



VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR SYDNEY HARBOUR CASINOS PROPERTIES PTY LTD

PROJECT STAR
Star City Casino upgrade and development of the Switching Station Site
H/DA_PL.1000

GM Urban Design & Architecture Pty Ltd
SEPTEMBER 2008 REV A



CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary	4
2. Introduction and Methodology	6
3. Existing Visual Environment and Proposed Project	8
4. Key Visual Objectives (Current controls)	25
5. Site Visibility	29
a. Long Distance Views	
i. Erskine Street corridor	
ii. King Street corridor	
iii. Market Street corridor	
iv. Millers Point	
b. Medium Distance Views	
i. Cockle Bay views	
ii. King Street Wharf views	
iii. Pyrmont Bridge Views	
c. Immediate Views	
i. Union Street	
ii. Union Square	
iii. Pyrmont Street	
iv. Edward Street	
v. Heritage Walk	
vi. Pirrama Road	
vii. Pyrmont Bay Park	
viii. Community Park and foreshore board walks	
d. Visually Prominent views	

6.	Assessment of Prominent View impacts and Mitigation Measures	54
a.	Long Distance Views	
i.	King Street corridor	
ii.	Millers Point	
b.	Medium Distance Views	
i.	King Street Wharf views	
ii.	Pymont Bridge Views	
c.	Immediate Views	
i.	Union Square	
ii.	Southern / Northern foreshore boardwalks	
7.	Conclusion and Recommendations	63

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been prepared to assess the visual impacts of the Star City Casino upgrade and development of the Switching Station Site on the corner of Union Street and Edward Street in Pyrmont. The project has been accepted by the Department of Planning and the Minister as a Part 3A project and therefore will be considered against the Director Generals requirements which include consideration of its visual impacts.

In summary the proposed development includes:

- A new 309 room hotel with ancillary lower level retail, gaming and conference facilities on the currently vacant 'Switching Station' site.
- Approximately 500 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 Pyrmont Bay Park to the intersection of Union and Pyrmont 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 visual assessment considers the potential impact of proposed massing of new tower and podium development from distance, middle views and immediate views within the surrounding context. The areas analysed include:

- Long distance views including the western and north western fringe of the Sydney CBD and Millers Point with the most prominent views occurring along King Street and the foreshore edge at the northern end of Milers Point.
- Middle distance views including the foreshore edge of the CBD and Pyrmont Bridge with the most prominent views occurring from King Street Wharf and near the western end of the Pyrmont Bridge.
- Immediate views along Union Street, Pyrmont Street, Edward Street, Union Square, Pirrama Road, Pyrmont Bay Park and the foreshore boardwalks and the heritage walk near Jones Bay Road with the most prominent views occurring from Union Square and the northern boardwalk at Pyrmont Bay.

The site has been the subject of a complex process to achieve design excellence. The proponents, Sydney Harbour Casino Properties Pty Ltd have, at the instigation of the Department of Planning, held a design competition for the Switching Station site. This competition was won by Cox Architects.

The winning design was developed from a brief that was specifically prepared for the competition. This brief considered the existing controls and proposed an alternative approach and building envelope for the site which was endorsed by the Department of Planning and the design jury. It is on the basis of this envelope that the detail design has progressed.

The agreed building envelope allows a tower form with lower podium structure on the site which was considered to achieve a more appropriate built form outcome based on view corridors and response to existing context.

The agreed envelope results in certain visual impacts on some views from the city as well as from Millers Point and Union Square. It is reasonable to assume that the visual impacts which flow from this envelope to the view corridors were considered either reasonable by the Department as part of their endorsement of the brief. On this basis the proposal has been considered with this envelope as the 'controls' defining the departments preferred development height, location, tower separation and setbacks etc.

The visual assessment shows that the proposal will generally have a low and acceptable impact when viewed from:

- The Sydney CBD east west streets including Erskine Street and Market Street.
- Pyrmont Bridge eastern and Cockle Bay
- Pyrmont Street
- Edward Street
- Heritage Street

- Pirrama Road
- Pyrmont Bay Park

Views from the following locations will have medium but acceptable visual impact when viewed from:

- King Street towards the Anzac Bridge pylon
- Millers Point and the western foreshore area of the Stevedore site
- King Street Wharf
- Pyrmont Bridge western end
- Union Square and
- The foreshore boardwalks around Pyrmont Bay and close view opposite entry on Pirrama Road.

There are no locations from which the development will be viewed that are considered to have high and unacceptable impact.

The proposed envelope included in the Bates Smart report (design brief for the competition) shows a building envelope with a potential height of 66m, a podium height of 15m and a tower separation of 12m. The proposal which is the subject of this report develops a building that is generally consistent with the winning design and the numeric standards within the design brief.

The proposal provides a 12m separation between the tower forms and a 66m tall slim tower form oriented east west. The tower provides a greater setback than envisaged by the brief aligning the building with the 9 storey tower form at 60 Union Street. This gives the tower alignment an appropriate streetscape presence that does not overly dominate the finer grain of Union Street but acknowledges the role of the site as a landmark location. The form of the podium with its simple linear expression and setbacks at the corners reduces its apparent scale adjacent to the lower heritage items on the western edge of Union Square and responds to the 3 storey scale of the remaining buildings surrounding the block.

The more distant views from Millers Point showcase the new tower as part of the Pyrmont built form silhouette. Whilst the tower occupies a considerable area of the sky plane, extending the built form of the existing towers, it is appropriate and in character with the rest of the landmark buildings which create emphasis in the skyline. The form reads as part of the composition of Casino towers and is consistent with the desired future character for Pyrmont articulated in the controls of larger scale built forms creating the 'wall of buildings' with the landmark sites seen as taller elements contributing to the drama of the peninsular. The proposal will reinforce this effect.

