

StarCity

Casino Upgrade

Preliminary Environmental Assessment



urbis



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Preliminary Environmental Assessment report is submitted to the Department of Planning pursuant to Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979. Its purpose is to inform the Director General in the preparation of Environmental Assessment Requirements for the subsequent preparation of a Project Application for alterations and additions to the existing Star City Casino complex in Pymont.

In summary, the Project Application will seek approval for:

- A new 300 room hotel with ancillary lower level retail, gaming and conference facilities on the currently vacant 'Switching Station' site.
- 550 additional basement car parking spaces to be access via the existing Casino car park.
- Re-development of the retail arcade through the ground floor level of the building, linking Pymont Bay Park to the intersection of Union and Pymont Streets.
- The redevelopment of the eastern (Pirrama Road) portion of the casino building currently occupied by large external stairs to contain additional restaurants, retail outlets, gaming space, other entertainment and tourist related facilities and a driveway providing a new vehicle drop-off to the Casino.
- Works on the exterior of the existing buildings to enhance their external appearance and function.





I INTRODUCTION

This report constitutes a Preliminary Environmental Assessment prepared on behalf of Sydney Harbour Casino Properties Pty Ltd for alterations and additions to the Star City Casino in Pyrmont.

This Preliminary Assessment Report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, and State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Projects) 2005. Development of the 'Switching Station' component of the project has already been declared by the Minister (4 September 2006) to be a 'Major Project' to which Part 3A applies, and a request for the Minister to declare the entire project a 'Major Project' was submitted on 18 April 2008. This report outlines the project and highlights the potential key issues associated with the construction and operation of the project.

This report has been prepared in anticipation of a Project Application to the Department of Planning and to inform the preparation of the Director General's Environmental Assessment Requirements for that application.





2 THE SITE AND CONTEXT

The site comprises the irregularly proportioned street block bounded by Edward Street, Pyrmont Street, Union Street, Pirrama Road and Jones Bay Road. It accommodates the existing Star City Casino, which was opened in 1997 and comprises:

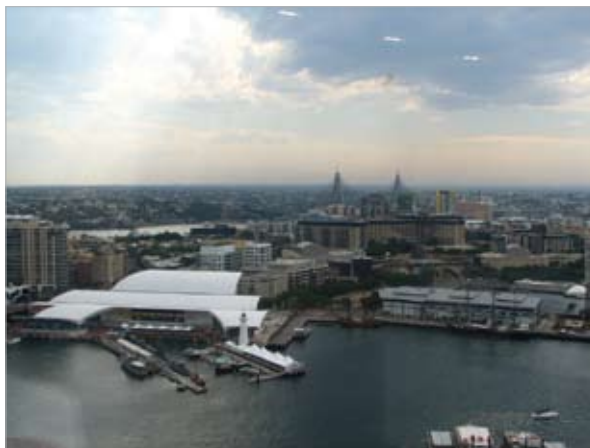
- A 10,500m² gaming floor
- 3,800m² of retail space, including 11 restaurants and 10 bars
- 2 theatres
- 480 hotel rooms / serviced apartments
- A 900 person ballroom / conference facility.
- basement parking for 2,500 cars

The site also accommodates the Metro Light Rail (MLR) line and the Casino MLR station, which are both housed within the Casino building, close to the Pirrama Road frontage.

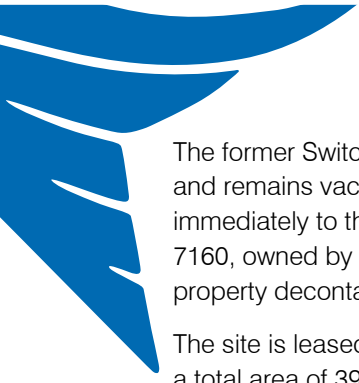
Figure 1 – The Site



Picture 1 – The 'Switching Station' site (vacant foreground)



Picture 2 – Star City Casino, viewed from Sydney CBD



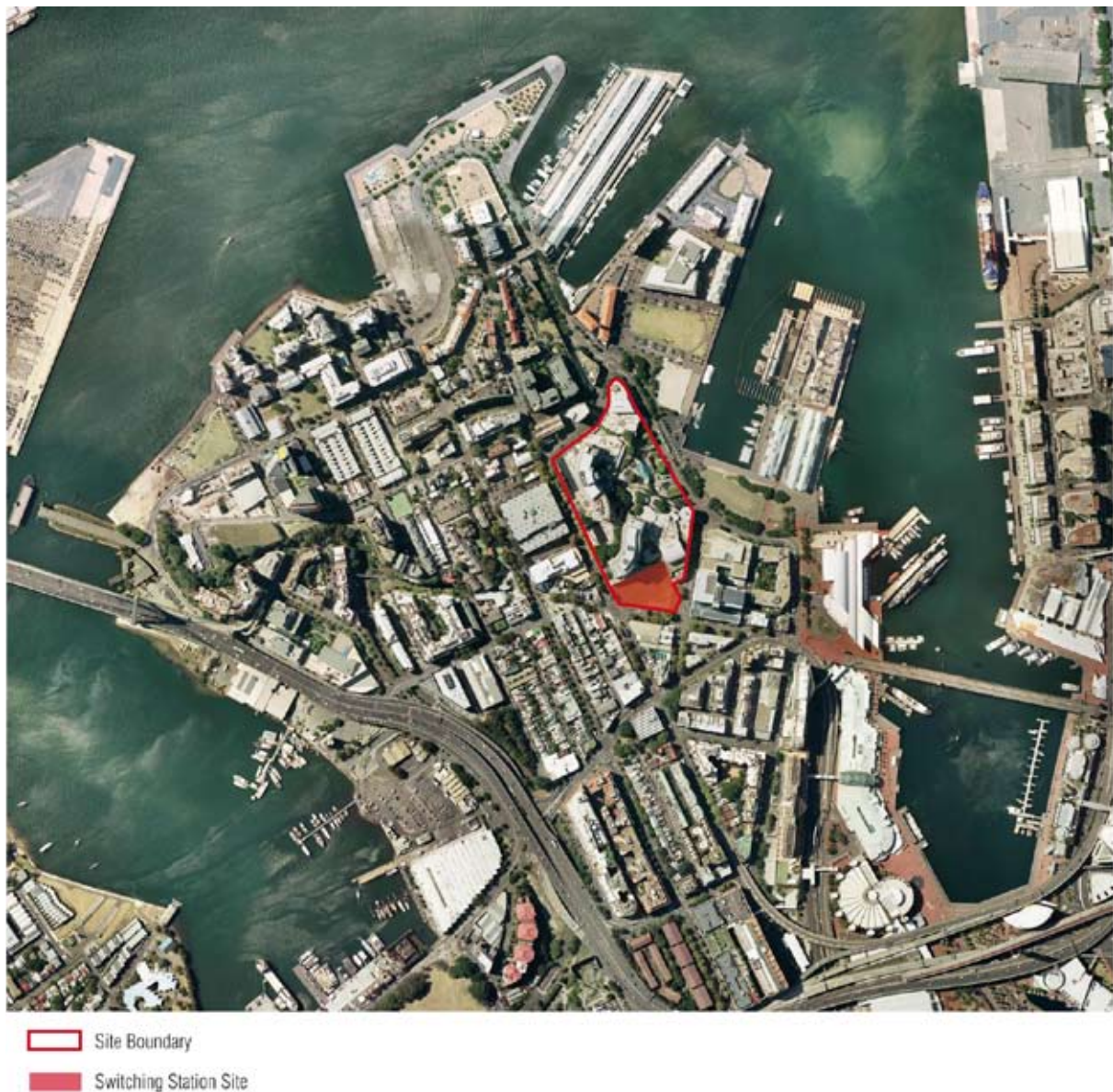
The former Switching Station site is part of the Casino site, but was not developed as part of the Casino and remains vacant. This part of the site is located on the corner of Union, Pyrmont and Edward Streets, immediately to the south of the existing Casino complex. The site was formerly used as Substation no. 7160, owned by Sydney Electricity. This function has since been transferred to another site, and the property decontaminated to enable its redevelopment.

