

## **THE SYDNEY MODERN ART GALLERY SSDA**

**THE FOLLOWING IS LIST OF CONCERNS THAT WERE EXPRESSED BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FOUNDATION AND FRIENDS OF THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS IN EMAILED CORRESPONDENCE TO MYSELF AND OTHER "FRIENDS" ON 24.11.2017**

- No loss of green space is acceptable.
- The size of the footprint – landgrab!
- The visual impact on the precinct - particularly the vistas down from Art Gallery Road, Mrs Macquarie's Road and from Woolloomooloo Gate.
- Tree removals, plantings and relocations – There are 220 trees in the development footprint. 140 will be discarded. 72 will be retained in their current location and 8 will be relocated. The SSDA states that 265 new trees will be planted. Of concern is a large number of the trees that will be removed opposite Woolloomooloo Gates on Mrs Macquarie's Road to make room for the Pavilion.
- Building heights and the proximity of these buildings to the road. The building on the Land Bridge (Entrance Plaza) and the adjoining building to the north opposite Woolloomooloo Gate (Entrance Pavilion) have a setback of respectively 5.75m and 9.95m from the road. The Entrance Pavilion fronts Mrs Macquarie's Road and has a height of between 7m and 8m above the road.
- Seawater Heat Exchange System – would require easements as the ducting and pump chamber cut through Trust land with impacts on Trust land from the pipe trenches.
- Round-a-bout outside Woolloomooloo Gate.
- The significant disruption to the Garden and Domain during construction.
- Loss of parking spaces outside the Gallery (owned and controlled by the Trust) – not only less parking for visitors to the Garden but a significant revenue loss to Trust when Government funding for the Trust's operations is reducing.
- Mrs Macquarie's Road / Art Gallery Road provide the only vehicular access to Royal Botanic Garden Sydney and a large part of the Domain and as such, are of high importance to the Trust. The plan seeks to transfer ownership and / or control of a very significant part of that road to the Art Gallery.
- No public transport requirement study or plan.

**I STRONGLY DISAGREE WITH THESE CONCERNS AND BELOW IS MY RESPONSE SENT TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FRIENDS OF THE GARDENS ON 07.12.2017**

**TO: THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS SYDNEY**

I have reviewed the list of issues contained in your email of 24.11.17 and offer the following comments or implied questions referring to each of the items in the order presented in your correspondence: -

- It is inevitable that green space be lost when undertaking a significant new development such as this and there must always be a debate. I believe that the scheme presented by SANAA, the architects, has demonstrably recognised this imperative and responded to their brief in a way that restricts the footprint of the new Sydney Modern to that which is essential in providing the required facility and delivering its related functionality;
- The footprint formed by any new building is determined by the floor space demanded by the brief and the subsequent design decisions made relating to the number of floors over which the required space is to be provided. A smaller footprint simply equates to more floors and consequently greater height. The scheme presented is far from a landgrab and is a balanced response to the need to minimise the loss of green space while addressing the need to respect the integrity of the existing Art Gallery envelop with an appropriate curtilage;

- The significance of the visual impact of the new Sydney Modern in a Woolloomooloo Gate context is a debatable matter given the impact of those RBG buildings currently lining the Western side of Mrs Macquarie Road. Many, including myself, will enjoy and admire the view of the architectural excellence presented by the new Sydney Modern as we emerge from the RBG through the Woolloomooloo Gates;
- The removal and/or relocation of existing trees is always an emotional and emotive issue. It would be wonderful if architectural excellence could be created without the need to tamper with the environment. That is an unrealistic expectation. Where a demonstrable need exists and a socially and culturally beneficial outcome may be achieved then balance becomes the yardstick in the debate. It is my view that the proposal displays that balance and my calculations suggest that we will have a significant net gain in the number of trees after the project is complete and the new landscaping is established;
- The height of the new Sydney Modern above Mrs Macquarie Road and the proposed setbacks are, in my view, reasonable. The pavilion is an open structure and the plaza is transparent. Views beyond the development are exposed and, as mentioned above, the integrity of the existing AGNSW is preserved. I am also concerned that you fail to note that the proposed heights respect the existing tree canopy in the RBG;
- The creation and use of easements to facilitate the ecologically sound Seawater Heat Exchange System is a transient event which when complete will have minimal lasting impact of the RBG;
- I am a resident of Macquarie Street adjacent to the Sydney Opera House and am familiar with the chaos that tour buses can create for traffic circulation. The installation of a roundabout at or near Woolloomooloo Gate should be a welcome infrastructure improvement. We would also welcome a roundabout in Macquarie street adjacent to what was previously a turning bay for similar infrastructure reasons;
- Disruption during construction is a fact of life. It facilitates improvement and progress which is difficult to oppose. Local Government will implement appropriate controls;
- I have no understanding of what impact the loss of parking may have on the RBG. Parking fees there are currently among the most expensive in Sydney and parking there is only of benefit to those who can afford to use it;
- The importance of the control of Art Gallery Road by the RBG escapes me. I would expect that current access provisions to the RBG would not be impacted by any change of ownership, if that is the intention;
- Finally, I have no doubt that a public transport study will be undertaken. If none is currently planned then it should be!

I would be happy for you to circulate these comments to other Friends of the RBG in order to provide a balanced view. I recall that there were many opposing views when the Calyx was in its embryonic stage however most of them have dissipated now that we can enjoy the demonstrable benefits offered by that facility.

Kind regards,  
**Danny Burtenshaw**