The importance of creating a transition from the existing towers of Star City to the scale of Union Street is a consideration which impacts more directly on the immediate views of the tower on the Switching Station site.

The height of the tower is perceived from Union Square as slightly lower than the existing towers. This is due to its lighter architectural character and the cantilevered glass parapet rather than the more solid, more intrusive forms of the existing character. The variation of the glassy tower to the more solid sandstone podium also achieves greater emphasis and weight to the base of the building creating a strong transition to the lower streetscape scale.

Therefore visual impact assessment shows that the proposed development on the Switching Station site and alterations and additions to the existing Casino are appropriate with low to medium impacts that are considered acceptable based on the design brief outcomes dictated by the Design Competition controls applying to the site and surroundings and the existing context in which the development is located.

2. INTRODUCTION

This report has been commissioned on behalf of Sydney Harbour Casino Properties Pty Ltd as part of a submission to the Department of Planning under Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Projects)2005.

The purpose of this report is to consider and assess the visual impacts of the massing and street frontage heights of the proposal.

This report addresses the following:

- *“Visual impact of the project in the context of its setting and building mass as viewed from public areas including Darling Harbour/Cockle Bay Wharf and Sydney CBD.*
- *Consistency with the street frontage scale in the locality and relative to adjacent buildings.*
- *Analysis of views and vistas and impact of the proposal on these views, particularly on views from Harris and Union Square, Darling Harbour/Cockle Bay Wharf and the Sydney CBD.”*

In preparing this report GMU have referred to the following documents:

- Star City Casino Upgrade Preliminary Environmental Assessment by Urbis dated 2008.
- Architectural drawings No ADA000, 100, 101, 102, 110, 120-122, 140-145, 150-152, 155, 158, 180-187, 190-191, 195, 200-205, 401, 402, 500-503, 550.
- City West Redevelopment Project Pyrmont Bay Master plan dated June 1993.
- City West Redevelopment Project Pyrmont Bay Master Plan – Draft Amendment 1 Switching Station site.
- Proposed Switching Station Site Development Design Competition Invitation including the Bates Smart Site Analysis report dated Ma7 2007
- Photomontages for Key Views
- Competition entry and photomontages.

METHODOLOGY

The assessment and conclusions contained in this report have developed from a visual assessment based on the following methodology:

- Desktop study including a review of aerial photography, topographic survey and the master plans and design brief endorsed by the Department which apply to the site.
- Meeting with the project architects to discuss and develop an understanding of the proposal.
- Review of the preliminary information for the proposal including the Environmental Assessment and Sketch design drawings.
- Visit the City model to determine areas of greatest likely visual impact.
- Determine key viewpoints via the above and the DRG requirements.
- Site visit including surrounding context area to test viewpoints and determine impacts.
- Describe and analyse views to the site – long distance, medium and immediate views.
- Ascertain views that are acceptable and those with a medium or high impact (visually significant views).
- Provide preliminary comments to APP and the project architects.
- Discuss conclusions and mitigation approaches.
- Review further drawings and massing photomontages.

-
- Prepare final report.

The approach for considering the views focused on public domain viewing points. The views have been considered based on the impact of the new massing as part of an existing cityscape and skyline as well as considering prominent way finding markers that might be affected by the proposal. The impact of these views has also been considered relative to the stated objectives of the master plans and design brief that were developed for the area and this site.

The views are described in the report via photographs with viewing locations shown. From this point the visually prominent views are further discussed and the impact of the development considered. Where the impact is considered unacceptable the recommendations are provided to improve or ameliorate the view impacts.

3. EXISTING VISUAL ENVIRONMENT AND PROPOSED PROJECT

The existing Casino and Switching Station site are located on the eastern slopes of Pymont. Together the Casino plus the Switching Station site occupy the entire block. This block is bounded by Jones Bay Road, Pymont Street, Pirrama Road, Union Street and Edward Street as shown in figure 1.



SITE LOCATION PLAN (COURTESY GOOGLE EARTH)

The existing Casino is located on the south western side of the Pirrama Road located behind the refurbished wharf structures at Pymont Bay and Darling Point. The existing building contributes to the foreshore character as part of the built form backdrop to Pymont Bay Park and is visible from the wharf structures and the foreshore boardwalk. The towers of the existing Casino contribute to the Pymont built form silhouette when viewed from the city and Cockle Bay/Darling Harbour. Further north along the city foreshore near King Street Wharf and to the northern edge of Millers Point the existing towers are seen “in the round” as prominent elements in the cityscape.