The site is leased by Sydney Harbour Casino Properties Pty Ltd from the Casino Control Authority, and has a total area of 39,499m², including the 4,756m² switching station site.

The site is legally described as:

- Lot 121 DP828957 (Switching Station Site)
- Lots 300-3-2 DP873212 (Main Site),
- Lot 1 DP 867854 & Lot 201 DP 867855 (Driveway which exits near Channel 7)

Figure 2 – The Locality



Picture 3 – Aerial photograph of Pyrmont



2.1 REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Casino is located in a major tourism precinct within the greater Sydney CBD area, and of itself is a major tourist facility contributing to the image of Sydney as an international tourist and business destination. The quality of the Star City complex and its associated accommodation is significant to the perception of Sydney by both interstate and international visitors.

2.2 LOCAL CONTEXT

The immediate context of the site is highly varied in terms of its land use mix, built form and character.

2.2.1 North

To the north of the site across Jones Bay Road is a precinct of high density, predominantly residential development of typically eight storeys in height.

Figure 3 – The Locality to the North of the Site



Picture 4 – Historic warehouse and terraces at 10-18 Pyrmont Street (side frontage to Jones Bay Road)



Picture 5 – View west along Jones Bay Road (Casino to the left)

2.2.2 East

To the north-east of the site are Jones Bay Wharf, Darling Island and Darling Harbour Wharf 10, which comprise a number of new buildings and refurbished former maritime/storage buildings. These buildings are now used for a mix of commercial office and residential uses, and are set amongst a number of landscaped forshore parks.

Figure 4 – The Locality to the East of the Site



Picture 6 – Former Naval Stores Building (Revy Building)



Picture 7 – Darling Island Commercial Office Development



Picture 8 – Darling Harbour Wharf Ten



Picture 9 – Darling Harbour Wharf Ten



To the south-east is a street block of mixed retail and commercial uses characterised by the modern 5 and 8 storey office buildings on the opposite side of Edward Street, and a lower 3 storey office building, remnant heritage listed pubs and terrace house buildings on Union Street.



Picture 10 – Corner of Edward Street & Pirrama Road, viewed from the north



Picture 11 – Corner of Edward and Union Streets, viewed from the west

Further east is Darling Harbour and the Sydney CBD, which has a direct visual connection to the Casino.

2.2.3 South

Union Street forms the southern boundary of the site. Its alignment extends from Union Square on Harris Street to Pyrmont Bridge, which provides direct pedestrian and monorail access to the Sydney CBD.

A low scale, predominantly residential precinct of two to three storey buildings with numerous active ground level uses exists on the southern side of Union Street. The terrace buildings on the southwest corner of Edward Street are heritage items.

Figure 5 – The Locality to the South of the Site



Picture 12 – Heritage buildings at 31-33 Union Street



Picture 13 – Union Street, west of Pyrmont Street (Union Square in background)

2.2.4 West

A diverse range of building styles, heights and land uses exist to the west of the site across Pymont Street. A high proportion of these buildings are heritage listed, including the row of terrace houses occupying the entire length of the northern side of Union Street, west of Pymont Street.

Figure 6 – The Locality to the West of the Site



Picture 14 – Heritage buildings at 91-95 Pymont Street (corner of Union Street)



Picture 15 – Schute, Bell, Badgery, Lumby Ltd building at 47-69 Pymont Street



Picture 16 – Heritage buildings at 27-29 Pymont Street (corner of Janes Bay Road)



3 REASONS FOR THE PROJECT

It is now over ten years since Star City Casino opened. In addition to the need to upgrade the facility to reflect contemporary international standards, and the ongoing development of the surrounding locality, recent developments have also influenced the decision to proceed with the project.

3.1 CHANGES TO GAMING LICENSE

Tabcorp and the NSW Government have recently concluded the casino licence negotiations with an agreement in principle covering the extension of Star City exclusivity, Electronic Gaming Machine tax rates and a number of important operational parameters. Part of these operational parameters include removal of the restrictions on the number of table games at Star City, subject to CCA approval, and re-classifying multi-terminal gaming machines (MTGMs) as tables. These changes will create an opportunity to expand table game operations at Star City, and more gaming space will be required to accommodate them.

3.2 CHANGES TO SMOKING LAWS

The Smoke-free Environment Act 2000 requires most enclosed public places in NSW to be smoke-free. Smoking bans were gradually introduced at Star City from July 2005, effecting tables, gaming machines, bars and restaurants.

Smoking bans now apply across the main gaming floor at Star City and smoking is not permitted in any enclosed area. Patrons wishing to smoke must go outside or onto a balcony if they wish to smoke.

Star City, like its competitors, need to provide unenclosed areas where patrons may go if they wish to smoke. It is therefore seeking to create various unenclosed or semi-enclosed spaces within and adjacent to the licensed gaming area.

3.3 THE SWITCHING STATION SITE

The State Government always intended that the Switching Station would be developed as part of the Casino, and indeed this is a condition of the lease of the site to Sydney Harbour Casino Properties Pty Ltd. However, delays in the decommissioning of the former Switching Station, and remediation of associated contamination prevented this from occurring prior to the 2000 Olympic games. After the Olympics there was an oversupply of hotel rooms which made it uneconomical to build a hotel in Sydney the early 2000's

Redevelopment of this distinct site for hotel and retail purposes is now proposed as part of a larger, co-ordinated improvement of the total Casino facility.

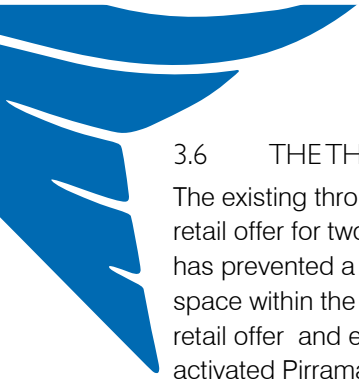
3.4 THE PIRRAMA ROAD STAIRS

When the Casino was originally opened, the foreshore of Pyrmont Bay accommodated disused maritime and warehouse uses. The resultant lack of amenity and activity in the area precluded viable active uses to Pirrama Road. In the intervening years, however, high quality adaptive re-use of waterfront buildings and the development of new high quality buildings and public domain spaces have significantly improved this area, creating an atmosphere conducive to active street edge activity.

While the large scale of the stairs to the Pirrama Road entry to the casino provides some sense of grandeur to this frontage, they have never been a successful aspect of the original design and have always been underutilised, resulting in a poor level of activation of the Pirrama Road / Darling Harbour frontage. This has principally been the result of the length of the stairs and the location of the vehicular entry to the site being via the porte cochere to Pyrmont Road, on the other side of the Casino. Partial enclosure of the stairs with active spaces and a new porte cochere is proposed to transfer the principal address and entry of the Casino to Pirrama Road, creating a more active and visually exciting street edge to Pirrama Road and the Harbour.

3.5 ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSION

The design of the existing Casino building was the outcome of an intensive design process, involving extensive debate throughout the community. However, its external expression now fails to meet international expectations of the visual excitement and innovation of contemporary Casinos.

A blue abstract graphic in the top left corner, consisting of several overlapping, curved shapes that resemble a stylized wing or a series of steps.

