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The Hon Gladys Berejiklian
Premier of NSW
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 200

Dear Premier,

'The Everest' Illumination - Sydney Opera House

I am writing to you on behalf of Australia ICOMOS to express our surprise and disappointment at your decision to override the Sydney Opera House Trust and its endorsed policy on illumination of the sails of the SOH so as to allow the use of the World Heritage site for what is effectively advertising of a horse race, 'The Everest'.

Australia ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) is a non-government, not-for-profit organisation of cultural heritage professionals formed as a national chapter of ICOMOS International in 1976. Our mission is to lead cultural heritage conservation in Australia by raising standards, encouraging debate and generating innovative ideas. ICOMOS is also an Advisory Body to the World Heritage Committee under the World Heritage Convention.

Australia ICOMOS has for some time been working with SOH CEO Louise Herron and her team to review and appraise the current proposed upgrade works to the SOH, known as the Sydney Opera House Building Renewal Program. As you would be aware, these works are extensive and deemed essential by the SOH Trust to allow the building to function efficiently as an arts and performance venue into the 21st century. If not managed with great sensitivity, these works could potentially affect the Outstanding Universal Values for which the building when it was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2008.

As required under the EPBC Act 1999, the SOH Trust and the Commonwealth had referred the proposed upgrade works to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, and Australia ICOMOS was subsequently requested to liaise with the SOH project team and to confirm that the project would be carried out to a standard commensurate with a building that is without doubt one of the greatest 20th century works of man.

This liaison process has been underway for more than a year, during which time there has been considerable refinement of the proposed upgrade works, exhaustive consultation and design input from eminent architects including Jan Utzon, the son of the original designer. During this process, we have been impressed by the approach of the SOH project team, especially their decision to put in place a model set of heritage and management principles that have been widely recognised as being best practice commensurate with the national and international heritage values of the SOH. In August, a new Conservation Management Plan (CMP) was endorsed by the NSW Heritage Council after being adopted by the SOH Trust, which will guide the ongoing conservation

management of the SOH for years to come. The commitment of the SOH team to these principles and policies contained within the CMP is very reassuring.

It is understandable therefore that Australia ICOMOS and many other stakeholders, as well as what appears to be a very substantial number of the general public, are both astonished and disappointed by your decision to override the SOH management and approve the proposed illumination advertising 'The Everest'. This decision is contrary to both the policies of the CMP, and we understand a number of other operational policies designed to respect the outstanding cultural heritage values of the SOH. Overriding these well-established and commendable policies is in our opinion a reprehensible action. It trivialises the World Heritage values of the SOH and sets an extremely dangerous precedent for future proposals to use the SOH as an advertising billboard. While we acknowledge that the proposed advertising illumination would not result in any physical and/or permanent impact on the SOH, it clearly conflicts with the letter and the spirit of the SOH's best practice management policy documents and demonstrates a lack of the respect that this outstanding architectural and cultural icon deserves.

Premier, you would I am sure be aware that, when the SOH was nominated by the Commonwealth for the World Heritage List, the process required and was given the full support of the NSW government. The Commonwealth EPBC Act 1999 requires that all parties, particularly governments, adopt strict measures to protect and respect the Outstanding Universal Values of places listed on the World Heritage List, and to establish procedures to ensure these measures are followed, in order to comply with Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention. Unfortunately we can only conclude that your decision in this case was driven not by following this rigorous process but by pressure from influential media persons and the racing industry.

It is likely that, in our role as the national representatives of an international cultural heritage advisory body, Australia ICOMOS will be requested to provide advice to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee about this matter. We sincerely request that, even at this late stage, you reverse your decision to approve the illuminated advertising for 'The Everest' and allow the very competent SOH management team to follow their well established processes in the management of the SOH.

Australia ICOMOS is always willing to discuss these matters further if this would assist you in understanding our position.

Yours faithfully



IAN TRAVERS
President, Australia ICOMOS

Copies:

The Hon Scott Morrison, Prime Minister of Australia

The Hon Luke Foley, Leader of the NSW Opposition

The Hon Gabrielle Upton, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Heritage

The Hon. Melissa Price, Minister for the Environment

The Hon Tony Burke, Shadow Minister for Environment and Water

Ms Louise Herron AM, CEO, Sydney Opera House

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