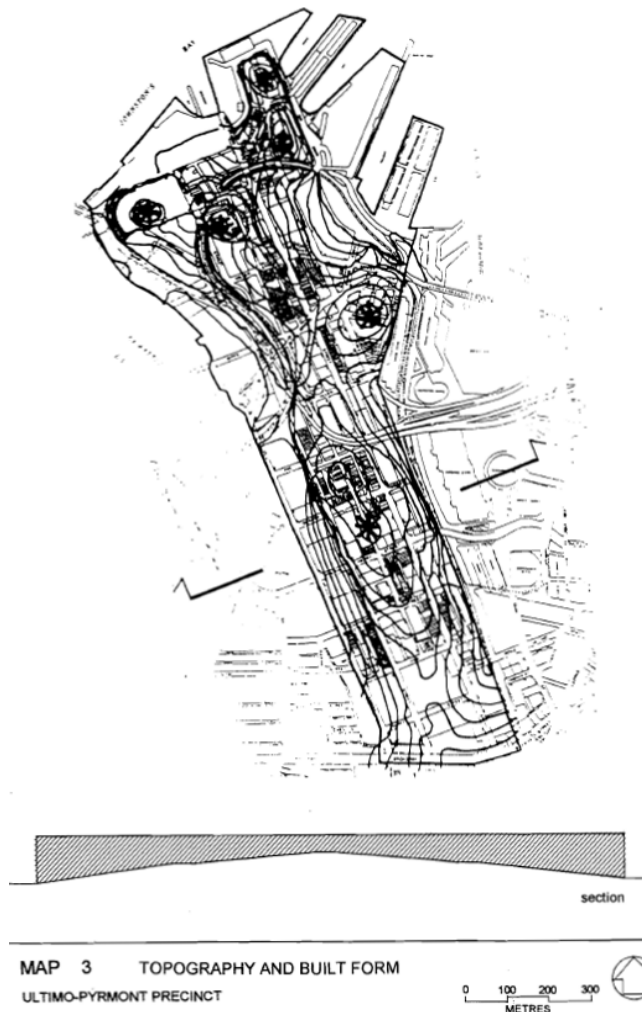
The closer context of the both sites is created by the streetscapes of Union Street, Pymont Street, Edward Street, Pirrama Road and Jones Bay Road. All these streets are part of the urban environment of Pymont with taller, dense development towards the east adjoining Darling Harbour and also to the north rising towards the northern ridge line along Pymont Street.

The Switching Station site occupies a full block frontage to Union Street and equates to roughly one third of the entire street length. This site also has frontage to Pyrmont Street and Edward Street. The podium level of development on the Switching Station site will have a visual presence to all three streets and to the square with the tower visible from distant views along the streets rather than at close quarters. The tower form will be visible in views from the CBD and Millers Point from various vantage points that are discussed in the following sections.

The visual environment in which the sites are located is influenced by a number of factors:

- *Topography*

The peninsular of Ultimo Pyrmont is oriented generally north west to south east. It is separated from the Sydney CBD by Pyrmont Bay and Darling Harbour and from Rozelle and Balmain by Blackwattle Bay and Johnston Bay. The peninsular is defined by a central ridge which runs along Bulwarra Road and Harris Street, terminating at roughly Bowman/John Street. Visually the peninsular is viewed as a number of precincts including the eastern slope which is visible to the western edge of the city, the western slope which is visible from Glebe Point and Rozelle and the northern end of Pyrmont which is visible from Balmain east. The orientation of the land mass exposes the north eastern areas of Pyrmont to McMahons Point (distance views) and to the northerly edge of Millers Point when looking back towards the south west.



EXTRACT FROM URBAN DEVELOPMENT PLAN 1999 UPDATE (City of Sydney)



AERIAL SHOWING THE LOCATION OF PYRMONT ULTIMO IN ITS BROADER CONTEXT (Courtesy Google Earth)

- *Street pattern, width and orientation*

The street pattern within Pyrmont is a regular rectangular grid. The longer streets run generally north west to south east. These streets include Pyrmont and Harris Street and they are the main collectors providing access from the northern end of the peninsular back to Parramatta Road and the southern part of the city. The shorter blocks are located south west to north east and these more local streets provide access from bay to bay and across to the CBD for pedestrians. In reality these east west links are often compromised by major road infrastructure for the Western Distributor and access to the Anzac Bridge.

The major north south streets such as Harris and Pyrmont Street vary in character along their length in response to the proximity to the water and offer water views to the north west. The east west streets also vary in their character depending on their alignment. Pyrmont Street is a north south street which undulates from higher ground to the south to

a minor gully near Jones Bay Road, rising again to the north before descending into Point Street and the escarpment near the northern part of Pirrama Road.



STREET PATTERN SURROUNDING THE SITE (COURTESY GOOGLE MAPS)

Harris Street roughly runs along the ridgeline and therefore has views to both east and west down some of the cross streets with Union Square located at the junction between Union Street and Harris Street. It provides outlooks down Union Street towards the city with views to the north east possible across the lower built form.

Union Street is located roughly on axis with Pymont Bridge which provides the main pedestrian and light rail access from the CBD to Darling Harbour and Pymont. The visual connection from street to bridge is not strong due to the configuration of the intersection and built form near the waters edge.

Edward Street has a different orientation to the majority of other streets in the precinct connecting Pymont Bridge Road to Pirrama Road and the foreshore edge. This street provides a vista for the small urban space on the corner of Pymont Bridge Road and Pymont Street.

Pirrama Road is the foreshore street to the eastern edge of Pymont. Its alignment is not regular but varies to respond to the various wharfs and foreshore areas. It is generally set back from the foreshore edge, separated by parks and built form from the bays. Therefore it offers a range of views to the Casino Site both from the street itself and from the community parks and wharf structures.

- *The existing built form, scale and grain*

The guiding principles underlying the controls applying to Ultimo Pymont have dictated a built form that reinforced the characteristics of the historic wool stores and warehouses (see diagrammatic section pg 9 under topography showing the preferred built form approach across the ridge to the water). This form advocates larger scale buildings on the flat, filled harbour foreshore areas to the eastern and western edges of Ultimo with finer grain, lower scale buildings along

the central ridge. The controls discuss the groupings of heritage buildings on the ridge line juxtaposed with the larger linear wharf buildings and industrial structures on the waterfront.

Both the original character of the area and the controls which have dictated more recent building massing have reinforced high urban edges to both the east and the west of the peninsula as 'urban walls'. This approach has created a wall of buildings which effectively absorbs the site and its existing towers into an urban cityscape when viewed from the middle of the Sydney CBD, Darling Harbour and the Pyrmont Bridge. The controls also identify sites for landmark buildings where the taller tower elements are intended to be seen above this wall to mark significant site. The Casino is one such site.