3.6 THE THROUGH-SITE RETAIL ARCADE

The existing through site retail arcade has never succeeded in providing an effective public way, or a viable retail offer for two main reasons. The exclusion of the Switching Station site from the Casino development has prevented a direct connection to the intersection of Pymont and Union Streets, and the limited retail space within the arcade has lacked the critical mass to create an attractive retail destination. An increased retail offer and extension of the arcade to the intersection of Pymont and Union Streets at one end, and an activated Pirrama Road frontage at the other is proposed to create an attractive and active arcade to serve both Casino/Hotel patrons and the general public seeking a route through the site.



4 THE PROJECT

The Project Application will seek approval for:

- A new 300 room hotel with ancillary lower level retail, gaming and conference facilities on the currently vacant 'Switching Station' site.
- 550 additional basement car parking spaces to be access via the existing car park.
- Re-development of the retail arcade through the ground floor level of the building, linking Pymont Bay Park to the intersection of Union and Pymont Streets.
- The redevelopment of the eastern (Pirrama Road) portion of the casino building currently occupied by large external stairs to contain additional restaurants, retail outlets, gaming space, other entertainment and tourist related facilities and a driveway providing a new vehicle drop-off to the Casino.
- Works on the exterior of the existing buildings to enhance their external appearance and function.

The capital investment value of the project will be approximately \$330 million.

Figure 7 – Photomontages of Proposed Works



Picture 17 – Hotel and retail podium proposed on Switching Station – Union Street frontage viewed from the west (Source Cox Richardson Architects)



Picture 18 – Hotel and retail podium proposed on Switching Station, viewed from the north-east (Source Cox Richardson Architects)



Picture 19 – Indicative illustration of envisaged works to existing Casino (Source Bee Design)

While not all aspects of the projects have been finalised at this stage, the following approximate figures are provided to summarise key numeric aspects of the existing development and the envisaged project:

	Existing	Proposed	Total
Casino Site			
Site Area	34,480	N/A	34,480
FSR	3:1	0.3:1	3.3:1
Gross Floor Area			
– Gaming	10,500 m ²	3,600 m ²	14,100 m ²
– Retail food & bev	1,800 m ²	6,820 m ²	8,620 m ²
– Hotel, Conference & other	91,140 m ²	Nil	91,140 m ²
– Total	103,440	10,420	113,860
Hotel Rooms/Apartments	480	Nil	480
Car parking	2,500	Nil	2,500
Switching Station Site			
Site Area	5,019 m ²	N/A	5,019 m ²
FSR	Nil	4.45:1	4.45:1
Gross Floor Area			
– Gaming	Nil	2,890	2,890
– Retail food & bev	Nil	3,070	3,070
– Hotel, Conference & other	Nil	13,425	13,425
– Total	Nil	22,335	22,335
Hotel Rooms/Apartments	Nil	300	300
Car parking	Nil	550	550
Total Project			
Site Area	39,499 m ²	N/A	39,499 m ²
FSR	2.62:1	32,755	3.45:1
Gross Floor Area			
– Gaming	10,500 m ²	6,490	16,990
– Retail food & bev	1,800 m ²	9,890	11,690
– Hotel, Conference & other	91,140 m ²	16,375	107,515
– Total	103,440	32,755	136,195
Hotel Rooms/Apartments	480	300	780
Car parking	2,500	550	3,050

4.1 THE HOTEL PROPOSED ON THE SWITCHING STATION SITE



Figure 8 – Preliminary Hotel Plans (Source Cox Richardson Architects)



Picture 20 – Basement parking level



Picture 21 – Ground Level



Picture 22 – First podium level



Picture 23 – second podium level



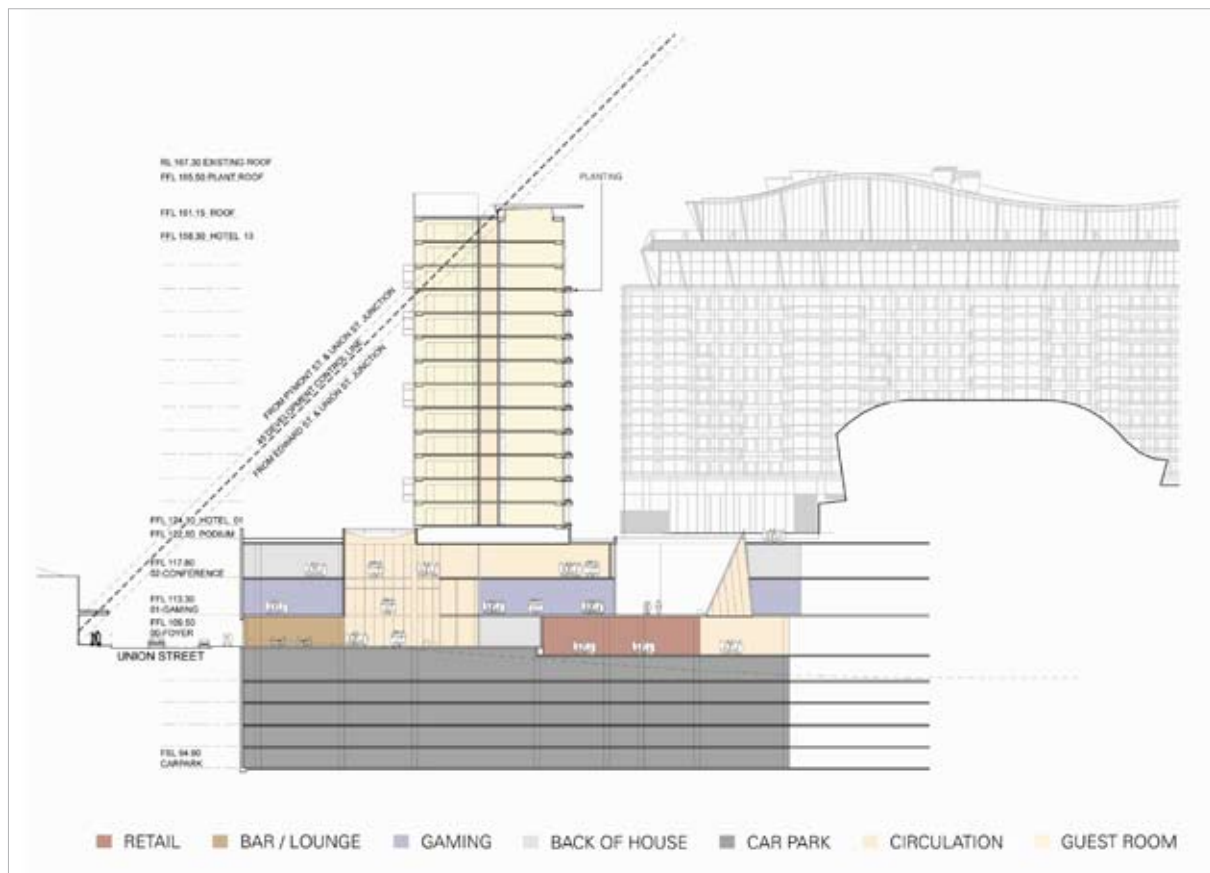
Picture 24 – Podium roof



Picture 25 – Typical tower level

4.2 THE PIRRAMA ROAD EXTENSION

Figure 9 – Pirrama Road steps enclosure (Source: The Buchan Group)



Picture 26 – Section



5 BACKGROUND

5.1 PYRMONT BAY MASTER PLAN

The Pyrmont Bay Master Plan was adopted on 30 April 1993, prior to the incorporation of SREP 26 into Sydney LEP 2005. It applied to the entire Darling Island, Pyrmont Bay Park / Boulevard and Casino precinct. Amendment 1 to the Master was adopted in May 1996, and applied specifically to the Switching Station site.

While the Master Plan was not carried forward when the former SREP 26 was incorporated into SLEP 2005, and therefore no longer has statutory effect, it nevertheless provides a useful guide to the original planning intentions that informed the current controls.

