

RESPONSE TO SIRIUS SITE SEPP



saveoursirius.org



Prepared by The Save Our Sirius Foundation

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above: A community in distress, as red S.O.S. lights flash from the top floor apartment of Sirius. photo: Ben Guthrie.

SAVE OUR SIRIUS FOUNDATION

RESPONSE TO DRAFT SIRIUS SITE SSP SEPP, 36-50 CUMBERLAND ST, THE ROCKS

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- Heritage significance
- SEPP Not Required
- CMP Required
- Minimum 10% Affordable Housing
- Sirius is not a surplus asset as defined by TAM guidelines

SIRIUS HERITAGE

The SEPP Fails to Recognise the Heritage Significance of Sirius

The draft amendments to the State Environmental Planning Policy (State Significant Precincts) 2005 (SEPP), fail to acknowledge the heritage importance of the Sirius building.

Sirius has been recognised by local and international heritage bodies for the architectural and social value it represents. Including;

- Heritage Council of NSW who recommended Sirius for state heritage listing
- The National Trust who nominated Sirius for state heritage listing
- International Council on Monuments and Sites [ICOMOS]
- International Committee for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement [Docomomo]
- The World Monuments Fund
- The Australian Institute of Architects
- The Historic Houses Association
- The City of Sydney
- The Twentieth Century Heritage Society of NSW & ACT

Why has the SEPP not acknowledged the heritage and history of this important building?

How can the public make an informed judgement of the SEPP without the understanding of the existing buildings significance?

SSP & SEPP Is Not Required

We are fundamentally opposed to the premise that new controls for a site with an existing architecturally, socially and culturally significant building need be developed in the first place.

We believe the Minister has not considered the heritage significance of Sirius in determining the site as State Significant Precincts. Rather the motivation for proposed amendment is to support the sale of the land.

In addition to heritage significance, Sirius is also recognised for Design Excellence and is listed on the Australian Institute of Architects Register of Significant Architecture in NSW.

Why has the Minister not acknowledged the architectural, heritage, and cultural significance of Sirius in determining the site as a State Significant Precinct?

Environmental Aspects

Sirius was designed to last 200 years or more. Brutalism are our civic castles, and were the architecture of Government.

No consideration to take has looked at the embodied energy and construction energised in Sirius. If demolished, the embodied energy will be wasted. In a time where climate change is altering the climate, Sirius provides an opportunity to keep carbon locked up.

Has the Government done a triple bottom line cost benefit analysis that considers these environmental aspects?

“The Sirius Apartment Building
is of heritage significance
because it is a rare, prominent
and intact example of social
housing, designed in the late
Brutalist style.”

NSW Heritage Council

OUR RESPONSE TO SEPP

NSW Property has failed to manage Sirius as required under Section 170 of the NSW Heritage Act

In 1995, the Land and Housing Corporation listed Sirius as a heritage item on its Heritage and Conservation Register, under Section 170 of the NSW Heritage Act.

Since the early 1990s, the NSW Premier's Department, NSW Treasury and NSW Department of Commerce have worked together to develop Total Asset Management [TAM] Guidelines, including Heritage Asset Management Guidelines, to help NSW Government Agencies manage their asset portfolios and to fulfill their obligations under Section 170 of the Heritage Act.

However, the government has not followed their own guidelines;

- Sirius is not a surplus asset as defined by the TAM Guidelines
- The disposal process for Sirius has not followed the TAM Guidelines

The NSW State government needs to follow its own well-established guidelines and mandates in the management of the state's asset portfolio. Complying with these guidelines would entail the following next steps for the Sirius building:

1. To fully address the potential heritage values of the property by commissioning a comprehensive CMP for the site. This would resolve the heritage uncertainty that now exists.
2. To meet with stakeholders and community groups to seek a solution to the future of Sirius that meets both community expectations and government priorities.

These issues are elaborated further in a submission by Save Our Sirius member, Anne Warr.

How can a draft SEPP be written, then the architectural significance of the existing building has not been considered according to the Governments own processes?

