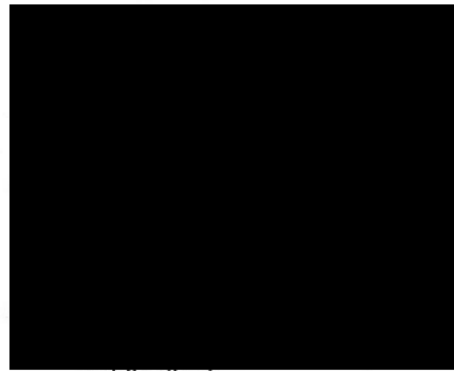


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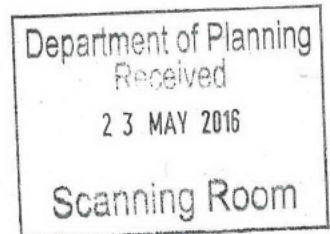
publication)

Director - Key Sites Assessments
Planning Services
Department of Planning and Environment
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

Attention : Alexander Scott

Development Application : SSD 7419
Taronga Zoo, Bradley's Head Road, Mosman

Applicant : Taronga Conservation Society Australia



Dear Mr Scott

I object to this application for permanent tourist accommodation within Taronga Zoo.

I have the greatest regard for Taronga Zoo and the conservation work it undertakes, both within Australia and in other areas of need. It certainly seems that the animals are remarkably well cared for, with constant concern for their well-being. The Shows and keeper talks are excellent, and there is a wide range of interest and educational opportunities for the public. Injured wildlife is nursed back to health and then released. I have been a Zoo Parent for some time, and have donated particularly to the Tasmanian Devil research.

However this proposal seems to be making the perceived expectations of paying overnight guests the priority.

My objections:

1. The creation of human accommodation clearly comes at a cost to potential expansion of animal accommodation / facilities.

Obviously there is a very finite amount of space at Taronga Zoo both for now and for the future.

3.2 (pp 18-19) : "The proposal includes the demolition of . . back of house structures including breeding and animal holding areas . . ." This is just the start. Of course there will be significant further loss of opportunity for increased / improved animal facilities if this proposal goes ahead. No space should be taken for permanent buildings for human accommodation.

2. The welfare of animals within the new Australia Habitat.

Clearly there must be challenges for animals that are part of this new exhibit. Photos on the 'Information Board : Showcasing Australian Wildlife' show animals being held. The documents from Green and Dale Associates focus on the concept of the Wildlife Retreat experience for people, but do

*Attachment Australia Habitat + Wildlife Retreat
— Concept map.*

*1/4
(+ attachment)*

give details of the environments for the display animals.

By way of example the Koala Guidelines give quite definite requirements for the well-being of the koalas (as you would naturally expect), including **the importance of Back of House Facilities and a reference to the need for them to have privacy from public viewing.** There is obviously a great need for Back of House / freedom from viewing areas for zoo animals. The concept map does not give any indication of this, nor indeed any animal housing.

I am interested to see that one of the feature animals will be freshwater eels. This is of particular interest in my area given that eels live in the ponds of Centennial Park, and to breed make a remarkable journey to New Caledonia. Clearly construction work for the SELR is going on along part of the route of their journey. The construction company claims that there will be only 'minimal disruption' to the eels, but there is nothing concrete to support their confidence - no written report, no plans are available to be shown to the public.

It has seemed during the SELR work that wildlife is a very disposable commodity. There must be a risk that Guest expectations and demands could place pressure on zoo animals. While I have every faith in Zoo staff, this planning document puts little focus on this.

3. The very large size of the proposed permanent tourist accommodation buildings.

It is impossible to see that the proposal offers 'a small building footprint'. I do not see that spreading the accommodation into a larger number of buildings makes for a reduced built footprint.

The development comprises :

- * 5 connected accommodation hubs to provide 58 rooms and 4 suites - in buildings between 2 and 4 storeys in height;
- * The Guest Lodge, **described as 'one storey' on p.18/ as 'two storey' on p. 21 ???**
- * A 4 storey building for the kitchen and to provide restaurant and function facilities. The included photo of the Harbour view shows the advantage of that height.

The accumulation of all of this makes for a large built area. Figure 7 clearly shows the reality of that built form. None of this built form provides anything for animals.

4. The loss of trees of moderate to high significance.

Given where I live I am very aware of the unfolding of the SELR and the devastating impact on trees along its route. Even after the original Anzac Parade destruction we are still seeing the on-going clear-felling and woodchipping of 20 year young healthy trees and magnificent trees of more than 100 years of age. Day by day the once-shaded Alison Road is being made starkly bare.

