



POSITION PAPER

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

BACKGROUND

The Sydney Opera House was listed on the National Trust Register in November, 1983 with the Listing recognising the work of architects Jørn Utzon and Peter Hall. The Listing Report noted that the Sydney Opera House had become an internationally recognised symbol of the City of Sydney. The Report noted “Dramatic internal spaces approached by grand stairways both internally and externally and an outstanding harbourside promenade also contribute to one of the world’s most significant buildings of the latter half of the twentieth century.

The Sydney Opera House was listed on the State Heritage Register in December, 2003, the National Heritage List in July, 2005 and the World Heritage List in June, 2007. The World Heritage List also establishes a protective Buffer Zone which includes the Royal Botanic Gardens and much of The Rocks.

In August, 2016 plans were announced for a major \$202 million upgrade to be spent on revamping the concert hall including upgrading the acoustics, accessibility, efficiency and flexibility of the concert hall, removing the marquee from the northern broadwalk, construction of a premium function centre within the building, creating a car-free entrance under the front steps with improved access to the main foyer, and transforming office space into a new Creative Learning Centre for children, families and young people.

National Trust representatives were given a tour of the Opera House and an explanation of the proposed work in 2016.

There has been concern expressed by Sydney City Council regarding the introduction of escalators and has put the view that the plan to create a function centre is “in direct contradiction with Jørn Utzon’s vision for the Opera House.

NATIONAL TRUST POSITION

- The Trust’s key principle is that, on completion, the public should be unaware of any works undertaken and that work should seem to have always been in place.
- The Trust strongly supports the principle of no advertising other than discreet advertising of Opera House events.
- The Trust strongly supports the proposal for the removal of the marquee from the northern broadwalk.
- Connections from the south foyer to the northern foyer should only proceed if they can be demonstrated to have a positive visual impact.
- The acoustic treatment in the Concert Hall should be as unobtrusive as possible to respect and reveal the Peter Hall interiors
- Hand rails in the auditoria should remain as part of the Sydney Opera House significant fabric and the Trust would support dispensation for non-compliance.
- Current plans for additional disabled seating in the Opera Theatre would have a significant impact on that room’s heritage values. Alternative approaches should be investigated.
- The Trust supports the proposed changes to the Concert Hall stage, raising and lowering the stages to one level 400mm below the existing stage level.
- While the disabled lift insertions appear to be in appropriate locations they must be of the highest quality materials, design and detail and the Trust will closely examine the final detailed designs.

ACTION TO PROMOTE THE TRUST’S POSITION

The Trust will promote its views on this issue in the media, with the Sydney Opera House and the NSW government.