



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 14/05/2025 – 10/6/2025

OBJECTION

The Mosman Parks & Bushland Association (MPBA) was formed in 1964 to protest against bushland being destroyed on Bradleys Head, Mosman. The Bradley sisters, Joan and Eileen, were among its founding members. Their method of bush regeneration, “Bringing back the Bush” continues to be widely practiced in Mosman and the world.

The continuing objectives 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.

In our submission to Taronga Zoo’s Sky Safari Application in 2024, MPBA stated that *“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.”*

Re-exhibition of State Significant Development - Taronga Zoo’s Sky Safari has not ameliorated our earlier objections. Our concerns are for the preservation of views from Sydney Harbour which we prioritise over Taronga’s Sky Safari.

The Legal Framework of the Application

1. NSW Statutory Planning Framework

Taronga’s Response to Submissions and Amendment Report 3.5.4 states that “the visual impacts proposed are consistent with the relevant parts of the planning framework and are compatible with the scenic character values of this part of Sydney Harbour” “and therefore concludes that no further mitigation is required to minimise visual impacts”.

We question whether the Development Application complies with State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021 (Biodiversity and Conservation SEPP).

Not all of the relevant sections of Chapter 6 of this SEPP have been considered

6.4 Heritage conservation in Sydney Harbour

6.52 (f) development near a heritage item, including development that—

(i) may have an impact on the setting of the heritage item, including by affecting a significant view to or from the item

(iii) will otherwise have an adverse impact on the heritage significance of the heritage item.

MPBA submits that nearby heritage places on Sydney Harbour will be affected by the development of the highly visible Sky Safari, and that there will be an adverse effect on Sydney Harbour itself.

2. EPBC Act

The view to the zoo from the World Heritage Opera House should be considered. The movement of the gondolas on the Sky Safari at night would be particularly egregious.

Merits of the Application

Sydney Harbour is treated with respect by the NSW Statutory Planning Framework.

The zoo and its slopes are part of the continuous vegetated foreshores of the northern Sydney Harbour landscape. The pylons, cables and moving gondolas of the proposed Sky Safari will tower above the tree canopy, interrupting and intruding upon this visual harmony.

The fleeting views (mountains to the Heads) that the application promotes in its report, do not compensate for the visual scar on the Sydney Harbour landscape. The Sky Safari will be seen from many harbour vantage points and from the water.

The Harbour should have pre-eminence over the zoo's ambition to create a tourist attraction that will raise money.

1. Visual Impact of the Sky Safari ride

The visual impact of the Sky Safari from Sydney Harbour itself and from vantage points around the Harbour is our greatest concern.

i. The Height of the Pylons and in particular Pylon No 5 – approximately the height of a 10 storey building. The Design Changes to meet the requirements of the cable car contractor affect the design of the Pylon 5, providing additional structural support. Unfortunately, they do not lower the height of Pylon 5. We are not so concerned about the increase to the heights of Pylon 1 and 2, as they will not be so visible from the Harbour.

ii. The Sky Safari involves a cable as well and up to 25 gondolas. The movement of the gondolas as they travel up and down will increase the visibility from the harbour and harbour vantage points.

iii. The Hoop Pines. Mosman Parks & Bushland is always reluctant to lose trees. The Hoop Pines, being Heritage trees and historically significant plantings would be particularly missed. MPBA had hoped that some additional pruning may have allowed the larger gondolas to pass between them. That would have resulted in a lower Sky Safari that would not have such a detrimental effect on views from the harbour. But if there is a choice between retaining the Hoop Pines and retaining a lasting unscarred green canopy, we would be prepared to sacrifice the trees.

2. The Lower Station and its visual impact

This is a further loss to the Harbour.

Additional advices from the cable car contractor have necessitated changes to the Lower Station. We believe that the footprint remains the same except for an added access ramp, that extends further west. The new design appears larger than the proposed station exhibited in 2024, and it is certainly larger than the current building.

It is a further intrusive element and does not succeed in holding to the objective of maintaining the dominance of landscape over built form.

It is a compounding effect of the large gondolas and the high Sky Safari.

3. Additional loss of many more trees to accommodate the Lower Station

More excavation is required for the larger Lower Station, and this necessitates the loss of many more trees.

The loss of trees is regrettable in itself, but lacking trees, the Lower Station will be all the more visible from the harbour, albeit temporarily. Extremely regrettable is the loss of habitat for our increasingly rare fauna.

4. Lighting (Appendix K) on the Safari at night creates a further intrusive impact on the Harbour

The gondolas will operate during normal zoo opening hours and it is proposed to activate the site by offering early morning and evening sessions and occasional special events which could last until midnight.

Lighting on the Safari and on the Lower Station will be a visual intrusion on dark headlands and harbour. It will also affect any remaining nocturnal fauna.

Inadequate and Misleading aspects of the Development Application

The Visual Impact Assessment is very disappointing. It should be remedied before it is accepted.

Shortcomings of Visual Appendices (L1 and L2)

- i. Lack of gondolas in the Visual Appendices images
- ii. Lack of images of the gondolas at night to show the effect on the harbour
- iii. Insufficient images showing views from the harbour and vantage points that look towards the zoo. (There are more images from within the zoo. These are less important than images from the harbour)
- iv. No attempt to illustrate the visual impact of moving gondolas

Conclusion

The application should be rejected.

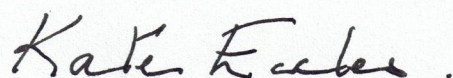
Taronga zoo is a loved icon and a tourist destination, but surely a way can be found to reduce queuing time, and to provide an enjoyable means of transport for its patrons, including those

with large prams and wheelchairs, while also respecting and honouring that other Sydney and Australian icon, our wonderful Sydney Harbour.

Unfortunately, the zoo's stated aim to create a tourist attraction – a ride providing a momentary view from the mountains to the Heads – has resulted in a design of such height and flow on effects such as the large Lower Station and further loss of trees, that it will have an adverse impact on views from significant vantage points around the harbour and from the harbour itself.

Further assessment is needed to create a Sky Safari that will allow an enjoyable ride for all, while reducing the height of pylons, cable and circulating gondolas, reducing the size of the lower station and saving some trees.

Surely, we can retain the beauty of our harbour.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kate Eccles" followed by a period.

Kate Eccles OAM, President