



4 July 2019

Mr David McNamara
Director
Key Sites Assessment
NSW Department of Planning & Environment
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Attention: Karl Fetterplace

Dear Mr McNamara

**RE: Response to Heritage Council Submission on the Sydney Opera House (SOH) Building
Renewal Program – Concert Hall Upgrade and new Creative Learning Centre (SSD 8663)**

The SOH is pleased to provide this Response to Submissions (RtS) in response to the Heritage Council Submission to the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) dated 20 February 2019.

This cover letter includes summary responses about:

- The removal of two elements of scope – the second lift (Lift 29) in the Northern Foyer and the hooded ventilation opening in the Western Podium; and
- Overarching issues raised by the Heritage Council, including development of a Concert Hall “at rest” mode, matching new concrete finishes to existing, and approval of finishes to the satisfaction of a Heritage Council Delegate; and
- It also includes additional material relating to the payment of development contributions.

This RtS includes as attachments:

- A record of the consultation undertaken with the SOH’s Design Advisor Panel (formerly the Eminent Architects’ Panel) and Conservation Council (Attachment A);
- An assessment of the “reversibility” of the various components of the proposal (Attachment B);
- Revised Summary Assessment of Impact Tables (Attachment C);
- A table of responses to the specific issues raised by the Heritage Council (Attachment D)
 - Attachment D1 – SOH Responses to State Heritage issues
 - Attachment D2 – SOH Responses to National and World Heritage issues;
- Additional drawings/plans/renders to support the responses (Attachment E);
- A full set of revised Concert Hall architectural plans (Attachment F); and
- A revised Capital Investment Value (CIV) Statement (Attachment G) (Note: The overall CIV has not changed, the revised CIV separates the Concert Hall value from the Creative Learning Centre value).

The SOH’s Mission is central to works being undertaken in the Building Renewal Program:

*To treasure and renew the Opera House for future generations
of artists, audiences and visitors; and*

To inspire, and strengthen the community, in everything we do.

As the custodians of this World Heritage building, the SOH is committed to conserving the Opera House for current and future generations, whilst ensuring that it optimises artistic, audience and visitor amenity, accessibility, and safety and security improvements.

The SOH will continue to work collaboratively with the Heritage Council to deliver these Renewal Projects to ensure that the Opera House remains the premier cultural institution and tourism destination in Australia.



Removal of Two Project Components

Lift 29 – Removed from Project Scope

The SOH has decided to remove Lift 29 (the lift in the Northern Foyer, on the western side) from the Project.

Lift 29 would provide access without stairs to all levels of the Northern Foyer, and in particular to Level 4 on the western side of the Concert Hall for access to the Concert Hall auditorium through Door 7. Door 7 provides access to approximately 600 seats on the western side of the Upper and Lower Circle, and Circle Boxes A, B, and C.

The project as proposed included provision for up to 34 accessible seating positions, with adjacent companion seats. Of these, 8 accessible seats were accessed via Door 7. By removing Lift 29 from the project scope, 26 accessible seating positions are still available within the Concert Hall.

The 34 positions in the project as proposed in the original EIS, would provide a “deemed to satisfy” solution in respect of the National Construction Code (NCC) requirement for accessible seating positions.

The SOH has undertaken an analysis of demand for wheelchair accessible seating at the SOH, and has determined that current demand for accessible seats does not exceed 26. Without Lift 29, the SOH will still be able to provide up to 26 accessible seating positions, with the ability to provide a choice of different seating at the front of the stalls, the back of the lower circle and in the boxes.

If, in the future, the demand for accessible seating changes such that more than 26 accessible seats are required, the SOH would seek to modify or seek further approvals to enable access to the western side of the venue at Level 4 and additional wheelchair positions.

Hooded Ventilation Opening in Western Podium – No Longer Required

A revised design for Plantroom 17 does not require the relocation of the air conditioning plant, nor does it require the new hood to be installed on the Western podium façade. The plant will be replaced in situ with smaller equipment.

The existing plant will be removed following an assessment of its significance and archival recording. Due to the location and limited access, this plant will need to be broken down for removal.

This change to the proposed works also results in the removal of the need to demolish two cubicles in the public women’s toilets on level 3.