The Western Edge of Darling Harbour -

The built form along the edge of Darling Harbour as viewed from the city and Cockle Bay is created by the Grand Mecure and Ibis hotel and serviced apartments, Novotel Darling Harbour and Goldsbrough buildings to the south. The wall of buildings is strongly evident and the Star City Casino buildings are seen as a minor element within the overall built form edge. Therefore the existing buildings along Darling Harbour are the dominant building forms.



PHOTOGRAPH OF WESTERN EDGE OF DARLING HARBOUR FROM COCKLE BAY SHOWING THE EFFECT OF THE TALLER LARGE SCALE DEVELOPMENT AT THE FORESHORE EDGE



PHOTOGRAPH OF WESTERN EDGE FURTHER NORTH WITH STAR CITY CASINO SOUTHERN TOWER JUST VISIBLE OVER THE MARATIME MUSEUM ROOF



PHOTOGRAPH OF STAR CITY, THE MARITIME MUSEUM AND THE GRAND MECURE IBIS FROM NEAR KING STREET WHARF

Union Street -

This wall of buildings creates the foreshore edge but the character changes at Union Street with lower street wall buildings comprising 4 storey commercial developments on the southern side of Union Street balanced by the 3 storey podium of 60 Union Street. The tower form of 60 Union Street rises to 9 storeys but has a low visibility to the street due to its setback from the street edge. This scale reduces again due to the rising topography of Union Street. The corner of Edward and Union Street has a lower scale created by the 3 storey heritage building to the north east and the 2 storey retail terrace on the south west corner of the intersection. This lower scale is continued along the southern side of Union Street across Pymont Street to Union Square.



PHOTOGRAPH AT THE EASTERN END OF UNION STREET LOOKING DOWN THE STREET WITH THE SITE BEYOND THE YELLOW COMMERCIAL BUILDING ON THE RIGHT HAND SIDE – THE BUILDING SCALE ACROSS THE STREET IS 3-4 STOREYS



PHOTOGRAPH OF SHOWING THE TRANSITION FROM THE TALLER COMMERCIAL PODIUM OF 60 UNION STREET TO THE SLIGHTLY LOWER FORM OF THE 3 STOREY HERITAGE BUILDING ON THE CORNER OF EDWARD STREET OPPOSITE THE SITE



PHOTOGRAPH LOOKING WEST ALONG UNION STREET WITH THE SITE TO THE RIGHT HAND SIDE AND THE EXISTING 2 STOREY WAREHOUSE AND TERRACES TO THE LEFT HAND SIDE (SOUTH)



PHOTOGRAPH SHOWING THE TWO STOREY TERRACES ON THE NORTHERN SIDE OF UNION STREET BEYOND THE INTERSECTION WITH PYRMONT STREET. THE GRAIN AND CHARACTER OF THE STREET CHANGES AT THIS POINT TO THE RIDGE PRECINCT.



PHOTOGRAPH LOOKING TOWARDS THE SITE AT THE CORNER OF PYRMONT AND UNION STREET SHOWING THE FINER GRAIN OF BUILDINGS AROUND UNION SQUARE WITH 60 UNION STREET VISIBLE IN THE DISTANCE

The site creates the northern boundary of this street between Edward and Union Street. Its context is created by the 3 storey scale of 60 Union Street's podium, the heritage New York Hotel to the east and finer grain of the 2 storey terraces to the west. It will have a role in creating the transition from the larger 'urban wall' typology of the built form on the eastern edge of the peninsular to the finer heritage character of the central ridge and Union Square.

Pymont Street -

The built form character along Pymont Street also changes. To the south west of the site the built form is generally low scale 2 storey terraces of mixed commercial and residential use. The south east side of the street is also a 2 storey scale. This scale increased further north leading into the taller 7 storey residential tower development on the corner of Pymont Bridge Road and Pymont Street.



PHOTOGRAPH LOOKING ALONG THE SOUTHERN SIDE OF PYRMONT STREET (WEST)



PHOTOGRAPH LOOKING NORTH TOWARDS THE SITE FROM THE SOUTHERN END OF PYRMONT STREET VIEWING THE EASTERN SIDE OF THE STREET IN CONTEXT WITH THE EXISTING STAR CITY CASINO VISIBLE AT THE END OF THE STREET VISTA – NOTE THE CHANGE IN SCALE FROM THE UNION STREET WAREHOUSE BUILDING TO THE RESIDENTIAL TOWER ADJACENT ON THE RIGHT HAND SIDE

To the north along Pymont Street the built form responds strongly to the warehouse typology. The existing podium of the Casino and Substation development create a tall 3 storey street walls which increase further in scale to the 5-6 storey heritage buildings further to the north.



PHOTOGRAPH LOOKING NORTH ALONG PYRMONT STREET SHOWING THE EXISTING CASINO PODIUM



PHOTOGRAPH LOOKING ALONG PYRMONT STREET AT THE INTERSECTION WITH JONES BAY ROAD LOOKING SOUTH



PHOTOGRAPH LOOKING SOUTH ALONG PYRMONT STREET PAST THE CASINO SHOWING THE TALLER RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS THE TOP OF THE HILL

Edward Street –

Edward Street also changes scale from its southern end near Pymont Bridge Road through to the northern end near Pirrama Road. The northern end of the street offers views to the water with a built form created by the side elevation of the 9 storey office building (with frontage to Union Street) and the podium and Lyric Theatre structure of the existing Casino. The southern end of this block is the Switching Station site.

The southern part of the block has lower building forms which include the 4 storey commercial development that has frontage onto the southern side of Union Street and the 3 storey industrial warehouse that continues through to Pymont Street.



