



POSITION PAPER

SIRIUS APARTMENTS

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SIRIUS APARTMENTS

The Sirius Apartments were listed on the National Trust Register in May, 2014. The Listing Report noted that the building has high social significance as it took form in 1978–1979 in the wake of the Green Bans movement that was protesting at the 1970s proposed wholesale redevelopment of The Rocks and Millers Point. The Sirius building was seen as providing affordable public housing in its 79 apartments, housing approximately 200 people potentially displaced by other developments in the area. It has been policy to house a social mix of young and old, and of large and small families. Some apartments were designed with particular families in mind as original occupants.

The Sirius Apartments building was designed by Tao (Theodore) Gofers and is a fine example of the Brutalist architectural style, especially in its use of off-the-form concrete and the stacking of cubic components to create a harmonious whole. It is also significant as an early example of rooftop landscape gardening. As such, it is featured on a number of architectural websites and in architectural literature internationally. The block was named after the First Fleet ship, HMS 'Sirius'.

The building has landmark significance notwithstanding that the construction of the building was notable for the amount of discord it created in the community, including extensive correspondence in the newspapers of the day. However, it was described in the magazine Concrete (Issue 11) as 'a bold and exceptional experiment in low-income public housing'. It was a conscious attempt to reduce the monolithic nature of most high-rise residential developments. The four wooden sculptures have aesthetic and technical significance and are rare surviving works by architect Tao Gofers.

In October 2014 the Sirius Apartments were nominated by the National Trust for Listing on the State Heritage Register. On 5 February, 2015 the Sirius Apartments were gazetted as being recommended for Listing on the State Heritage Register and following public exhibition for comment the Minister for Heritage will make a decision on the Listing.

THE THREATS POSED TO THE SIRIUS APARTMENTS

In March 2014 it was announced that the Sirius Apartments would be sold and the residents re-located. Media statements indicate that the State Government may be expecting to receive \$100 million from the sale and this indicates that the building may face demolition. Such demolition could not occur if the building were listed on the State Heritage Register. The Trust understands that the Department Family and Community Services intends to oppose the State Heritage Register Listing.

NATIONAL TRUST POSITION

As is always the Trust's position, the Trust will advocate that consideration of Listing of the building on the State Heritage Register and consideration of the future of the building should not be confused and future potential uses or sale values should not be a factor in determining the proposed State Heritage Register Listing.

The Trust will continue to urge the Listing of the Sirius Apartments on the State Heritage Register and will argue for retention of the original tenants (who had already been re-located to the Sirius Apartments) in the building.

Other apartments could be made available for local low-income workers who will be required to work in the local area and for whom inadequate provision has been made, despite development conditions requiring this.

ACTION IN REGARD TO THE TRUST'S POSITION

The Trust will make its views known in the traditional and social media and will strongly oppose any proposal to demolish the Sirius Apartments and to replace them with a large building.