5.1.1 Urban Design / Built Form

Relevant urban design / built form principles established in the Master Plan include:

- *Use building forms to define the public domain by generally building to the street alignment or to an established building line and to a recommended height.*
- *Allow some variation with taller landmark buildings, but still maintain building line with podium, screen or landscape devices.*
- *Form a strong built edge to the water with a continuous line of buildings and a colonnade, linking the Maritime Museum to the historic Victualling yards (Revy).*
- *Building heights should increase from 14 metres at the waterfront to 28 metres behind with different forms of landmark buildings to a maximum of 66 metres.*

5.1.2 Height

With regard to height, the Master Plan stated that the:

"Building envelope of the Power Station/Entertainment complex site should be of an appropriate street scale along the foreshore boulevard (Pirrama Road). Behind this, the landmark building envelope should not dominate the street, but should step to the general building envelope height of 28 metres and up to a maximum landmark height of 66 metres".

Amendment 1 provided two possible interpretations of the built form envelope controls applicable the Switching Station site. While neither option recognised the 'landmark site' height status of the site pursuant to Clause 25 of SREP 26, the second option did provide for additional height above the 28 metre SREP 26 control, in conjunction with slightly increased setbacks above podium level.

5.1.3 Floor Space

Of the overall FSR of 2.5:1 applicable to the entire Master Plan area, the Master Plan redistributed this floor space in accordance with Clause 48 of the former SREP 26. Specifically it allocated less development potential around the waterfront and wharves, and a 'business' FSR of 3.5:1 to the main Casino site (119,000m² GFA) and 4.5:1 to the Switching Station site (21,500m² GFA).

5.1.4 Car Parking

Relevant car parking principles established in the Master Plan include:

- *Provide on-site parking within the range recommended in the Urban Development Plan.*
- *Provide for special needs parking for entertainment/hotel/casino complex subject to traffic study.*



5.1.5 Entertainment/Casino/Hotel Sub-Area

While the Master Plan included a range of detailed provisions that have variously been incorporated into the existing Casino, of relevance to the current project are the following specific provisions:

- *Development will be built generally to the street alignment to define streets and the public domain*
- *A landmark section may be included up to 66 metres in height from the assumed natural ground level, covering not more than 30% of that part of the site to which the 28 metre height limit applies.*
- *Create an "Activity Strip" at ground level along the foreshore boulevard with views across park to the water.*
- *Encourage restaurants, bars and other similar activities associated with hotel and casino above with views across park to the water and the city.*
- *Facades to the foreshore park should create an architectural style and character appropriate for this highly significant location.*
- *Ground level activity should be encouraged on foreshore boulevard frontage and in the through-site pedestrian concourse and its connection the light rail concourse.*
- *A 3 metre colonnade should be provided to foreshore boulevard.*
- *Seek co-ordinated signage and night lighting and illuminated signs to commercial frontage to the foreshore boulevard.*
- *Provide pedestrian connection from light rail station to foreshore boulevard, to Jones Bay Road and to pedestrian concourse connection.*

5.2 ORIGINAL DEVELOPMENT CONSENT FOR THE CASINO DA 33/94

On 2 December 1994, the Minister granted consent for:

"Development of a casino and entertainment complex, including hotel, serviced apartments, theatres, restaurants, bars, car parking and associated facilities".

The consent relevantly conditioned the casino is the following regards:

- Condition 4. FSR not to exceed 3:1.
- Condition 13. Further design detailing of Pirrama Road stairs required to *"activate and enrich this elevation. This shall include a wide variety of cuisine options offering easy choice and easy accessibility for the public"*.
- Condition 16. *"The pedestrian concourse shall be located as shown on the drawings with the following features:*
- i) pedestrian interest and activities.*
 - ii) opportunities for through site views between the foreshore and Pyrmont Street.*
 - iii) a minimum width of 6 metres, of which 4 metres is to be column free."*
- Condition 39. 2,500 car spaces are to be provided.

5.3 DEVELOPMENT CONSENT DA 30/97 - SWITCHING STATION SITE

On 22 October 1997, consent was granted for the erection of a function centre with car parking and retail uses on the Switching Station Site. This development was designed generally in accordance with Amendment 1 to The Pyrmont Bay Deemed DCP. However, the scheme did not proceed and the consent has now lapsed.

5.4 2007 SWITCHING STATION PROJECT

On 12 March 2007 the Director General issued requirements for a Project Application for proposed redevelopment of the Switching Station site. Notably, these included a requirement to undertake a design competition overseen by officers of the Department. This competition was conducted, and in August 2007 a winning entry was recommended by a panel comprising three architects appointed by the Department and three representatives of the Casino.

The winning entry will form part of the current comprehensive Project for the entire Casino site. Environmental assessment of this part of the project has been undertaken in accordance with the Director General's requirements.



6 STATUTORY PLANNING

6.1 CASINO CONTROL ACT 1992

The Casino Control Act governs the operation of casinos in NSW. Its primary objects are:

- (a) *ensuring that the management and operation of a casino remain free from criminal influence or exploitation;*
- (b) *ensuring that gaming in a casino is conducted honestly;*
- (c) *containing and controlling the potential of a casino to cause harm to the public interest and to individuals and families.*

Clause 7(1) of the Casino Control Act 1992 provides that the Minister may, from time to time, issue directions to the Casino Control Authority regarding various matters relating to the Casino. The directions most relevant to this proposal are those relating to the number of gaming tables and also the number of gaming devices for which the Casino holds a licence to operate.

Clause 65 of the Casino Control Act 1992, requires that gaming may not be undertaken within the Casino unless the facilities provided relating to the conduct or monitoring of Casino operations are located in accordance with plans which are approved by the Casino Control Authority. This includes the location of gaming machines and tables.

6.2 ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT ACT 1979

Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (The EP&A Act) requires that major projects obtain approval from the Minister for Planning. Development is defined as a 'Major Project' to which Part 3A applies either by being identified within a State Environmental Planning Policy (see SEPP Major Projects below), or by order of the Minister published in the Gazette.

The Major Project approval process provides for the Minister for Planning to undertake a co-ordinated, whole of government assessment of the merits of a proposal that has significance to the State or region.

6.3 STATE ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING POLICY (MAJOR PROJECTS) 2005

Clause 6 of State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Projects) 2005 (SEPP Major Projects) specifies various criteria by which development may be defined as a 'Major Project'. Part of this clause states:

- (1) *Development that, in the opinion of the Minister, is development of a kind:*
 - (a) *that is described in Schedule 1 or 2, or*
 - (b) *that is described in Schedule 3 as a project to which Part 3A of the Act applies, or*
 - (c) *to the extent that it is not otherwise described in Schedules 1-3, that is described in Schedule 5 is declared to be a project to which Part 3A of the Act applies.*


Clause 10 of Schedule 2 to the Major Projects SEPP describes development with a capital investment value of more than \$5 million on the sites identified on Map 9. The Switching Station site is listed within this clause at point (g), and is identified on Map 9. With a capital investment value of \$140 million, this component of the development is clearly a major project, and was declared as such by the Minister on 4 September 2006.

With regard to the remainder of the scheme, Clause 17 to Schedule 1 of SEPP Major Projects includes:

“Tourist, convention and entertainment facilities

Development for the purpose of tourist related facilities, major convention and exhibition facilities or multi-use entertainment facilities that:

- (a) *has a capital investment value of more than \$100 million, or*
- (b) *employs 100 or more people, or*
- (c) *has a capital investment value of more than \$5 million and is located in an environmentally sensitive area of State significance”.*



Even excluding the Switching Site component of the scheme, the project is clearly a 'tourist and entertainment' facility and has a value in the order of \$190 Million. The Minister was formally requested to declare the entire project as a Major Project on 18 April 2008.

