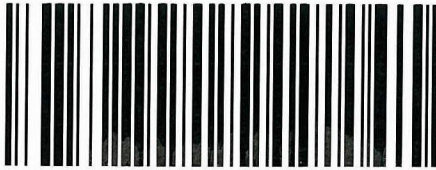




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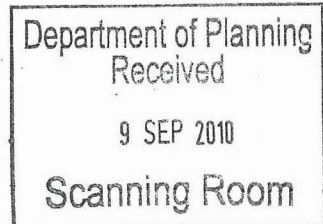
Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts



PCU014353

Reference: 1/12/036/0449
Your reference: MP 09_0200

Mr Daniel Cavallo
A/Director – Government Land and Social Projects
NSW Department of Planning
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001



Attention: Michael Buckley

Dear Mr Cavallo

Thank you for your letter of 16 August 2010 to Mr Peter Burnett, First Assistant Secretary, Approvals and Wildlife Division, Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. Mr Burnett has asked me to reply on his behalf.

The Environmental Assessment responds to the Director General's Requirements for the proposed Vehicle and Pedestrian Safety Project at Sydney Opera House (MP 09_0200). The Sydney Opera House is a declared property for its World Heritage values and is included in the National Heritage List. The Sydney Opera House and Surrounds is also entered in the Register of the National Estate. The World Heritage values refer to the Sydney Opera House as a great architectural work of the 20th century. It represents multiple strands of creativity, both in architectural form and structural design, a great urban sculpture carefully set in a remarkable waterscape. Its National Heritage values include its historic significance, its rarity, its aesthetic significance, its creative and technical achievement, its social value and its association with significant people. These values are represented by the building and its external and internal fabric, as well as its immediate forecourt surrounds and the harbour setting.

This proposal should be considered together with proposal MP 09_0122, Stormwater Drain Diversion which, when assessed together with MP 09_0200, has the potential to have a significant impact on the Forecourt Area of the Sydney Opera House.

The Bilateral Agreement between the Australian Government and the State of New South Wales notes that the State of New South Wales and agencies of New South Wales will act in accordance with the Management Plan for the Sydney Opera House.



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The Management Plan for the Sydney Opera House is the bilaterally accredited Management Plan for the Sydney Opera House August 2005 which also encompasses the Conservation Management Plan 3rd Edition 2003 (CMP). This CMP finds the Forecourt to be of exceptional significance with the roadway paving of fan pattern granite sets and the remains of the 1857 oviform drain of considerable significance. The air intake grill at the base of the Tarpeian cliff is of little significance. The security gatehouse, the cat's eye reflectors and black and yellow speed humps on the roadway, and the garden and dwarf granite walls at the base of the Tarpeian cliff are intrusive.

Policy 1.2 (f) notes that the open and uncluttered character of the forecourt and the grand stair, by which access to the raised podium is gained, are essential to architect Utzon's concept and should be retained in any future development. Policy 1.6 permits excavation of the forecourt to provide new access and delivery systems, provided the access systems are designed to be minimal visual intrusions into the surrounds of the building. Policy 3.3 requires objects, such as railings, only to be permitted on the forecourt if they do not interrupt or intrude upon the open and uncluttered nature of the place, or if they are absolutely necessary for the safety of visitors. Policies 4.1 and 4.2 suggests the need to resolve the unsatisfactory conflict between pedestrians and particularly heavy vehicular traffic, while Policy 6.1 requires the forecourt to remain unchanged. Policy 15.1 requires the retention and conservation of the fan pattern granite sets of cobbles, whilst Policy 15.2 permits the roadway granite sets to be renewed with long lasting fabric of the same material, colour and texture, without intrusive traffic calming features, possibly by raising the level of the roadway to the surrounding pavement level. Policy 15.3 permits an underground access facility by retaining the existing level of the forecourt, by minimising above ground intrusions, by recording the surviving nineteenth century fabric of the stormwater drain before its diversion and providing for paving designed to be consistent with the character of adjacent podium and broadwalk paving.

The proposal involves the grade separation of service delivery and heavy vehicles from pedestrians, by constructing: an access ramp and underground tunnel in the forecourt, new underground loading and unloading facilities and equipment. The proposal also includes: the redesign of the guardhouse, the raising of the existing kerbed roadway to the existing pavement level; the removal of garden beds; and the redesign of the existing air intake grill opening.

The CMP anticipates all these proposals and the proposals are consistent with the CMP conservation policies identified above. In particular it is noted that the proposal to construct a tunnel under the forecourt will involve the removal and replacement of the granite paving sets and the removal of the intrusive traffic calming features such as the cat's eyes and road humps and the relocation of the existing guardhouse further away from the forecourt. The entrance to the underground tunnel will be located as close as possible to Macquarie Street to minimise the adverse impact of the intervention in significant forecourt fabric, and the railing to provide public safety will mimic the existing public safety water edge barriers.

The overall result of the proposed works will be an enhancement to the ability of the place to operate as a world class performing arts venue. Adverse impacts, such as the tunnel ramp and the erection of safety railings, will be minimised. In addition, some of the intrusive elements on and adjacent to the forecourt will be removed and the intrusive nature of other elements will be diminished.

Consequently the proposed Vehicle and Pedestrian Safety Project at Sydney Opera House (MP 09_0200), together with the proposal MP 09_0122, Stormwater Drain Diversion, is unlikely to have any permanent or significant adverse effect on World and National Heritage values of the Sydney Opera House. All current fabric, including the fabric of the oviform stormwater drain, should be recorded before any construction or demolition commences.

The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts supports the Measures to Mitigate against Impacts (6.1.8) and the implementation of the Draft Statements of Commitments for Detailed Design Work Phase (7.1) included in Volume 1 of the Environmental Assessment (July 2010).

Yours sincerely



Theo Hooy
Assistant Secretary
Historic Heritage Branch

31 August 2010