



## POSITION PAPER

### SYDNEY MODERN NSW ART GALLERY EXTENSION

#### HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DOMAIN

The Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Landscape Conservation Area was listed on the National Trust Register in May, 1976 recognising it as the second oldest botanic gardens in the southern hemisphere (1816) and for containing many important structures and memorials from early Colonial times when it formed part of the Governor's (Phillip's) Domain. The listing noted that the Gardens layout was exceptionally important. The Art Gallery of New South Wales was listed on the National Trust Register in April, 1979 as forming a substantial cultural landmark in Sydney and for its strongly classical facade of rich detail that has continued the building tradition in the former Governor's Domain of eclectic masonry structures set in park-like settings. The Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain was listed on the State Heritage Register in April 1999. The NSW Art Gallery has not yet been listed on the State Heritage Register. National Trust representatives were given a presentation on this proposal by the architects and the NSW Art Gallery.

#### THE CHALLENGES POSED BY THE EXTENSION PROPOSAL

The proposed development involves loss of public open space even though the brief for the most recent Management Plan required that there should be no net loss of open space with any new development. There appears to be no clear strategy for mitigating this loss of public open green space. The Trust opposes any loss of public open space.

Comparisons with the National Gallery of Victoria, in terms of floor space, are not necessarily valid as the National Gallery of Victoria is spread over two sites. This raises the question of a new Sydney Modern beyond the Domain / Royal Botanic Gardens or the alternative development of the site to the south-east of the present buildings. It should be noted that Melbourne's equivalent public open spaces to Sydney's Domain have not suffered development pressures. New major building developments should be sited in the Sydney CBD or at a site where vital green space is not compromised.

The Trust urges the investigation of alternate sites for the Sydney Modern proposal such as the 'void' beneath the Barangaroo Headland.

The Trust considers there are major problems with the proposed development in the Domain. They include: -

The present proposal would result in a significant reduction in the area of "open space" and have major impacts on the presentation and setting of the historic building, especially the ability to see and appreciate the building in the round. The 'shelter' structure is extremely intrusive and bears no relationship to the existing Gallery in its form and alignment. It appears to be unnecessarily large and would 'compete' strongly with the historic building particularly in the manner in which it impacts on the northern elevation.

The connecting building containing the restaurant/café and usual facilities is too high and out of scale. The adjoining building to the north is too close to the road, with inadequate landscaping and importantly, set too far forward, impacting on the view cone from the north. The white colour and the large reflective glass windows are too stark for the garden environment. Most importantly the proposal confuses the significant entry experience to the existing building.

The National Trust recognises that a Sydney Modern proposal would extend the number of cultural assets for Sydney and increases visitation and revenue generation for the NSW Art Gallery. The Trust strongly supports this cultural and social objective but believes that the proposal should not be sited in the Domain.

The re-use of the former oil depot for functions associated with the NSW Art Gallery is supported by the Trust. However, the current proposal is too intrusive, involving the removal of a majority of the original historic piers. Any redevelopment of this facility must retain the original fabric intact.

#### ACTION IN RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSAL

The Trust will make its views known to the Board of Trustees of the Art Gallery of NSW, to the members of the Art Gallery Society of NSW, to the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust and the Foundation and Friends of the Botanic Gardens organisation. The Trust will also comment on and put its position at the various stages of public exhibition of the development plans for the Sydney Modern Project and will move to nominate or support the nomination of the Art Gallery of NSW for listing on the State Heritage Register.