

Director Environment and Planning Department
Mosman Council

RE: Taronga Conservation Society Australia (TCSA) – Development Application for an “Australian Habitat and Taronga Wildlife Retreat” (AHTWR)

Dear Mr Covich,

I write to you regarding my concerns for the ongoing Capital Development of Taronga Zoo, specifically the Taronga Conservation Society Australia’s (TCSA) plan to build an Australian Habitat and Taronga Wildlife Retreat (AHTWR). The proposal is currently on Public Exhibition at NSW Planning and Environment, and I encourage your department to lodge its requirements in relation to the applications misleading nature, departures made by the TCSA from their approved Taronga Zoo Master Plan 2000 (TZMP2000) and Urban Planning ramifications for your Local Area, before submissions close on the 23 May 2016.

As the former Development Manager for the Zoological Parks Board I understand the constraints of developing the Mosman site and the significant impacts of TCSA’s piecemeal development on Traffic, Parking and Emergency evacuation of patrons and residents away from the area. The proposal by TCSA represents a further degradation of the Zoo’s environment and more importantly a reduction to your local area’s amenity and safety. Specifically:

Misleading Development Application

Artist’s impressions and most drawings show double storey residential buildings hiding behind vegetation (referred to by TCSA as “pods” to deliberately misrepresent the impacts of the proposed development on the foreshore’s view corridors) but in fact the Architectural Sections show 5 residential/hotel buildings as high as the Taronga Centre, some 4 storeys high (only shown once in the application). An attempt by TCSA to reduce the perceived negative environmental impacts of the proposal. The glazed buildings will reflect across the harbour and at night there will be increased light pollution.

https://majorprojects.affinitylive.com/public/af4225503ee3638c96dd6d888b5ece6e/Appendix%20D_Architectural%20Plans_reduced_Part5.pdf

The TCSA has ignored approved planning guidelines and the potential impacts on Traffic and parking to build a AHTWR. The TCSA proposal aims to further privatise another significant area of what is a Public Zoo by restricting access only to high paying customers (National Zoo Canberra is charging between \$1000 - \$2000 per night for a their recently completed Wildlife Retreat - Jamala Lodge). The AHTWR will be licenced and a 24/7 365 days a year operation which the TCSA claim will have no adverse impact on local traffic or parking.

https://majorprojects.affinitylive.com/public/bfdb9408ce2dec79be61249cfedfed2/Appendix%20I_Operational%20Management%20Plan.pdf

Traffic and Parking

Please refer a portion of the Parsons Brinckerhoff (PB), “Traffic Transport & Parking Strategy” April 2003 which is one of a suite of approved Planning Documents underpinning TZMP2000. The PB document determines the site’s future full development and parking requirements based on a maximum of 1.4m visitors/annum in 2013, yet the TCSA’s application claims current visitation is 1.7m visitors/annum. That is

a 25% increase with no further parking/traffic studies being undertaken. Yet the TCSA claims their development will have no impact on parking as its patrons will use the existing parking station “out of hours”. The operation plan and community consultation documents however acknowledge that visitors will have “a 24 hour” experience in a 24/7, 365 day a year operation. The PB report also acknowledges that the TCSA would need to absorb Zoo staff parking within its own site once Mosman Council installs parking metres along Bradley’s head Road, which I believe has now occurred. The TCSA has not responded by providing more parking in its application for “roar and snore”; its application for its New Institute of Science and Learning, nor for this application, the Australian Wildlife Retreat. Nor has it acknowledged the collective impacts of commercial activities such as, parking meters on Bradley head Road, Twilight at Taronga and this year’s VIVID Lights Festival. The TCSA has removed its Master Plan documentation from its website and does not reference important planning documents such as the PB, Traffic Transport and Parking Strategy report, as doing so would exposes its obligations as a State Agency. I can provide a full copy of the PB report and TZMP2000, should you be interested.

With 37.8 full time staff and 100 guests in residence, proposed at any one time in a 24/7, 365 day a year operation, the AHTWR development will have a negative impact on traffic parking and emergency evacuation, but as the relevant documents are not held by the Department of Planning and Environment, nor publically available, a proper assessment of the developments environmental impacts, nor the collective impacts of all the developments mentioned above, and outside the TZMP2000, cannot be made.

In closing the TCSA’s Development Application is a complete departure from all the State Government’s approved planning documents for the site and should not be allowed to proceed until such time as a thorough and new re assessment for the whole Zoo site is prepared and approved by the Department of Planning and Environment. An approved Master Plan and Implementation Study to replace TZMP2000 is long overdue and piecemeal development of the site should no longer be allowed until the real environmental impact on local amenity are demonstrated by the applicant.

Responses by your Department can be made at the following Department of Planning & Environment Web Page. The State Significant Development Application number is SSD15_7419. The planning office in charge of the assessment is Mr Alexander Scott who can be contacted on Ph. 02 9228 2096 and Email alexander.scott@planning.nsw.gov.au
http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=7419

Yours Sincerely

Mr Eddie Swat
Certified Practicing Planner (CPP) Planning Institute of Australia