PHOTOGRAPH LOOKING DOWN EDWARD STREET TOWARDS THE WATER AND PIRRAMA ROAD SHOWING THE GREATER SCALE TO THE EAST AND THE EXISTING PODIUM FORM AND LYRIC THEATRE TO THE LEFT HAND SIDE OF THE IMAGE



PHOTOGRAPH LOOKING DOWN EDWARD STREET TOWARDS THE WATER SHOWING THE CHANGE IN SCALE FROM THE SOUTH TO THE NORTH – FINER GRAIN DEVELOPMENT TO TALLER 'WALL' BUILDINGS

Jones Bay Road –

To the north of the Casino the scale of development increases to the top of the ridge. Much of this development is high density residential with heights in the order of eight storeys. This area contains the heritage walk which starts at Jones Bay Road near the Casino and links to Mill Street. This walk has a greater elevation than Jones Bay Street and offers views back to the Casino podium.



PHOTOGRAPH LOOKING EAST ALONG JONES BAY ROAD SHOWING THE INCREASED SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT GENERALLY TO THE NORTHERN END OF THE CASINO BLOCK



PHOTOGRAPH LOOKING AT THE INTERSECTION OF JONES BAY ROAD WITH PIRRAMA ROAD WITH THE CURVED END OF THE EXISTING CASINO VISIBLE AND THE NEW 5 STOREY DEVELOPMENT UNDER CONSTRUCTION ALONG PIRRAMA ROAD



PHOTOGRAPH FROM THE HERITAGE WALK LOOKING BACK TOWARDS THE CASINO

Pirrama Road -

Pirrama Road provides the foreshore street for this part of Pyrmont. To the north east are Jones Bay Wharf, the development of Darling Island and Darling Harbour Wharf 10, all of which respond to the warehouse or wharf typology required by the area controls. The scale of these developments is generally 4-5 storeys with public boardwalks along the waters edge. The character of the street is created by the juxtaposition of these wharf buildings and public open space areas and parks which contrast with the Casino podium which steps back from the street edge.

The area of Pirrama Road leading south to the Casino is dominated by the extensive street tree planting that screens much of the built form. The vegetation within Pyrmont Bay Park continues this landscape character and presently the extensive tree planting up and through the Casino Podium also reinforces this green edge to the street.



PHOTOGRAPH LOOKING SOUTH EAST DOWN PIRRAMA ROAD TOWARDS THE EXISTING CASINO FRONTAGE



PHOTOGRAPH LOOKING FROM THE EASTERN SIDE OF PIRRAMA ROAD TOWARDS THE EXISTING FRONTAGE OF THE CASINO INCLUDING THE 'STAIRWAY'



PHOTOGRAPH FROM THE SOUTHERN EDGE OF THE FORESHORE PARK ADJACENT TO PYRMONT BAY LOOKING NORTH WEST TOWARDS THE EXISTING CASINO.



PHOTOGRAPH LOOKING ACROSS PYRMONT BAY TOWARDS THE NORTHERN TOWER OF THE CASINO AND THE NEW DEVELOPMENT UNDER CONSTRUCTION ON PIRRAMA ROAD AND THE SOUTHERN END OF DARLING ISLAND



PHOTOGRAPH LOOKING AT THE WHARF REDEVELOPMENT ADJACENT TO THE PYRMONT BAY MARINA

THE PROPOSED PROJECT:

The proposed project includes an upgrade of the existing Star City Casino both internally within the podium and gaming floors as well as upgrades to the facades of the existing towers and infilling the existing stairs to Pirrama Road to create a stronger street edge and activation. The project includes the development of the adjoining Switching Station Site on the corner of Pyrmont Road and Union Street for a new hotel and lobby and extension to the current gaming floors and retail arcade. The existing Casino consists of:

- 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



IMAGE OF THE NEW HOTEL PROPOSED ON THE SWITCHING STATION SITE

The site accommodates the Light Rail (LR) line and the Casino LR station, which are both housed within the Casino building, close to the Pirrama Road frontage. The existing hotel and serviced apartments are contained within the two curved tower forms which are visible from the CBD and Millers Point to the north as part of the urban skyline of Pyrmont.

The development of the Switching Station site includes an additional new hotel tower and podium, connecting into the existing retail arcade, linking Pirrama Road to the corner of Union and Pyrmont Street and Union and Edward Street as envisaged by the original master plan for the site. The new development upgrading the Casino and developing the Switching Station site includes:

- A new 309 room hotel with ancillary lower level retail, gaming and conference facilities on the currently vacant 'Switching Station' site.
- Approximately 500 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 Pyrmont Bay Park to the intersection of Union and Pyrmont 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.

4. KEY VISUAL OBJECTIVES (CURRENT CONTROLS)

To determine the key visual objectives for this development reference is necessary to the controls applying to this site and area, the design brief upon which the project design is based and the Director Generals requirements for the site. The layering of controls applying to this site is complex. The planning report accompanying this project submission includes a comprehensive discussion of the applicable controls for the site. Therefore only the relevant considerations regarding visual impact have been included here.

Pymont Bay Master Plan -

The Pymont Bay Master Plan was undertaken prior to the incorporation of SREP 26 into the Sydney LEP 2005. The master plan now has no real effect as it was not carried forward as part of the adoption of the former SREP 26 into the City of Sydney LEP 2005. It does contain the original principles that were to apply to the area and site.

The relevant urban design / built form principles established in the Master Plan include (*extract from Urbis Planning Report*):

- *“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.*

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 to the original master plan 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, the second option did provide for additional height above the 28 metre SREP 26 control, in conjunction with slightly increased setbacks above podium level.”

