

## **Australian Chamber Orchestra Submission to: Concept State Specific Development Application for Walsh Bay Arts Precinct**

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### **1. About the Australian Chamber Orchestra**

***“one of the most precise, cutting-edge virtuoso string ensembles to be found anywhere in the world.”***  
**Chicago Tribune, 2014**

Founded in 1975, the Australian Chamber Orchestra is recognised as one of the finest chamber orchestras in the world. It is renowned for the integrity and excellence of its programming, and the loyalty and enthusiasm of its audiences and other supporters. A dedicated troupe of diverse musicians, the ACO performs all over the world, from red-dust regional centres of Australia to New York night clubs, from Australian capital cities to the world’s most prestigious concert halls, including Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw, London’s Wigmore Hall and Vienna’s Musikverein. The ACO’s dedication and musicianship has created warm relationships with such celebrated soloists as Emmanuel Pahud, Steven Isserlis, Dawn Upshaw, Imogen Cooper, Christian Lindberg, Joseph Tawadros and Pieter Wispelwey. The ACO is renowned for collaborating with artists from diverse genres, including singers Tim Freedman, Neil Finn, Katie Noonan, Paul Capsis, Danny Spooner and Barry Humphries and visual artists Michael Leunig, Bill Henson, Shaun Tan and Jon Frank. The ACO has recorded for the world’s top labels. Recent recordings have won three consecutive ARIA Awards and documentaries featuring the ACO have been shown on television worldwide and won awards at film festivals on four continents.

The ACO currently presents more than 85 concerts a year in venues all over Australia and attracts very high audience numbers year on year. National audience reach since 2009 has grown from 93,000 to 118,000 per year. The ACO has 10,000 subscribers who purchase year-long season tickets every year and attracts many tens of thousands of single ticket buyers to its events. The ACO has collaborated successfully with such companies as the Sydney Dance Company, the Sydney Festival and the Sydney Opera House and has embraced new technologies, especially through the creation of ACO VIRTUAL – an immersive, interactive digital installation of the ACO which has toured to regional and metropolitan centres all over Australia. The ACO’s Education Program reaches students in primary and secondary schools, tertiary music students and young professionals seeking experience to enter the profession. An adult education series of pre-concert talks attracts thousands of members of the public keen to gain insight into the music played by the ACO.

The ACO has an annual budget of \$15M. It receives base funding from the Federal and NSW Governments (total \$2M), earns ticket and concert revenue of \$7.5M, sponsorship, donation and fundraising income of \$5M and interest on its reserves of \$0.5M. Following a series of financially successful years since 2003, the ACO has built up a solid reserve base to provide stability and certainty in its planning and commitments.

### **2. Support for Arts NSW’s Proposal for the Development of the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct**

The Australian Chamber Orchestra is highly supportive of Arts NSW’s proposal to develop an integrated performing arts and cultural precinct within an enhanced public domain at Walsh Bay and sees great potential in the Proposal’s capacity to expand and strengthen the existing cluster of cultural institutions and attractions along Sydney’s ‘Arts and Cultural Ribbon’ and complement the other cultural initiatives in surrounding areas, including those proposed at nearby Barangaroo (currently under development).

Part of Arts NSW's proposed Walsh Bay Arts Precinct includes the transformation of Pier 2/3 to accommodate the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Bell Shakespeare and Australian Theatre for Young People as well as the retention of a large 'raw' space in Pier 2/3 for events, festivals and functions.

As well as supporting Arts NSW's overall proposal for the development of Walsh Bay Arts Precinct, the ACO is particularly supportive of the proposed refurbishment and expansion of facilities within the existing structure of Pier 2/3 to include:

- Office workshop and rehearsal spaces
- A performance space for ACO in the northern end of the first floor of Wharf 2/3
- A performance space for ATYP and a large rehearsal space with performance capacity for Bell Shakespeare on the first floor of Pier 2/3
- Centrally located ground floor entry foyers with support facilities
- Additional public outdoor space at the first floor level
- A large flexible open "raw" space at the northern end of Pier 2/3 ground floor that will accommodate a range of mixed arts and commercial uses.

### **3. The ACO Music Centre**

The ACO is seeking a new home to enable it to meet the demand for its growing education and community engagement programs. In order to meet the projected growth of the ACO's education and outreach programs, the ACO has committed to relocate to new premises – the ACO Music Centre – which will be able to stage public performances and accommodate a public access program which will bring first class musical and educational experiences to people of all ages, ranging from primary school children, through secondary and tertiary levels, professional development and adult education.

The proposed refurbishment and expansion of facilities within the existing structure of Pier 2/3 would enable the NSW Government and the ACO to create the ACO Music Centre.

The ACO Music Centre will be built around a 500-seat music auditorium, with excellent acoustics, video projection, sound recording and editing facilities. The ACO Music Centre will include a permanent installation of ACO VIRTUAL (the ACO's interactive digital installation) Backstage areas will accommodate rehearsal and practice facilities for the ACO's musicians, and a music and sound library, box-office and administration.

The year-long program in the ACO Music Centre will include full-scale concerts by the ACO, the Sydney home of A<sup>C</sup>O<sub>2</sub> (our next generation ensemble), the home of the ACO Academy (our national youth chamber orchestra), chamber concerts, solo recitals, open rehearsals, workshops, pre-concert talks, lectures and films about music.

The ACO Music Centre will develop an international reputation for creativity, innovation and daring through the kind of programming which has become the ACO's hallmark. It will be a magnet for creative artists, aspiring young musicians and general music-lovers and is anticipated to attract over 150,000 visitors a year to the proposed Walsh Bay Arts Precinct.