Similarly, the accessible public toilet on the eastern side of level 3 will not need to be installed within the existing “lobby” of the women’s toilets. The new accessible toilet can instead be constructed in a back of house space that is no longer required for air conditioning ducting.

* * *

Revised architectural drawings for the Concert Hall, that include the removal of these two elements of scope, are provided in Attachment F.

Discussion of Over-arching Issues Raised by the Heritage Council Submission

Concert Hall “At Rest Mode”

At sections 4.14, 4.29, 4.37, 15.16, and 16.2.17 in its submission, the Heritage Council has recommended that SOH develops an ‘at rest’ mode to be included in the “automated” settings for the Concert Hall.



The Concert Hall is first and foremost a performing arts space, used for a range of different art forms including acoustic (e.g. orchestral) and amplified (e.g. school speech days and contemporary music) performances. The setting of the Concert Hall is agreed with venue users, primarily to support the artistic performance, but with reference to SOH's Conservation Management Plan 4th Edition (CMP4). Once the venue is "set" for a performance, the hirer requires that it remains in that setting until the performance is completed, for artistic consistency.

The proposed works will greatly improve the performance and functionality of the Concert Hall, by designing acoustic improvements that are sensitive to the fabric and provide aesthetic benefit. However, technical overlay will always be necessary to support the diversity of performances that are hosted.

Apart from patrons coming to performances who will see the venue in amplified or acoustic modes, the only other members of the public visiting the Concert Hall will be on tours. Hosting tour groups within the Concert Hall is contingent on the agreement of the venue hirer, noting that activities to support the performance (e.g. instrument tuning and rehearsals) will always take precedence.

Often, tour groups visiting the Concert Hall observe the venue in use - being set up or striking an amplified or acoustic event, being used for rehearsals or tuning (where permitted), or undergoing maintenance. While this is a part of the practical nature of a highly utilised venue, it also provides an important opportunity for interpretation of the Opera House's heritage significance as a working performing arts venue to the public who may not have an opportunity to attend a performance.

Currently, the interpretation of the Concert Hall on these tours highlights the role of Peter Hall at the SOH and identifies significant Peter Hall design elements in the venue. The tour leader focuses on particular elements depending on what activities are occurring in the venue, for example when the venue is in amplified mode and the crown and organ are not visible, the tour leader will highlight the folded timber ceiling, brush box panels and theatre seats as elements by Peter Hall. The heritage interpretation of the Concert Hall as a working performing arts venue during tours of the SOH will continue on the completion of the proposed Concert Hall acoustic upgrades when the venue reopens.

At the suggestion of the Heritage Council, SOH has developed a proposed "at rest" mode for the occasions when the venue is not required for performance or being reset for a different performance (see renders included in Attachment E). The primary audience for the "at rest mode" will be tour groups who will be taken to the upper circle and the view from this location is shown in render no. ARM -SK-9226.

SOH proposes that a policy governing the implementation of the 'at rest' mode when the venue is not being used for performances is included in its future revision of the CMP.

Matching of New Concrete Finishes to Existing Concrete

In sections 3.15, 3.16, 3.18, 3.19, 3.46, 3.48, 3.52, 3.54, 3.59, and 5.19, 15.12, and 16.1.15, the Heritage Council has requested that the Sydney Opera House ensure seamless consistency of concrete finishes, for example:

Any new elements proposed, including concrete finishes, must match the existing in both form and finish. This should be determined in consultation with the nominated heritage consultant working closely with an experienced concrete expert to ensure seamless consistency, to the satisfaction of a Heritage Council delegate. (Paragraph 3.19)

It is difficult to achieve a precise match of new concrete with that originally used in the construction of the SOH. This is because:

1. the constituent materials and methods now used are different to those used in the 60's and 70's.
2. the primary objectives of achieving required strength, workability and durability (which may differ from the original design) require a different mix and admixtures; and
3. new concrete will not have the age or 'patina' of the original.



SOH's experience, developed through the delivery of the Joan Sutherland Theatre Safety, Accessibility and Venue Enhancement (SAVE) and Function Centre projects, is that by working with a concrete finishes expert it is possible to treat finished concrete to achieve a close match to the colour and texture of adjacent concrete surfaces. This can be adopted selectively where it is appropriate to have seamless consistency. In other cases, it will be appropriate to introduce subtle differences in finishes so as to distinguish between original form and changes made to the building.