The Master Plan for this precinct envisaged that the Casino site should provide a visual landmark when viewed from a distance and from the water. It did not however specifically include or exclude the 66m height to the Switching Station site as distinct from the main Casino Site. The further amendment did set two height scenarios that were intended to act as a height transition from the existing Casino towers to the lower scale of Union Street.

Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2005 - Planning principles for Ultimo-Pymont -

Review of the current applicable LEP 2005 shows that the planning principles applying to Ultimo-Pymont are as follows:

- (a) *“Building heights are to reflect and emphasise the topography of Ultimo-Pymont by increasing in height as distance increases from the nearest waterfront. Building heights should allow a reasonable sharing of distant views from buildings by their occupants.*
- (b) *The heights and scale of buildings are to form a transition between the high-rise buildings in the City and low-rise buildings in the suburbs adjoining Ultimo-Pymont.*
- (c) *The heights and scale of new buildings are to respect existing buildings in the locality, particularly heritage items and buildings in conservation areas.*
- (d) *The heights and form of buildings are to take account of visual impact, solar access, wind impact and, where appropriate, the privacy of residences, in order to contribute to a high quality of environmental amenity in intensively used parts of the public domain and in residential areas.*
- (e) *Buildings fronting the public domain should have appropriate height, bulk, finish and street alignment so as to enhance its quality by complementing its character. In general the scale of street facades must be*

appropriate to the width of adjoining streets or lanes, adjoining heritage items or other contextual elements.

(f) *Higher buildings may be accommodated:*

(i) *If they will emphasise existing or former high points in the natural ground level on Distillery Hill, Pymont Point, Darling Island and adjoining the CSR Stables, they will reflect the former vertical smoke-stack elements of the Pymont Point Power Station, ...*

and they will not compromise the environmental amenity and general scale of buildings in their locality.

(g) *Development on the waterfront and on adjoining land is to maximise the environmental quality of those parts of the peninsula for all users.*

Urban Development Plan -

The original Urban Development Plan 1999 Update for Ultimo Pymont still applies to the site and precinct. This document provides more detail for the development of the area and states that:

“High edges formed by existing warehouses along Wattle and Pymont Streets generate two distinct ‘urban walls’. These provide clear definition of the Pymont/Ultimo precinct from surrounding areas... This characteristic should be maintained and enhanced by new development.”

The UDP sets out a number of numeric controls and other provisions which apply to the site:

- Street wall controls – 45 degree angle generated from 1.6m above the street level as the primary setback control for the street.
- Sites adjoining heritage items or conservation areas must be compatible in form and the height so that the new building does not exceed one and a half times the height of the adjoining lower scale building(s).
- Encouraging additional height at street corners.
- Privacy separation distances of 12m between habitable and habitable rooms
- Significant view corridors down Edward Street adjacent to the Casino, a view from Union Square as a significant place oriented along Union Street (not over the Casino or Switching Station site).
- Facades are to be rich in treatment and modelling ...to contribute to a lively environment and harmonious streetscapes and built edges of the public domain.
- Awnings are required along Union Street
- Permissible building height identified as 21m to Union and Pymont Street for the Switching Station site with an overall height of 28m and a landmark location height of 66m for the Casino.
- Identification of the site as a retail and leisure node.
- Street tree planting to Union Street with *Plantanus hybrida*, Pymont Street with *Plantanus orientalis digitata*.

The proponent has applied to the Department of Planning for this site to be considered as a Part 3A project. The Minister has advised that it meets the criteria and as such will be assessed under the relevant legislation. As part of achieving a high quality design outcome for the site the proponent in consultation with the Department of Planning has held a design excellence competition. The result of this competition and its brief also inform the likely and acceptable visual impacts of the development.

Design Excellence Competition –

The design brief for the competition was agreed and endorsed by both the proponent and the Department of Planning in setting the appropriate objectives, principles and built form envelope for the Switching Station site. Although the competition has no statutory force it does appear to represent the outcome desired by State Government as part of the Part 3A process. Therefore it is relevant to summarise the key outcomes and envelope controls within the brief.

The brief required the following outcomes:

- The exploration of innovative ideas and design excellence
- The Department advised that the master plan is considered to no longer apply to the site.
- 4 key locations from which the building will be identifiable being:
 - Darling Harbour
 - Pyrmont Bridge
 - Union Square
 - Sydney CBD.
- A site analysis was included by Bates Smart that identified the following for the site:
 - The former Switching Station site mediates several street frontages including the historic residential frontages to Union Street and the warehouse frontages to Pyrmont Street.
 - Opportunities for good solar access to the north due to the low scale of the podium and fly tower to the Lyric Theatre.
 - Primary open landscaped space includes Union Square, Pyrmont Bay Parkland and the Star City roof terrace.
 - Primary urban open space includes Pyrmont Bay harbour side walk, Union Square and Darling Harbour promenade.
 - There is a primary pedestrian route along Union Street from Harris Street to the city.
 - The pylon on the Anzac Bridge forms a predominant landmark from the western, northern and southern approaches to the peninsular and is the tallest built forms in the precinct.
 - Star City buildings are the predominant buildings on the northern side of the Pyrmont Peninsular, yet are substantially lower than the Jackson Landing grouping.
 - The group of hotels and service apartment buildings (Grand Mecure, Hotel Ibis and Novotel) form a building wall on the eastern side of Pyrmont and to the western side of Darling Harbour.
 - Union Square terminates Union Street at the Harris Street intersection on the north side ridge forming the highest point on the peninsular.
 - There is a key vista from Union Square to the city skyline towards the east including vistas of Sydney Tower on the Union Street axis.
 - Edward Street has a direct view beyond Pyrmont Bay Park to Sydney Harbour.
 - Probable development envelope for the Switching Station site should include:
 - A Tower setback to Union and Pyrmont Street;
 - 12m separation from the existing Casino tower to the new building;
 - New podium height to match adjacent street blocks;
 -

- Maximise views for the potential hotel;
 - Maintain and reinforce existing key view corridors down Union Street, Edward Street and from Union Square across the site;
 - A building envelope with a 66m height equalling the existing Casino Roof with 13 levels of hotel and a continuation of the existing podium at RL 25.
- Extend the landscaped area of the exiting podium roof to the Switching Station site.

