

TARONGA REPTILE AND AMPHIBIAN CONSERVATION CENTRE (RACC) MOSMAN

Application Number: SSD-17483577

Minister for Planning and Public Spaces
Taronga Conservation Society Australia "TSCA"

OBJECTION to construction of a relocated new Reptile and Amphibian Conservation Centre

My attention was triggered by an article on Sunday 22 August 2021 in *The Sun Herald* titled "Zoo with a View or Concrete Jungle?"

My search of Taronga Zoo's website shows a professionally-polished appeal for donations for this RACC, estimated to cost \$13.3million, and also for 2 Wildlife Hospitals, one at Taronga and another at Dubbo. The appeal to the public is predicated on the Zoo's assumption that these facilities **will** go ahead. In this light my cynicism is piqued and I wonder *What is the point of any public submissions? Is there already implicit consent?*

Nevertheless prompted not by the TSCA but by the press story that public submissions close today only 4 days after the press story, I searched the Department's planning portal.

Given human damage to the habitats of wild creatures, I cannot object to the "Vision" and "Goals" set out in the TSCA's appeal for donations.

However I doubt there is any wisdom at all to construct and spend large sums of money for the planned RACC on this Harbour headland where any future RACC expansion needs necessarily will be constrained by available land. That is, unless the present mindset is that future expansion will be on other Harbour-side land, or be vertical. The former would increase the footprint and envelope of the built environment, the latter would increase the envelope and potentially build-out the view from the Harbour of an existing vegetated landscape. Neither of these possibilities are desirable.

The architect's Design Statement identifies a very large RACC building spread over 3 levels with a gross floor area of 1,264sqm. I do not look forward to plans for the proposed Taronga Wildlife Hospital which with an estimated cost of \$48.7million suggests a very much larger building in footprint and bulk than the planned RACC.

It appears that the TSCA has assumed that its Vision and Goals would attract no objection so that the ends justify the means. Such assumption is highly regrettable because it has misled the TSCA not to give proper information to the general public but instead to appeal to the public for donations, supplementing Government funds. If the RACC is built, this secretive approach may be predicted to result in an inadequate facility at this site in the medium and long term.

The alternative transparent approach engaging in substance with the public could have elicited community wisdom. Indeed, a broader and wiser Vision would locate a RACC and a Sydney-based Wildlife Hospital on a greenfield site where future expansion would not be constrained by pressures as exist at this irreplaceable heritage site on the shores of Sydney Harbour.

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