

14 December 2017

To Whom it May Concern,

RE: Development Application SSD 6471 – Sydney Modern, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in support of the Art Gallery of New South Wales's recent *Sydney Modern Project* State Significant Development Application. This submission expresses strong support for this major project from the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales, the Art Gallery's membership body.

The Art Gallery of New South Wales proposes to undertake a major expansion of the existing Art Gallery adjacent to the Phillip Precinct of The Domain. The expansion, proposed as a separate, stand-alone building, is located north of the existing Gallery, partly extending over the Eastern Distributor land bridge and includes a disused Navy fuel bunker located to the north east of this land bridge.

The new building comprises a new entry plaza, new exhibition spaces, shop, food and beverage facilities, visitor amenities, art research and education spaces, new roof terraces and landscaping and associated site works and infrastructure, including loading and service areas, services infrastructure and an ancillary seawater heat exchange system.

About the Society

The Art Gallery Society (Society) was established in 1953 to support the Art Gallery of New South Wales (Gallery), including through providing member services, acquiring works of art and raising community awareness for the Gallery. The separately constituted organisation has employees led by an Executive Director who is appointed by an independent governing council. The Society works very closely with the Gallery to achieve positive outcomes for the Gallery. The Society is a very successful museum membership program with approximately 30,000 members.

The Society collaborates with the Gallery in many important areas. The membership program has built up a large body of enthusiastic, loyal supporters who actively participate in the life of the institution. They engage with the Gallery's art collections, temporary exhibitions and wider museum programs, and should also be viewed as keen advocates for the institution. Additionally, the Society provides thousands of hours of volunteer support for the Gallery each year.

The Society mounts wide-ranging, stimulating and relevant member programs and events, which are coordinated with the Gallery. These also help to attract new members. The programs include members' exhibition previews and viewings; art lectures, courses and exhibition talks; art-making workshops for children and adults; organised visits to commercial galleries, and art-focused interstate and international

tours led by art experts. These programs are designed to complement the Gallery's own education and public programs, which address the broader community.

For over six decades the Society has raised funds for the acquisition of works of art for the permanent collection, contributing over 250 works to the collection valued in the many millions of dollars. It supports selected Gallery programs, including the popular *Art After Hours* Wednesday evening programs that make the Gallery accessible to different audiences, and provides financial support to Gallery exhibitions and publications, as well as continuing financial support for the professional development of Gallery staff.

The Future

The Art Gallery Society is very supportive of the *Sydney Modern Project* because it will help secure the future success of the Gallery. The Gallery is the State's premier art museum and one of the country's foremost cultural institutions. However the Gallery is constrained by its spatial capacity to mount major international art exhibitions and to display more of its outstanding art collections.

The Society supports SANAA's innovative design concept for the new building. The proposed public access to the new pavilion roof terraces and gardens, as well as the new art garden linking the current building to the new building, will be very attractive and restful spaces for all visitors. The Society also supports the proposed lift access site at the base of the Woolloomooloo steps; this will greatly improve access for all visitors to the Gallery. Additionally the Society would support unimpeded, easy and efficient pedestrian access to the new building and the Royal Botanical Garden from the Woolloomooloo area.

The *Sydney Modern Project* will help increase cultural tourism by attracting more regional, interstate and overseas visitors to Sydney and NSW. It will offer visitors free access to outdoor spaces and interlinked terraces with vantage points over Sydney Harbour. It will increase art education opportunities for more NSW children, students K-tertiary, adults and people with disadvantages.

An anticipated audience growth across the two sites (i.e., the existing Gallery and the new *Sydney Modern* site) could greatly assist the Society to grow the membership. Our ambition is to significantly increase and diversify the membership. We seek to increase member awareness and appreciation for the visual arts and foster a deeper connection with the Gallery.

We aim to make membership relevant to more people across NSW. A breakdown of the current membership reveals approximately 20% of the Society's members live out of Sydney and predominantly in regional NSW. The Society's membership profile is changing and now better reflects the NSW population.

One of the most valued benefits of membership is having access to the Members Lounge. As part of the *Sydney Modern Project* the current Members Lounge will be redesigned and enlarged, which will greatly assist the Society to attract new

members. The Society is in discussions with the Gallery to increase the size and enhance the members' amenities and facilities in the future Members Lounge.

In conclusion, the Art Gallery Society supports the Sydney Modern Project because it will enable the people of NSW to enjoy more outstanding international art exhibitions; will offer increased display space for the Gallery's significant permanent collection; allow the Society to grow a more diverse membership; attract greater cultural tourism to NSW, and ensure the Gallery remains vibrant and relevant for many generations to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. The Society is very pleased to support the *Sydney Modern Project* and looks forward to this important expansion opening in the 150th anniversary year of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, in 2021.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Ladd
President
Art Gallery Society of NSW

Ron Ramsey
Executive Director
Art Gallery Society of NSW