The SEPP should be withdrawn and all supporting documents carefully edited and amended with the inclusion of the Conservation Management Plan.

The Heritage Impact Statement is inadequate

In an earlier letter to Minister for Planning we highlighted two significant errors in the Heritage Impact Statement.

These errors have not been resolved prior to the closing date for feedback.

The authors state that the building and site is not classified by the National Trust [NSW] – when it was listed by the National Trust in 2014.

The authors state that the building is not listed as significant on the AIA Register of Significant Architecture, when it is clearly listed as item no. 4703569.

Furthermore, the Heritage Impact Statement fails to acknowledge the Sirius building, and only considers the impact of a new building on the site.

How can the public come to an informed position of the Heritage Impact Statement when it misrepresents the heritage significance of Sirius?

The SEPP should be withdrawn and a more suitable Heritage Impact Statement prepared that includes analysis of the heritage significance of Sirius.

Affordable Housing

Sirius is purpose built low income housing, designed to last 200 years. It has been fit for purpose for 38 years, and continues to be fit for purpose with the last resident, Myra, moving out in February 2018.

The Draft SEPP statement that the building is in poor condition is false - as the recent adjacent images illustrate.

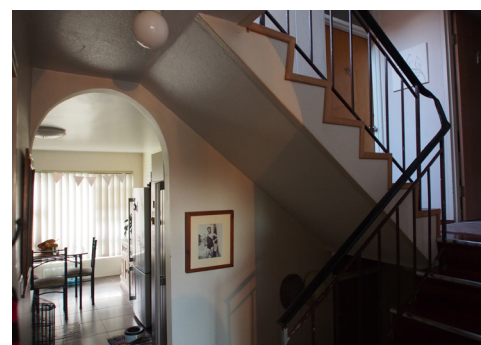
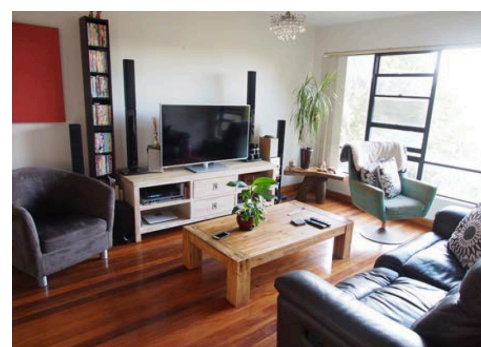
The NSW State Government has committed to improving housing affordability in all areas of NSW.

Providing affordable housing in new developments is a way for the commitment to be addressed;

- Shelter NSW recommends that 15 per cent of floor space in new developments is allocated to affordable housing.
- Greater Sydney Commission recommends that up to 10 per cent of floor space in major housing redevelopments be dedicated to affordable rental housing

Therefore, future uses for the site must include affordable housing.

Why has the Draft SEPP been written without any provision for affordable housing, given it is a priority for the NSW Government?



*top and middle: Interior images of a split-level three-storey apartment with roof garden. photos: John Dunn.
bottom: The Phillip Room. photo: Barton Taylor.*



Conclusion

We are fundamentally opposed to any planning controls that allow the demolition of Sirius.

Notwithstanding this position, any future controls must have mandatory affordable housing provision.

We request that our questions are addressed and ask that the SEPP be redrafted to address the heritage significance of Sirius, require Sirius provide a level of affordable housing in the inner city, and protect the built form of Sirius in its entirety for future generations.

Save Our Sirius Foundation

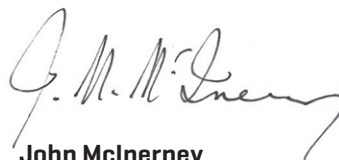
16th February 2018



Shaun Carter
Chair



Myra Demetriou



John McInerney



John Dunn



Margaret Bishop



Ben Peake



Amiera Piscopo



Anne Warr

left top: The final three: Kelly Moss, Myra Demetriou and Cherie Johnson in the Phillip Room shortly before Kelly was relocated in 2017. photo: Alisha Gore.

left bottom: Sirius from Cumberland St, The Rocks. photo: Katherine Lu.