In accordance with the Heritage Council's request, the SOH will work with a heritage consultant/ heritage architect and experienced concrete expert on the concrete finishes and form. Whilst an exact match of concrete finishes is unlikely to be achieved, SOH will ensure high quality craftsmanship, and a high degree of seamless integration of new and existing works, including through careful treatment of existing and new concrete. As there is a range of different situations where new and old concrete co-exist, it is intended to carry out prototyping and benchmarking of these finishes which can then be used as a guide for the remaining and future works. This would include review of finishes achieved on previous projects, and development of new finishes with the tradespeople responsible for the works. SOH would be pleased to involve the Heritage Council delegate in a review of these benchmarks.

Approval of Finishes and Components to the Satisfaction of a Heritage Council Delegate

At various instances, the Heritage Council has recommended that finishes and components of the project be subject to further review and approval of a Heritage Council delegate.

Where noted in the detailed response that is appended, SOH commits to undertake further assessment and consultation in respect of some elements to ensure that the Heritage Council's views are fully considered. SOH proposes that these be conducted as part of the future Section 60 application.

SOH also notes that final finishes for some elements of the proposal will need to be further resolved and prototyped during the delivery of the project and after approvals have been obtained. This is necessarily deferred so that SOH can work closely with the actual contractors and tradespeople who will be carrying out the works, to ensure that the final design is achievable. Many of these will need to be prototyped on site once the venue is closed. In these instances, SOH will continue to have close involvement with the design team, Design5, DAP and CC to ensure the best possible outcome. SOH would be happy to clarify with the Heritage Council what further involvement is proposed for its delegate during the delivery of the project.

The SOH also notes that the design for the Concert Hall Renewal project was carried out over a period of three years, from September 2015 to September 2018. Undertaking design over this length of time is rare in building projects, but appropriate for the SOH, where the objective has been to conduct a robust design process and extensive consultation with many stakeholders.

The design has been carried out in accordance with the SOH's CMP4 which sets out the governance by which changes to the building fabric are managed. It has included extensive involvement of a Heritage Architect in the development of the design (in this case, Alan Croker of Design5, the author of CMP4), and close scrutiny DAP and the CC. As noted in Appendix 8 of the EIS, the DAP considered the project design on 37 occasions, and the CC considered the project design on 25 occasions. Since lodgement of the EIS, the DAP has considered the project design on a further four occasions.

SOH has also consulted extensively with a wide range of other stakeholders, including NSW Government agencies including the Office of Environment and Heritage, SOH resident companies, the architecture and heritage community, disability community, performing arts community, SOH staff, neighbouring residents and the general public. These consultations were documented in Section 3.4 of the EIS.

The extensive design process and consultation has been described in the EIS, the Architectural Design Statements, the HIS, and the Options and Design Alternatives Analysis Appendix to the EIS. Attachment A to this Response to Submission details the extensive consultation with the DAP and the CC.

As a condition of the previous EPBC approval for the JST Safety, Accessibility and Venue Enhancements (EPBC 2016/7825), SOH was required to obtain approval of design finishes from the DAP and CC. This was subsequently documented in letters of support. In anticipation of a similar



requirement for this project, SOH obtained these letters of support and provided them with its EIS submission.

Noting this, SOH considers that its proposal is well-considered and achieves a very high quality in design outcomes, and will have an acceptable impact on heritage significance.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Peter Doyle, Project Manager, at the Sydney Opera House on (02) 9250 7383 or at pdoyle@sydneyoperahouse.com.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Cashen'.

Ian Cashen
Executive Director, Building, Safety & Security

ATTACHMENTS

- ATTACHMENT A: Record of Consultation with SOH Design Advisory Panel, SOH Conservation Council
- ATTACHMENT B: Elements of Proposal – Degree of “reversibility”
- ATTACHMENT C: Revised Summary Assessment of Impact Tables
- ATTACHMENT D1: Responses to State Heritage issues raised
- ATTACHMENT D2: Responses to National and World Heritage issues raised
- ATTACHMENT E: Additional drawings and renders
- ATTACHMENT F: Revised Concert Hall Architectural Plans
- ATTACHMENT G: Revised Capital Investment Value (CIV) Statement
- ATTACHMENT H: Addendum to HIS
- ATTACHMENT J: Submission regarding Development