney Harbour.

Mosman Parks & Bushland appreciated being involved in meetings with the project team. There are further decisions to be made – hours of operation, sunset and sunrise tours, cost of tickets and whether the ferry price could be combined. We would be happy to be invited to further discussions when they take place.



Kate Eccles OAM
President