6.4 STATE ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING POLICY 41 (CASINO ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX)

SEPP 41 applies specifically to the site and permits, and indeed requires its use for casino or complementary development, despite the provisions of any other planning instrument. The proposed development is therefore permissible pursuant to the SEPP. Complementary development is defined as:

"development for any of the following purposes:

car and coach parking, community facilities, conference and convention centres, cultural and entertainment facilities, hotels, public recreation areas, public transport purposes and interchange facilities, restaurants, bars and cafes, retail shops, serviced apartments, sporting and recreation facilities (such as a health centre, gymnasium, , swimming pool and tennis courts) , theatres, and any other purposes that are ancillary to development for the purpose of a casino".

6.5 STATE ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING POLICY SEPP 11 (TRAFFIC GENERATING DEVELOPMENT)

SEPP 11 provides a mechanism by which the Roads and Traffic Authority is given the opportunity to comment on the impact of a development proposal that meets certain criteria relating to potential traffic generation. The subject proposal will require this referral as it will result in:

- Increased gross floor area greater than 4,000m²; and
- Car parking for more than 200 vehicles.

6.6 SYDNEY LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN 2005

Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2005 (SLEP 2005) is the principal planning instrument applicable to the land and Part 3 of this instrument contains the planning and development principles for the Ultimo-Pyrmont precinct. On 9 December 2005, the provisions that previously related to the land under Sydney Regional Environmental Plan 26 City West were incorporated into the Sydney LEP 2005. The LEP now details zoning, building height and floor space controls, as well as heritage conservation and Master Plan provisions applicable to the site.

6.6.1 Zoning and Permissibility

The land is zoned 'Residential Business'. The proposed use is consistent with objective (a) of the residential-business zone and is therefore permissible. This objective states:

"(a) to promote a wide range of uses, particularly business development including tourist, leisure, commercial, retail and office development consistent with Ultimo-Pyrmont's proximity to the Sydney CBD, harbour locations and transport infrastructure".

Figure 10 – Zoning Map



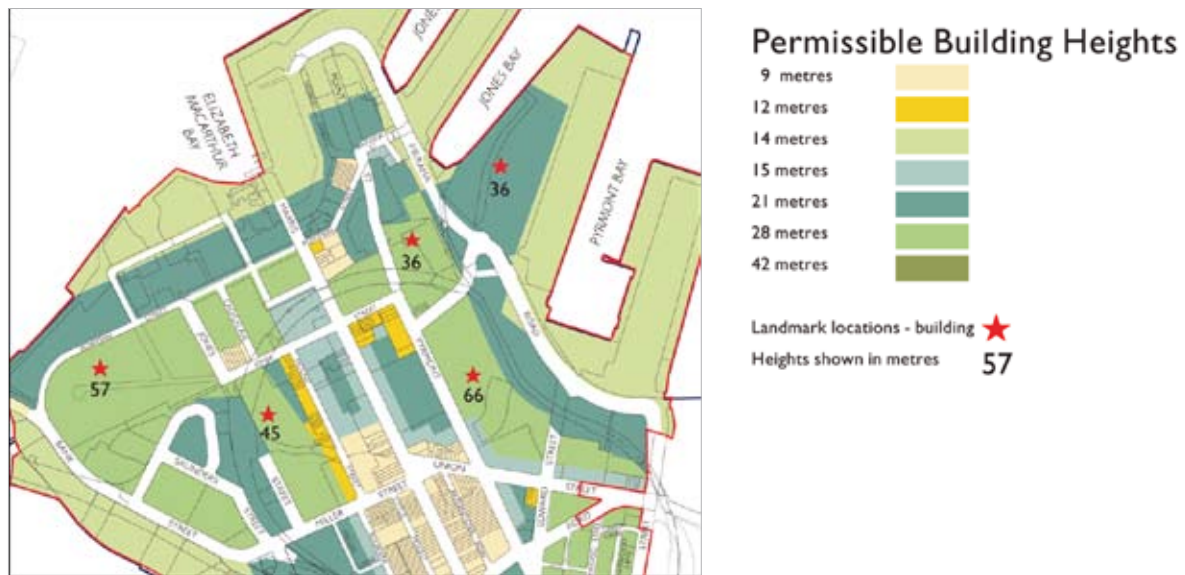
Picture 27 – Extract of SLEP 2005 Ultimo Pyrmont Zoning Map

6.6.2 Building Height

Clause 9 of SLEP 2005 invokes the maximum building heights for land as shown on the Ultimo-Pyrmont Height Map. The achievement of maximum building height must also result in a design consistent with the urban design principles contained within SLEP 2005. The Ultimo-Pyrmont Height Map specifies a 15 metre street edge height for the Switching Station site, a wide zone along Pirrama Road with a 21 metre height limit and a height of 28 metres across the rest of the site.

However, Clause 95 (also by way of the Ultimo-Pyrmont Height Map) specifies 'landmark sites' which may accommodate building heights in excess of the underlying height standards. In this instance, the height map identifies a site specific building height of 66 metres.

Figure 11 – Height Control Map



Picture 28 – Extracts from SLEP 2005 Ultimo Pyrmont Height Map

6.6.3 Floor Space Ratio (FSR)

Clause 98 specifies the maximum area of business floor space permitted on the land in master plan areas as a maximum FSR of 2.5:1. However, pursuant to Clauses 98(2) and 115, a greater FSR may be adopted for the site by way of a Master Plan.

6.6.4 Heritage

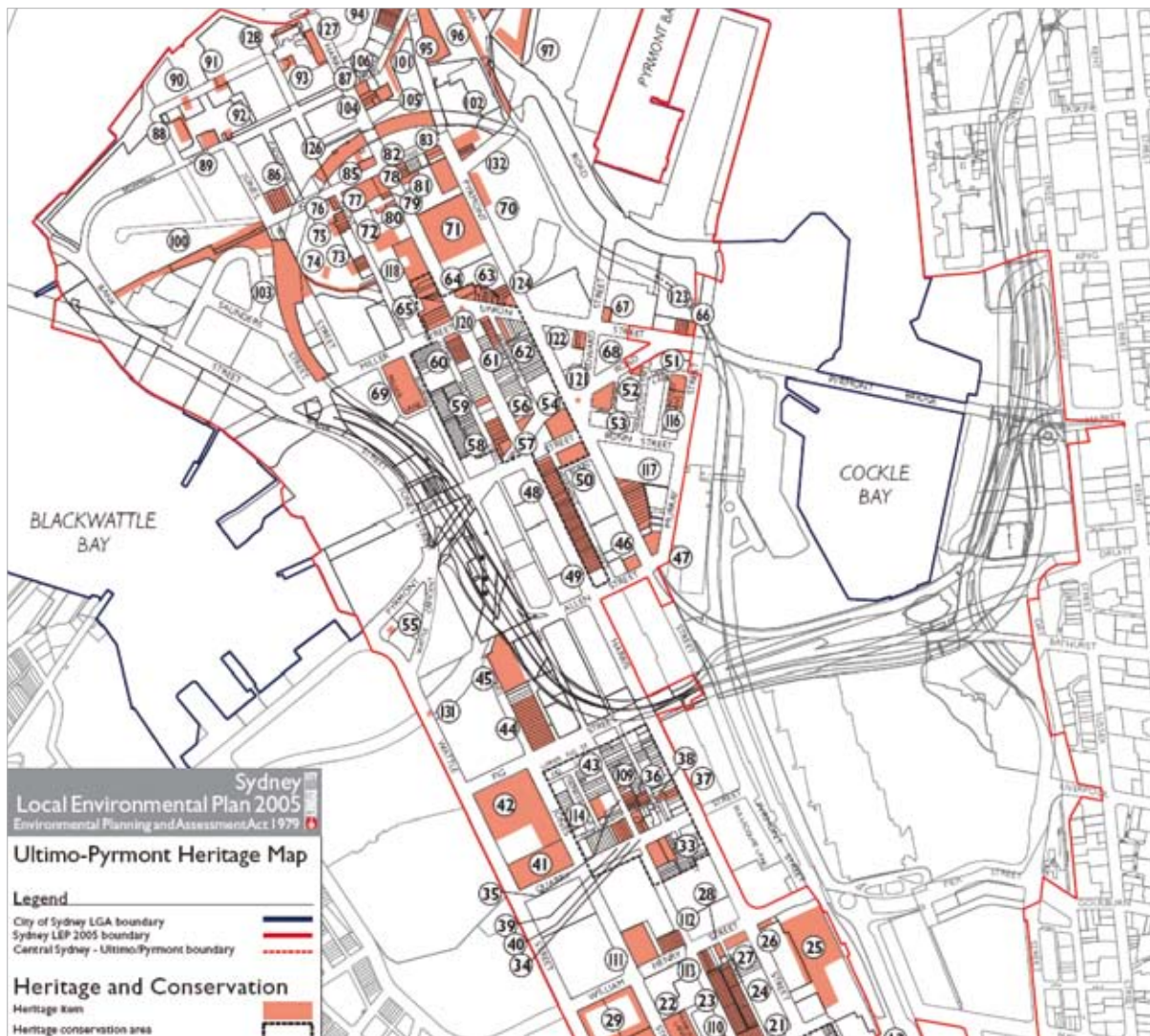
The site is not located within a conservation area, and while Item 70 (Pyrmont Power Station, Building A at 42 Pyrmont Street, on the corner of Jones Bay Road) is technically located on the site, this heritage item has been incorporated in the overall development of the Casino site.

