

Attention: Megan Fu
Major Projects and Assessments
Department of Planning and Environment
GPO Box 39, Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Ms Fu

SSI 6792 Northern Beaches Hospital (Stage 2)

As someone who commented on Stage 1 of this project and, has been a long-term supporter of the Northern Beaches Hospital Project (the Project), Stage 2 is a disappointing addition to the Project's long, fraught history.

Essentially, the architect has delivered what can only be described as the "bog-standard contemporary glass box". In a report for the ISS Institute and the Victorian Government, Elisabeth Coleman wrote:

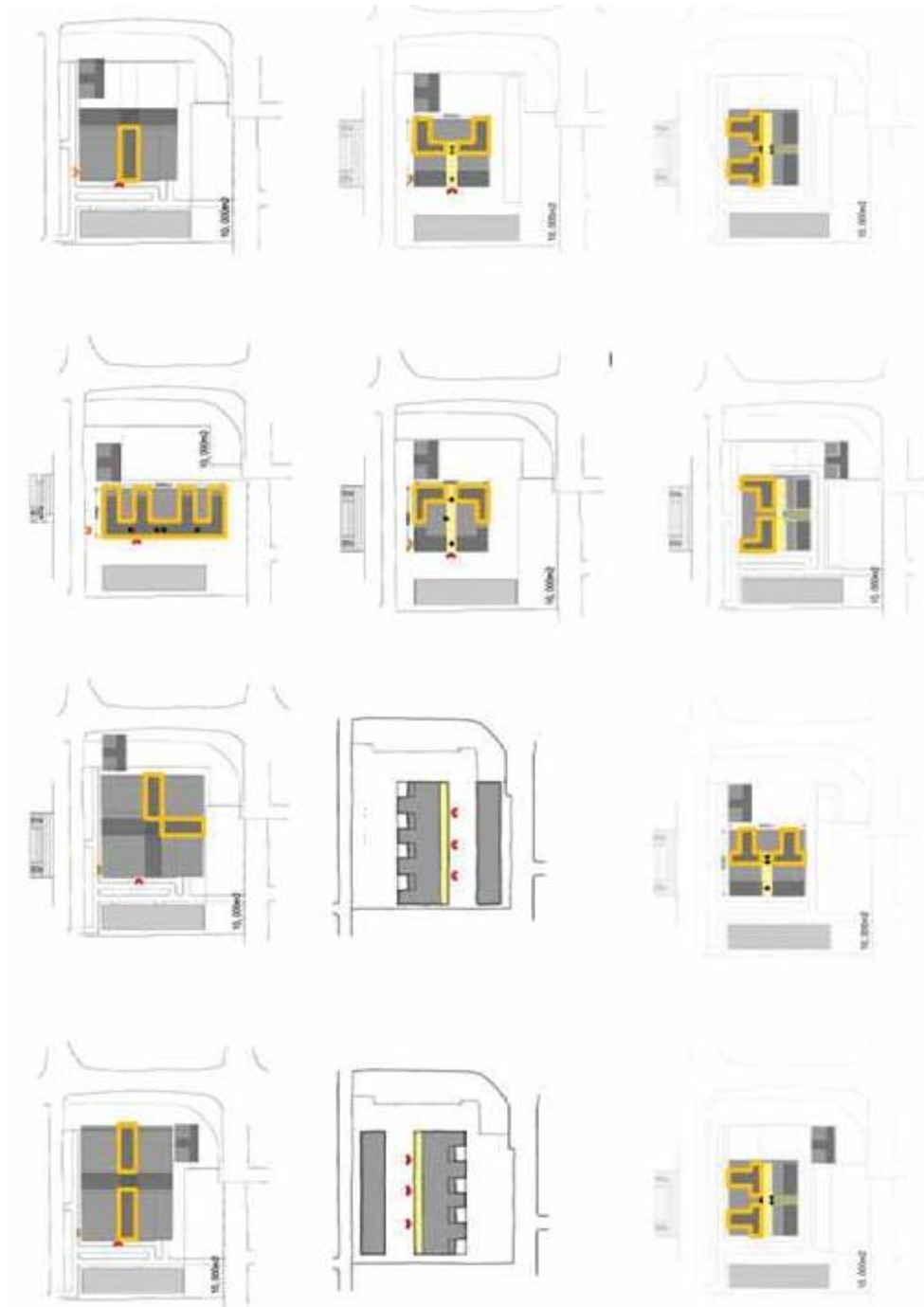
The use of light and the requirement for flexibility in the spaces we use, mandate the use of glass as a functional and expressive medium that can be used in a wide range of contexts. As glass is used increasingly as a structural element in the built environment, the need for high-quality engineered components becomes paramount. That such components also be designed aesthetically is equally important in an overall design concept.¹

There are many tall glass buildings in Sydney, few if any being remarkable for their aesthetic qualities. Furthermore, an official Commonwealth Government website speaks of contemporary architecture as emphasising "the practical minimalism of Australian modernism".² This project is another example. Sadly, it is also clear that in the design stage, the building configuration amounted to Lego-bloc-like variations on a theme, as shown by this exhibit extracted from the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS):