Finally the preliminary strategic assessment by Urbis included in Appendix F of the brief dictates:

- A building height no higher than the existing Star City buildings i.e. 66m;
- A 15m high podium;
- Extension of the retail arcade to the intersection of Union Street with Edward and Pyrmont Streets.

The jury report from the competition process selected the Cox scheme as the winning design with the following provisos and different views expressed by the jury members:

- That the height of the tower be reviewed to achieve mediation between the Casino buildings and the adjacent Pyrmont area.
- Concern relating to the new tower height and its relationship from the north to the east (which may require a step in the building height).
- That the proposed 15m podium height was appropriate in achieving a suitable pedestrian scale and related the development to the adjacent context.
- That the 20m setback of the tower from the street frontage was sufficient to identify the podium as the point of reference to the street rather than the tower so that the proposed tower height was appropriate.

Director Generals Requirements –

The Director Generals requirements relating to visual impact are as follows:

- Address the visual impact of the project in the context of adjoining development, impact on any heritage item and its setting and building mass as viewed from public areas including the Darling Harbour/Cockle Bay Wharf and the Sydney CBD.
- Visual aids such as photomontages are to be used to demonstrate visual impacts in particularly having regard to the siting and design, bulk and scale relationships
- Address.....analysis of views and vistas and impact of the proposal on these views particularly on views from Harris and Union Square and Darling Harbour/Cockle Bay Wharf and the Sydney CBD.

Conclusion -

The above analysis shows that historically a range of approaches have been considered for the Switching Station site and its height and form. To determine if the proposal has acceptable impacts the building envelope required by the various controls and the design brief must be taken into account as it effectively defines the location of the major building massing and therefore its impacts.

The master plan and UDP appear to dictate a lower building form that provides transition from the lower scale of Union Street to the taller landmark towers already existing within the Star City Casino site. However the brief and the Bates Smart study propose a different approach which advocates a tower form up to or close to the height of the existing Casino tower buildings with a lower podium form and a 12m separation between the existing southern tower and the new tower. This approach breaches the 45 degree setback plane within the UDP.

Therefore the assessment of visual impacts has been predicated on this envelope as providing the 'controls' that are appropriate for the site.

5. SITE VISIBILITY AND VISUALLY PROMINENT VIEWS

As discussed in the previous section the Director Generals requirements, design brief and the controls affecting the site have identified a number of key views that should be considered as part of the visual analysis of the proposed project.

GMU have analysed the identified views but has also reviewed the visual impact of the proposal from other key locations to ensure additional impacts were not likely to result. The following section briefly considers all locations where the potential visibility has been considered. The key views are then identified from this study and discussed in further in the next section.

For clarity the impacts have been classified as no impact, low, medium or high impact:

- **No visual impact** includes locations where the new tower form and podiums are not visible or are screened by other existing development.
- **Low visual impacts** include locations where the tower form is barely visible or where it is visible within part of a cityscape view (amongst other buildings of similar scale and bulk) and does not obscure significant landmarks or vistas.
- **Medium visual impacts** include locations where the proposed development will be visible and:
 - May obscure open sky or reduce views to less prominent built form markers or outlooks and/or
 - May be reasonably visible within a skyline silhouette and/or
 - May impact on the scale of the street by creating an increased street wall height and form beyond the existing context surrounding the site and
 - Where the increased visibility, bulk and form are consistent with the desired future character of the area, the controls applying to the site and/or the endorsed design brief for the site.
- **High visual impacts** include locations where the new development will be highly visible from prominent public domain locations and will obscure views to landmark items or will result in an overbearing form or scale to existing areas not envisaged in the controls or the brief and where such an impact is adverse to the amenity and visual qualities of the area.

a. LONG DISTANCE VIEWS

The location of the site and the development surrounding it results in the majority of long distance views occurring from the eastern and north eastern edges of the Sydney CBD. Whilst the proposal will be visible to a small degree from areas such as McMahons Point these locations are sufficiently distant that the new tower will be seen as part of the broader Pyrmont and Ultimo skyline and is considered to have low visual impacts.

However the views from the CBD edge and within the Sydney CBD are closer to the site and the new tower on the Switching Station site will have more visual impact due to its proximity. The following long distance views were investigated as part of determining the visual impacts of the proposal from the CBD:

i. ERSKINE STREET CORRIDOR

The topography of the Sydney CBD provides a ridge line oriented generally along York Street with the landform then falling towards Sussex Street and then flattening out towards King Street Wharf, Cockle Bay and Darling Harbour itself. The street grid within the CBD is characterised by a linear grid with long streets running north south and shorter perpendicular streets running east west towards the water from the ridge line. It is these shorter east west streets that benefit from views across to the western slope of Pyrmont and Ultimo as the land drops away to the water.

Erskine Street is the first street that has a view towards the existing Casino. This view is visible from the intersection with York Street. The view from the northern footpath is generally obscured by street trees but the existing northern tower of the Casino can be seen as part of the view termination of the street.