The site is also in the immediate vicinity of numerous heritage items, including:

- No. 63 Group of dwellings at 91-95 Pyrmont Street.
- No. 67 New York Hotel at 60 Union Street (north east corner Union and Edward Streets)
- No. 71 Schute, Bell, Badgery, Lumby Ltd building at 47-69 Pyrmont Street
- No. 83 Cottages at 27-29 Pyrmont Street
- No. 97 Naval Stores Building at Jones Bay Road, Darling Island
- No. 102 Escarpment and Fencing to Jones Bay Road
- No. 122 Group of dwellings at 31-33 Union Street (south west corner Union and Edwards Streets)
- No. 122 Group of dwellings at 31-33 Union Street (south west corner Union and Edwards Streets)
- No. 132 Warehouses and Terraces 10-18 Pyrmont Street

However, only items 67, 122, 124 and 63 are in the direct vicinity of any proposed works, being opposite the Switching Station site. No heritage items have a direct relationship to the Pirrama Road stairs.

Figure 12 – Heritage Map



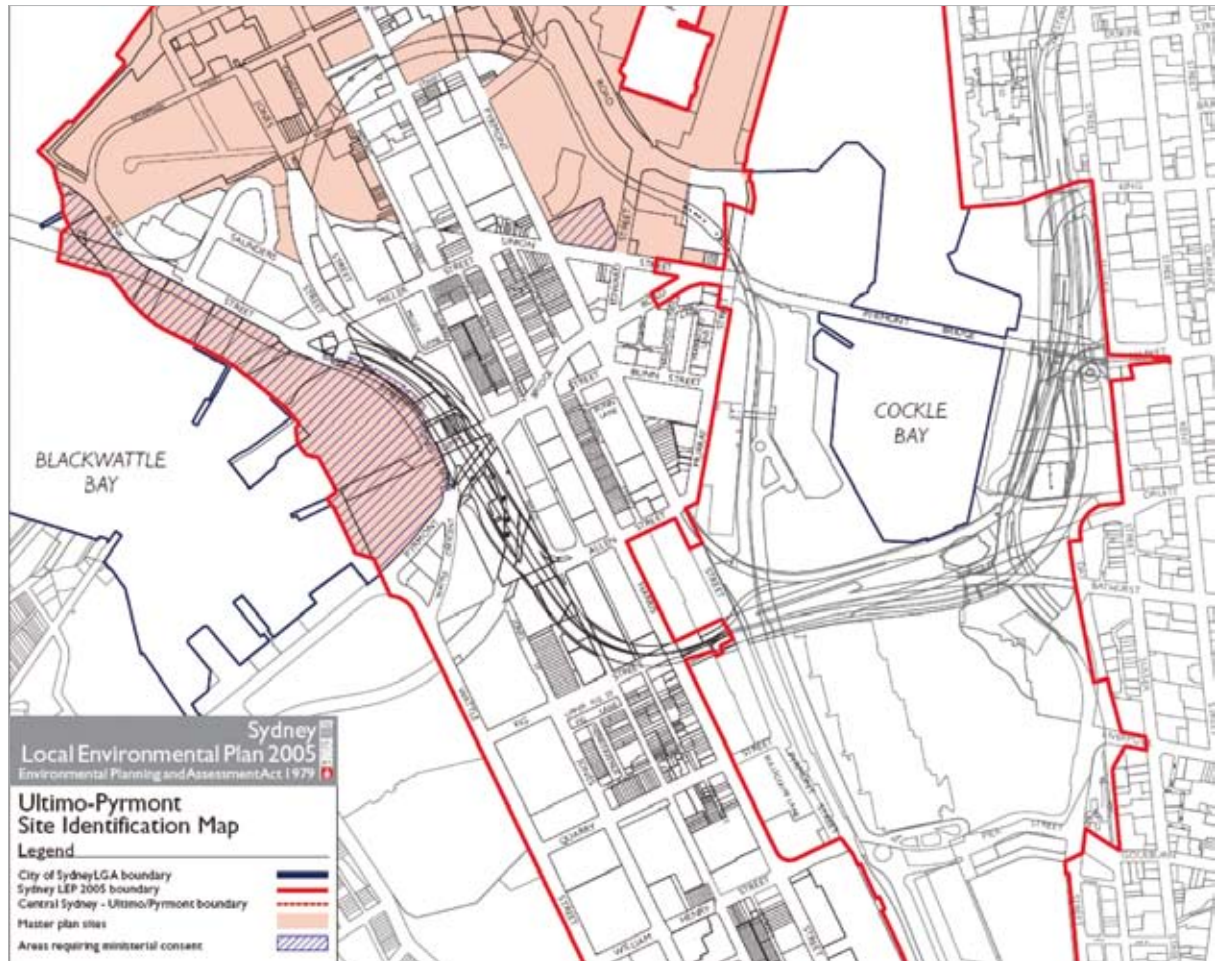
Picture 29 – Extract of SLEP 2005 Ultimo Pyrmont Heritage Map

6.6.5 Master Plans

Notwithstanding that 'Master Plans' are no longer recognised under the EP&A Act, and must be dealt with as 'Deemed DCPs', Clause 106 of SLEP 2005, and the Map thereto (see below), requires the preparation of Master Plans prior to the development of certain land, including the subject site. While the Pyrmont Bay Master Plan was prepared Pursuant to the former SREP 26 (Amendment 1 related specifically to the Switching Station site), this plan was not recognized in the list of adopted Master Plans carried forward into Clause 106 of SLEP 2005. Clause 106 also states that:

"The Minister may waive compliance with this requirement because of the nature of the development, the adequacy of other guidelines or for such other reasons as the Minister considers sufficient".

Figure 13 – Master Plan Sites Map



Picture 30 – Extract of SLEP 2005 Ultimo Pyrmont Site Identification Map

6.6.6 Activity Strips

The Ultimo-Pyrmont zoning map identifies Union Street as an activity strip. Clause 90 of the LEP requires ground floor development along these strips to include non-residential uses such as retail outlets, restaurants, neighbourhood facilities and the like. This is to emphasise people-oriented street frontages and enhance security and surveillance.