¹ Elisabeth Coleman (Fellowship funded by Skills Victoria, Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, Victorian Government), *Contemporary Architectural Glass: The Australian Context*, International Specialised Skills Institute Inc., ISS Institute Inc. © 2010, page 9 (17 of 78 PDF) <http://issinstitute.org.au/wp-content/media/2011/04/ISS-FEL-REPORT-E-COLEMAN-Low-Res.pdf> as at 13 December 2014

² **Australian architecture**, <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/austn-architecture> as at 13 December 2014

Exhibit A³



However, we can (and should) expect better. Hospitals can be both functional and ascetically pleasing, as well as win the odd award. After only a short amount of on-line research, two facilities were identified thanks to variations on the search terms “beautiful hospital architecture”. These are:

³ The Northern Beaches Hospital (Stage 2), State Significant Infrastructure Application and Environmental Impact Statement - Ssi_6792, 13 November 2014, page 20 (30 of 108 PDF) https://majorprojects.affinitylive.com/public/c94f108f9ebfa01c6c8d9af30b27234d/0_EIS.pdf as at 13 December 2014

McKay-Dee Hospital in Ogden, Utah⁴ and;

New North Zealand Hospital, Denmark⁵

These facilities are exceptional and you would have thought that a green-fields site would have given an inspired and talented architect the opportunity to design something both functional and appealing. From the Utah example:

Circulation Spine

Imagine knowing where you are and where you are going from the moment you enter the hospital's sliding glass doors. Functionally, the circulation spine provides varied expansion and facilitates wayfinding for hospital veterans and new guests. Shortly after the new building opened, it became the place to be, the popular destination for community members. Because of this surge in popularity, McKay-Dee expanded soon after, and the circulation spine facilitated a smooth addition.

Natural Inspiration

The Wasatch Mountains grace the surrounding landscape and serve as living art – visible through patient windows. The community, patients and staff are able to enjoy the outdoor gardens and walking path. A decade later, these elements have proven effective in patient and staff stress reduction. McKay-Dee is a healing environment. Patients have written to them expressing their appreciation for the new environment, many stating, "it doesn't feel like a hospital."⁶

⁴ *America's Most Beautiful Hospital: 12 Years in the Making*, August 14, 2014, <http://www.hksinc.com/insight/americas-most-beautiful-hospital-12-years-in-the-making/> as at 13 December 2014

⁵ *Welcome to New North Zealand Hospital - World-class architects to design the hospital of the future in Denmark!*, <http://www.regionh.dk/nythospitalnordsjaelland/menu/English/> as at 13 December 2014

⁶ Refer to footnote 4, above. The photograph is from the same website, as at 14 December 2014

Picture: The view from McKay-Dee Hospital in Ogden



Meanwhile, the example from Denmark is also outstanding. I note in particular, these comments on its website:

A pavilion in the forest

The new hospital will gather all functions of a hospital in one organic building, shaped like a clover leaf.

The hospital will take the form of a pavilion in the middle of a forest south of Hillerød, North Zealand and will be both inviting and carefully planned down to every logistical and clinical function.

Unlike traditional hospitals, the architecture will be kept on a human scale and adapted to the surrounding landscape. At its highest point, the hospital will only have a modest four floors. The design is flexible and can be adapted to future expansion, either in 2020 or 2050.⁷

⁷ Refer to footnote 5 above. The picture on the next page comes from the same website as at 14 December 2014

Picture: New North Zealand Hospital design, shaped like a clover leaf



The Denmark design is also notable for its deliberate attempt to be sympathetic to its surrounds, bringing the natural environment into many spaces. By contrast, our project leaves a green corridor along Wakehurst Parkway which (when compared with how the Danes do things) has no intrinsic relationship to the facility being built. The contrast is demonstrated below:

Exhibit B⁸



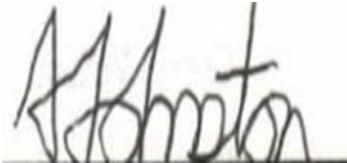
The two pictures on this page speak to the great differences in design and, the use (or not) of green spaces; not to mention other architectural possibilities.

It is truly sad that the northern beaches do not look like we will receive our own “Pavilion of the Forest” with the construction of the Northern Beaches

⁸ The Northern Beaches Hospital (Stage 2), State Significant Infrastructure Application and Environmental Impact Statement, Figure 07: Surrounding Land Uses, page 8 (19 of 108 PDF)

Hospital. After what it has taken to get the project here, I had hopes for an award-winning meeting of ascetics, function and technology, which was gentle on the urban landscape and the people within it. Yet, here is presented another glass, concrete and steel box.⁹ I would recommend urgent revisions of the Stage 2 EIS, drawing on the design principles of the two facilities (and any others you may come across) that are described above.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Adam Johnston', written over a horizontal line.

Adam Johnston

14 December 2014

⁹ See generally, *Appendix B Drawings (including Site Plan and Precinct Plans)*, <https://majorprojects.affinitylive.com/public/915e9b5cbe2c0615b87951ba7cace52b/Appendix%20B%20Drawings%20%28inc.%20Site%20Plan%20and%20Precinct%20Plans%29.pdf> and also *Appendix B Hospital Building Plans* <https://majorprojects.affinitylive.com/public/0d6a67141def680d629f97e61593c12b/Appendix%20B%20Hospital%20Building%20Plans.pdf> as at 14 December 2014