3.3.1 (p 19) Referring to the accommodation pod layout : "Notably this form has assisted in retaining several mature and significant trees on the site."

While this may sound hopeful 3.7 (p 22) explains that 77 trees are required to be removed, including 39 trees of moderate to high significance. Apparently "sensitive construction methodology" can limit the impacts on **a further 9 trees.**

5.1.2 (p 38) "The building footprints proposed are small . . . enabling the retention of significant trees

where possible." Obviously there is no guarantee, no certainty for the final outcome. **This tree loss should be seen as significant, and unacceptable.** Even Figure 8 is only a 'concept plan', providing no realistic idea of the outcome.

5. Exclusivity of the Australia Habitat exhibition? (See attached photocopy - concept map.)

In attempting to justify a need for this new Tourist Resort facility, comparison is made with '*Roar and Snore*'. (4. Strategic Justification for the Project). 4.1.1 states that without increased accommodation within the Zoo the demand for the *Roar and Snore* experience will make such " . . unique immersive experiences with wildlife . . . more expensive and exclusive."

However this proposal for the Australia Habitat and Wildlife Retreat seems to exclude general zoo visitors and by its design and purpose to be extremely exclusive. There is not an indication of price, but there is a suggestion that the new Retreat will appeal to a different clientele than the *Roar and Snore*. It is not clear to what extent the existing Australian exhibits will be replaced by this Wildlife Retreat centre. There seems to be **only a viewing platform for 'General Zoo visitors', as distinct from the immersion of the 'Guests'.** Even the Tasmanian Devil building is colour-coded with the proposed buildings of the Retreat.

Currently it is a delight to visit the Australian animals area. I suppose we all love to see the echidna, the wombats, the Tasmanian Devil keeper talks are great. This proposal gives no information as to what Australian exhibits will remain for the ordinary zoo visitor. (There is absolutely no reason why Australian animals can't have fantastic environments for their own enjoyment, without having to support tourist accommodation.)

6. Justifications for this development are not convincing.

This project is a State Significant Development, its 'State Significance' being defined by the Zoo's contribution to Tourism. The focus is on State Tourism, presumably including Corporate Events and Functions. I see that the State Government has given \$114.8m over 10 years to the Zoo - to renovate the Zoo and the Visitor Experience.

It is a great pity that the State Government doesn't seem to value sufficiently what the Zoo is already doing. It is a shame that the State Government can't see the value of simply making financial contributions to the existing (and planned) conservation projects undertaken by Taronga Zoo, without strings attached.

I assume that *Roar and Snore* will continue as the more affordable experience. **I would argue that this is enough.** It doesn't have to leave a permanent footprint. Even the reference to other zoos includes a large number of simply 'tent-type experiences'.

I strongly disagree with the proposed use of this public land which should primarily be for the welfare of wildlife, not as a Resort for tourists. There is an expressed hope that these guests could become "conservation champions" after their wildlife immersion experience. That must be seen as a very flimsy justification.

Conclusion.

This application is proposing a very big change in establishing permanent accommodation within the grounds of Taronga Zoo. It is wanting to use this public land for what could be an expensive, quite

exclusive facility for the benefit of NSW Tourism. There could be an element of Theme Park in its application.

This Application includes not only this Stage 1, but also Stage 2 which refers to alterations to the existing Taronga Centre. The concept map (copy attached) also shows Australia Habitat Phase 1 (this proposal) and an Australia Habitat Phase 2, which I didn't see in my reading of the document.

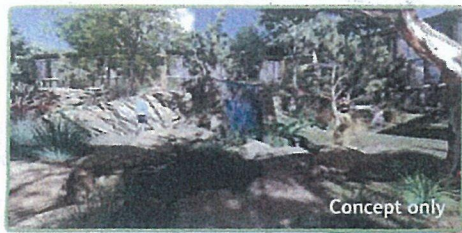
There will not be more land made available to Taronga Zoo. It is essential that existing land is used only for the betterment of animal accommodation, or health care needs, or just the chance for the animals to be able to get away from being always on show.

I would ask that no proposal to use this precious land for human accommodation is ever approved.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Note : I have made no political donations.

AUSTRALIA HABITAT + WILDLIFE RETREAT



Concept only

Question: See my Conclusion p. 4.



Question:
The only
General
Zoo visitor
access ??

See my A+S

Existing
Zoo

WOLLEMI
GORGE



Existing
Zoo

Design of the Taronga Wildlife Retreat is sensitive to the local site and minimises visual impacts from Bradley's Head Road and Sydney Harbour. The highest point of the accommodation pods will be no higher than the first floor of the existing Taronga Function Centre.