6.7 URBAN DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR ULTIMO PYRMONT

An Urban Development Plan (UDP) for Ultimo Pyrmont has been prepared for the areas within Ultimo and Pyrmont to which SREP 26 formerly applied. Clause 83(2) of SLEP 2005 requires that the consent authority have regard to the "Ultimo Pyrmont Urban Development Plan endorsed by the Council on 25 March 2004"

The UDP makes more detailed provisions for land development within the precinct than are contained within LEP 2005, and is consistent with the LEP's broader development controls.

The provisions within the UDP relate to design based development criteria such as, amongst others, more detailed building envelopes, sustainable residential development, access, parking and circulation, and public domain strategies.

Of specific relevance to the Casino is the identification of the site as one of only three 'Retail and Leisure Nodes' is the Ultimo Pyrmont area (Map 12 – Casino, Fishmarkets and Darling harbour).



7 PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The following issues have been identified as being of potential significance in the assessment of the proposed project.

7.1 ECONOMIC EFFECTS

The project application will include a retail analysis of the likely trade area of the proposed retail component and establish the likely retail expenditure of the various potential markets. It will review the retail structure and competition within the trade area and establish how the proposed retail development will integrate within the existing retail fabric. Specifically, the retail analysis will assess the turnover impacts on specific competing retail centres.

Similarly, the project application will include a review of the key drivers of hotel and conference demand and the current state of the tourist market in Sydney, having regard for the quantity and quality of stock, domestic and international tourist numbers, achieved hotel room rates, occupancy rates, etc. Specifically, this analysis will assess the turnover impacts on specific competing hotels and conference facilities.

The project application will also consider the broader economic consequences of the project, including the employment benefits in terms of both direct and indirect effects and the issue of community need.

7.2 SOCIAL EFFECTS

The project application will be accompanied by a Social Impact Assessment addressing the likely impacts of the proposed gaming, hotel and retail components of the development upon the local and broader community. This assessment will include consultation with a range of statutory, community and private stakeholders, to be documented in the project application.

7.3 SUSTAINABILITY

The DG's Environmental Assessment Requirements for the 2007 Switching Station project required demonstration of a 5 star Australian Building Greenhouse Rating (ABGR) rating. However, the ABGR reflects the design, construction, occupancy and ownership phases of commercial office buildings. Similarly, the Green Star rating (through the Green Building Council of Australia) relates generally to office buildings to provide objective measurement for 'green buildings'.

The casino and hotels are different types of building, with different operational characteristics. As such the ABGR and Green Star rating tools cannot be meaningfully applied to the proposed buildings.

However, the proponent supports the principles of both certifications and is committed to incorporating best practice ESD principles in the design, construction and operation of the hotel and casino. A detailed report in this regard will accompany the Project Application.

7.4 HEIGHT

The proposed recladding of the existing tower buildings will not alter their height

The enclosing structure over the Pirrama Road steps will be an inclined structure of varying height, but generally reflecting the height of the existing podium, in general accordance with the 21 and 28 metre height controls.

The building envelope of the hotel on the switching station site will not exceed the height of the existing Star City tower buildings. Under SLEP 2005, the site is earmarked as a landmark site, with a maximum height specified as 66m. Construction to this height will enable the realisation of a viable hotel development within this tourism precinct. The resultant design will sit above the lower, 28m overall height of the Pyrmont peninsula, and reinforce the building's relationship with the taller Star City buildings which have been constructed to this 66m height.

This narrower, taller building form is also proposed to provide a more viable hotel operation, with more attractive rooms that have better access to natural light and views. It also provides for better building separation, and view corridor retention.



7.5 FLOOR SPACE RATIO

The site is subject to a base business FSR of 2.5:1, with no limit upon residential FSR. However, clauses 98 and 115 of LEP 2005 permit additional FSR on land that is subject to a Deemed DCP if:

- a) a better pattern of building heights will result, and*
- b) there are reductions in building heights on other sites in the deemed DCP area, and*
- c) the urban design principles for Ultimo-Pyrmont will be achieved for that land, and*
- d) the greater building height will not adversely affect the quality of the adjoining public domain.*

The Pyrmont Bay Deemed DCP provided a floor space distribution for the 'Pyrmont Bay Master Plan Area', encompassing the Pyrmont Street Entertainment and Casino Centre, Darling Island Residential, Wharf 7-10, the Switching Station site, and Pyrmont Bay Park. All other land within the deemed DCP area has been developed in general accordance with this distribution. However, while the previous 1997 consent for the Switching Station site approved a development that fully realised the 4.5:1 FSR attributed to it under the Master Plan, the Casino has an FSR of just under 3:1, despite being allocated 3.5:1 under the Master Plan.

We therefore submit that while the Pyrmont Bay Master Plan has no statutory force, in the absence of any other applicable guidance, it demonstrates that the proposed FSRs are consistent with the density of development envisaged in the original planning of the locality.

7.6 ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The following descriptions of the various components of the Project have been prepared by the relevant project architects.

7.6.1 New Hotel

The following design statement has been prepared by Cox Richardson, the architects of the proposed switching station hotel component of the project.

"The hotel proposed for the Switching Station site has been designed as a landmark building for the Pyrmont locality. It presents a positive iconic presence to Sydney Harbour and in particular the Pyrmont Bridge approaches to the Peninsula.

It provides an active podium to Union Street that is responsive to the historic character of the streetscape by way of its stone finish and human scale. It provides activation via its hotel entries, retail frontages, hotel lobby activity (cafe and bar) and buffet and gaming entries. It improves pedestrian linkages through the existing Casino creating a more inviting and continuous public domain in the form of a day lit 'eat street'.

The vision for the tower is fresh and contemporary. It provides a separate identity and counterpoint to the existing casino buildings. However in the curvature of its north facade makes reference to the form of the existing buildings. It is crisp, restrained and understated in its detail and includes many ESD initiatives.

The proposal makes a significant contribution to the built form and quality of the public domain to the Peninsula. It will improve amenity for residents and workers, and add significantly to the entertainment/leisure/accommodation capacity of the Darling Harbour precinct".

7.6.2 Casino Alterations

The following design statement has been prepared by the Buchan Group, the architects of the proposed casino alterations:

"Casino Expansion

It is proposed to maintain and confine the Main Gaming Level to the same floor as exists presently. The expansion of this floor is to be in three locations – across the Switching Station site, to the west towards Pyrmont partially over existing void spaces, and over the existing Spanish Steps towards the Harbour.



In satisfaction of the objective of a more Harbour orientated property, it is proposed to create a series of covered “openable” spaces on the Pirrama Road elevation of the building, providing for activity overlooking the Harbour and foreshore.

The Casino expansion will feature a new interior design concept which will simultaneously meet the requirement for an environment of “excitement” and entertainment, together with a world class level of design sophistication befitting – and indeed expressing – the urban essence of Sydney.

The Main Gaming Floor will be broken down into designated “precincts” as direct responses to the various identified target market demographics, whilst simultaneously creating interior spaces and volumes of diversity, colour, interest and excitement.

Most fundamentally, front door arrival to the Casino both for pedestrians and vehicular drop off will be provided at Pirrama Road, in order to orientate the Casino itself and the Casino arrival experience to – the Harbour.

Pirrama Road and Harbour Address

The redevelopment proposes the mutual activation of both the public realm and the Star City property as it addresses Pirrama Road and the Harbour beyond.

This is achieved by means of the Main Gaming Level expansion towards Pirrama Road, and similarly the Ground and First Level expansions and activation of the building. The Ground Level will contain restaurants and cafes integrated with rich landscaping and spectacular light and water features on an epic urban scale.

