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Dear Ms Cummins,

### **Gosford Library**

The National Trust of Australia (NSW) expresses its support for the retention and adaptive re-use of the former Gosford Library Building. The building has been listed by the National Trust of Australia (NSW).

As outlined in our correspondence in October 2024, and again in a presentation to Councillors in February 2025, the National Trust consider Gosford Library to be a noteworthy building that is worthy of retention.

We commend the council for reconsidering the fate of this building and hope that you have received community feedback in your recent survey that advocates for its retention.

The Gosford Library is a significant modern building which contributes to the urban landscape and twentieth century heritage of the Central Coast; it is also an important social space for the local Gosford community. We feel that demolition is an environmentally adverse and culturally undesirable outcome which can and should be avoided.

It is noted that the revitalisation of the Gosford CBD has enabled the construction of a newer, state of the art library for the city, and consequentially the redundancy of the of the current building for library purposes. The erection of new library amenities does not, however, necessitate the destruction of its prior facilities. We feel that the current building remains a high-quality design that is well-located and in sound repair, and that it would a more suitable candidate for adaptive re-use purposes than for demolition.

We note the following qualities of the Gosford Library:

- The building is architecturally meritorious, having been designed with a high quality of aesthetic, creative and technical values. Constructed in 1968, it reflects an excellent standard of design that resulted from a highly collaborative process between the architect (Alan Williams & Associates), engineers (Arup), builder (A.W. Edwards), and material suppliers (Fabbrostone). The library features a distinctive architectural form that incorporates uniquely detailed unpainted precast concrete panels and well-crafted timber roof framing. A building of this type is a rarity in the Central Coast region.
- The place is an excellent example of mid-century public architecture, reflecting an important social investment in establishing civic facilities in the region. This building could serve the community for many more years.
- The library is of high social significance, having been continuously used for almost sixty years. The building, purposely designed in a cohesive landscape with Kibble Park, provides an important indoor-outdoor space for community and cultural activity in Gosford.



- The building has had its roof repaired/replaced in recent years and this is an important measure in terms of preserving any structure.

It is noted that Council has shown the benefits and challenges of each option (ie: retention or demolition) and included costings with those.

The extent of adaptation costs will of course depend on what is proposed and the extent of any changes, and it is unclear if there is actually a proposal for adaptive re-use at this stage upon which the proposed costings have been made. The fact is that the current building is of very high quality. It is by a good architect, a very significant engineer, and is very well built. The interiors with Tasmanian oak, Douglas Fir and Western Red Cedar sit alongside high-quality concrete construction. The current construction costs in Australia mean there is no possibility of building such a high-quality community building in such robust materials today.

It would be my opinion that this building could be easily upgraded to meet new requirements. It has strong bones and would be able to meet fire safety and access standards without excessive intervention – if the right advice is obtained. Any innovative contemporary architect would, I am confident, be able to take this existing building and turn it into something of real ongoing use and value to the people of Gosford.

In the meeting with Council, it was noted during discussions that in fact the whole switchboard or substation servicing Kibble Park was located inside the Former Library Building. Whether this is true or not is for others to advise, but it would be a major consideration in any demolition proposal and associated costs as to replace the building with “open green space” would require significant outlay to relocate this infrastructure.

The building is a rare gem not only in Gosford, but in NSW. It really is a building of very high quality design and construction.

There is a real opportunity here for Central Coast Council to retain a significant asset, protect its heritage, and lead the way in terms of promoting sustainability through the adaptive re-use of a more than serviceable and architecturally noteworthy building.

The National Trust urges the building be retained.