The elevational treatment of the architecture fronting Pirrama Road will be of the very highest quality and will simultaneously present an enduring image for the property – of life, colour, animation, and iconic imagery.

Crucial to the objective of providing a “front door” experience and identity to the property will be the inclusion of a dramatic glazed entry Icon element containing a series of curved escalators ascending in helical configuration to the Retail / Restaurant Level of the First Floor and in turn to the Main Gaming Floor on the Second Floor, together with a soaring double height curved escalator connecting the Ground Level directly to the Main Gaming Level. This element, together with the new Pirrama Road elevation of the building as a whole, will represent the indelible iconic image of the new Star City redevelopment.

The new front arrival experience to the property will be made complete by a dedicated “red carpet” vehicular drop off lane for taxis and limousines (in addition to the existing Pyrmont Street porte cochere) delivering patrons directly to the new entry Icon.

Retail and Restaurant Precinct

The property presently suffers for lack of a high quality conditioned retail and restaurant precinct.

The new development proposes at First Level a series of premium restaurants overlooking Pirrama Road and the Harbour, combined with a new air-conditioned quality retail zone as an internal “public street”, linking through to the corners of Pyrmont and Union Streets, and Union and Edward Streets.

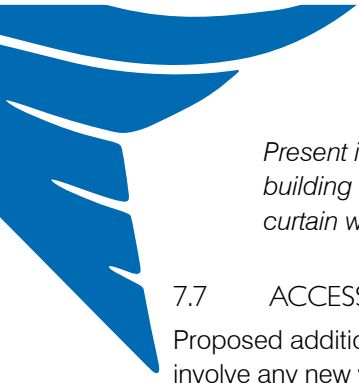
In additional, a series of premium restaurants and a Night Entertainment venue are located at Third Level also overlooking the Harbour.

Existing hotel and serviced apartment tower elevations

The redevelopment proposes a series of subtle facade alterations to the existing hotel and serviced apartment tower elevations.

The intention of these measures is to “contemporise” and “lighten” the somewhat featuristic and masonry dominated expression of the existing forms.

The vision is to render the existing tower forms as an elegant, understated and contemporary backdrop to the more intense visual interest envisaged for the public levels of the property.



Present ideas for these elements involve consideration of the roof pergola elements forming the building crowns and other “clipped on” existing elements, as well as consideration of application of curtain wall systems over portions of the existing masonry”.

7.7 ACCESS AND CAR PARKING

Proposed additional car parking will form a lateral extension of the existing basement car park, and will not involve any new vehicular access points. It will serve patrons of the the new hotel, ancillary uses and the expanded casino. The Project Application will include a detailed parking demand analysis in this regard.

The proposed new driveway and porte cochere to Pirrama Road will refocus vehicular drop off movements from the existing Pyrmont Street frontage to Pirrama Road.

The Project Application will be accompanied by a Transport Impact Study which assesses the combined traffic, transport and accessibility impacts of both of these proposals. The study will:

- Address all impacts and measures to mitigate impacts on local and arterial roads and adjacent road intersections.
- Provide details modelling /modelling for key intersections being:
 - Pyrmont Bridge Road /Pyrmont Street.
 - Pyrmont Street/Union Street.
 - Union Street/Edward Street.
 - Pyrmont Bridge Road /Union Street.
 - Pyrmont Bridge Road/Murray Street.
- Detail Strategies for encouraging public transport patronage for employees and visitors, in particular the light rail given its proximity to the site, and the recently announced plans for a Metro rail station in Pyrmont, and changes to Sydney Ferries.
- Review compliance with relevant Council and RTA traffic and car parking codes.
- Provide details for the provision and movement of coaches, buses, taxis, shuttle buses, service and delivery vehicles.
- Detail adequate emergency vehicle access.
- Consider Councils program of footpath widening, pedestrian and bicycle strategies, and traffic flow change proposal.

7.8 PUBLIC THROUGH-SITE LINK

A through site link was required to join the waterfront with Union Square as part of the original casino development consent. Although this has been provided by way of an arcade within the southern end of the existing casino building, it has thus far not been successful as a pedestrian link and its retail performance has been poor.

As the Switching Station site has yet to be incorporated into the Casino, it has obstructed the line of site and principal pedestrian desire line between Pyrmont Bay and the intersection of Union and Pyrmont Street. This has required the arcade to divert to Pyrmont Street some distance from the intersection with Union Street, creating an indirect route with poor sightlines. Furthermore, limited retail space has compromised the retail attractiveness of the arcade.

With the incorporation of the Switching Station site, it is proposed to extend the arcade directly to the intersection of Union and Pyrmont Streets, and integrate it within a significantly expanded area of ground level retail activity. This will provide for a more direct and vibrant pedestrian connection.



7.9 SAFETY AND SECURITY

The project will involve a new retail environment to Union Street and a new activity area and Casino entry to Pirrama Road. A “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design” (CPTED) process will be undertaken to mitigate any potential personal safety or security risks associated with the proposed works.

7.10 EXTERNAL APPEARANCE

The strategic location and significance of this site provides an opportunity to create a distinctive and innovative building design that will be visible from the surrounding areas and key approaches to Star City.

Preliminary visual studies have been undertaken which identify six key visual points from which the proposed works will be identifiable:

- Darling Harbour
- Sydney CBD – western corridor
- Pyrmont Bay Park
- Pyrmont bridge
- Union Square and
- Union Street

The project application will provide photomontages and analysis of the impact of the project upon these views.

7.11 NOISE

The project Application will be accompanied by a detailed acoustic report addressing the impact of the following potential noise sources upon the amenity of surrounding properties:

- Increased and altered traffic movements on surrounding streets.
- New vehicular drop off activities on Pirrama Road.
- Activities proposed on open and semi-enclosed spaces proposed to Pirrama Road.
- New roof top mechanical plant.

7.12 HERITAGE

While a heritage item is located on the site, it does not have any physical or visual relationship to those parts of the site to which the project relates.

There are no heritage items with any immediate relationship to the Pirrama Road frontage of the site.

While the terrace houses on the corner of Union and Pyrmont and Union and Edward Streets, and the New York Hotel Building at the corner of Union and Edward Streets are across the road from the Switching Station site, these items are located in highly altered environments and already sit within a context of large modern buildings. We therefore do not propose any detailed investigations in relation to potential impacts upon the significance of these properties.

7.13 OTHER MATTERS TO BE ADRESSED

Other matters that will be addressed in the Environmental Assessment include:

- Reflectivity
- Waste Management
- Remediation of Contamination of the Switching Station Site
- Geotechnical Conditions of the Switching Station Site



7.14 AGENCIES TO BE CONSULTED

Only limited informal consultation has been undertaken with public agencies to date. However the following agencies will be consulted:

- SHFA;
- Sydney City Council;
- Roads and Traffic Authority;
- Local Precinct Committees;
- The Design Panel convened for the Switching Station Design Competition in July 2007; and
- Casino Control Authority.



8 CONCLUSION

The project will reposition Star City as a world class casino commensurate with the status of Sydney as an international tourist and business destination.

The new hotel on the Switching Station site will complete development of the street block, provide a high quality active edge to Union Street and add a high quality iconic element to the Pyrmont skyline. It will also significantly enhance the currently dysfunctional through site link arcade.

The proposed façade works to the existing casino towers, the enclosure and activation of the existing steps to Pirrama Road, and the creation of a vehicular drop-off to Pirrama Road will readdress the Casino to the Harbour, as envisaged in the original planning documents.

The Switching Station component of the hotel has already been declared a Major Project, and a formal request for similar declaration of the entire project has recently been made to the Minister. We are therefore seeking the Director General's Environmental Assessment Requirements to allow full documentation of a Project Application.



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