PHOTO LOCATION MAP



PHOTOS LOOKING WEST FROM ERSKINE STREET TOWARDS THE NORTHERN END OF THE EXISTING STAR CITY CASINO TOWER

The location of the street axis relative to the Casino Site and the existing city edge buildings along Sussex Street screen the proposed new tower from this street and therefore there is no impact. The existing podium and the proposed adjustments to this podium in Pirrama Road are also screened by the wharf redevelopment located on the waters edge and therefore are also not visible from this view corridor.

Conclusion – No visual impact.

ii. KING STREET CORRIDOR

King Street is also an east west street which connects the CBD ridge line with Sussex Street and provides a ramped access to the Western Distributor and Anzac Bridge as part of the overpass structure linking the harbour bridge to Ultimo and Rozelle.

The location of King Street relative to the Casino and the Switching Station site provides a view from the end of King Street and provides a way finding view to the pylon structure of the Anzac Bridge. Only the top of the pylon structure is visible and it forms part of the skyline composition within the view corridor.



PHOTOS LOOKING WEST ALONG KING STREET – ABOVE LHS VIEW DOWN KING STREET FROM YORK STREET SITE IS NOT VISIBLE, ABOVE RHS VIEW DOWN KING STREET KENT STREET CROSSING THE STREET WITH CLOSE UP BELOW TO SHOW DETAIL EXTENT OF VIEW TO THE PYLON OF THE ANZAC BRIDGE



PHOTO LOCATION MAP



ENLARGEMENT OF VIEW ABOVE

The main view impacts will occur from the northern footpath. King Street is a one way street providing access from the west to the east of the city and the view from vehicles is oriented across the city rather than towards Pyrmont. Street trees obscure much of the outlook to the axial view other than where the footpath widening occurs between Clarence Street and George Street. The southern footpath provides a view that is oriented more towards the existing Casino tower rather than the pylon. So it is primarily the view from the narrower northern footpath that will be affected by the proposal.

Approaching Sussex Street along King Street the top of the existing tower is visible however the Ibis Hotel and Grand Mercure on the eastern side of Darling Harbour effectively obscure the majority of the existing tower with only the roof form evident. These buildings will have a similar effect on the new tower form.

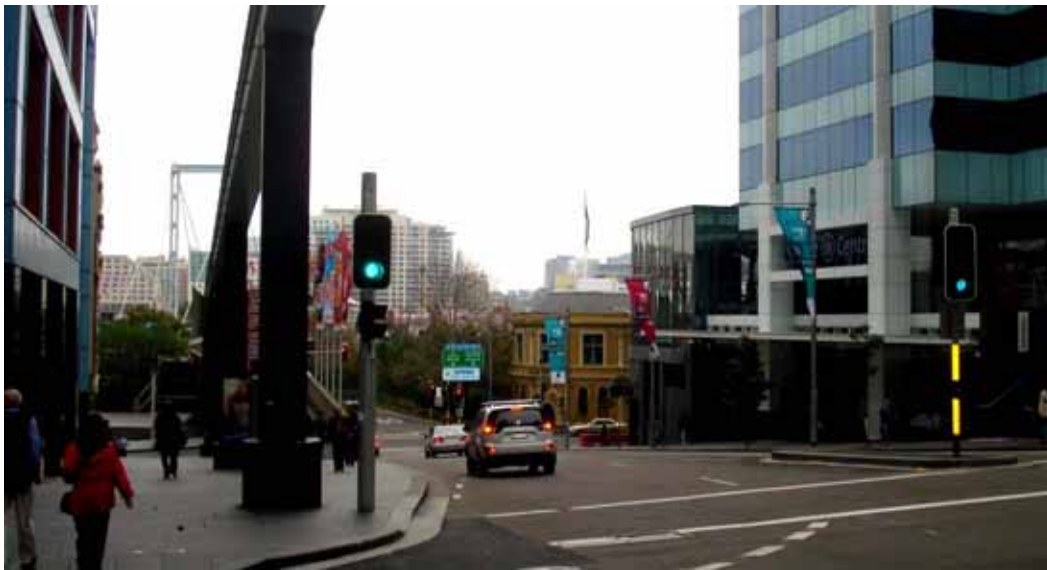
Conclusion – Potentially medium visual impact on King between Clarence and Kent Streets –see Section 6 analysis.

iii. MARKET STREET CORRIDOR

As with King and Erskine Streets, Market Street is an east west street connecting Hyde Park north with Darling Harbour, Cockle Bay and the overbridge which provides the pedestrian link to the Darling Park Monorail station and also access from the CBD to Pyrmont Bridge.

Visually this street is affected by the monorail structure which reduces its visual connection to the west. At Clarence Street the Casino and Switching Station site is not visible. At Kent Street the existing tower is visible against the backdrop of other buildings which are located behind the Casino.

The greatest visibility appears at the southern footpath on the corner with Kent Street where the tower will be visible but is seen against the backdrop of existing buildings. It is likely that only the roof form of the tower would be seen as occurs with the existing Casino tower.



PHOTOS LOOKING WEST ALONG MARKET STREET AT KENT STREET WITH THE EXISTING CASINO TOWER JUST VISIBLE TO THE RIGHT HAND SIDE OF THE VIEW DOWN THE STREET OVER THE TOP OF THE HERITAGE BUILDING. THE NEW TOWER WOULD BE WITHIN THE VISUAL CATCHMENT OF THE TALLER RESIDENTIAL TOWER BEHIND THE FLAG POLE



PHOTO LOCATION MAP (ADDITIONAL RED DOT PHOTOS ON NEXT PAGE)



ENLARGEMENT OF VIEW ABOVE



PHOTOS FROM THE MARKET STREET PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE APPROACHING THE LIFT STRUCTURE AND ACCESS TO PYRMONT BRIDGE. THE EXISTING CASINO TOWER IS VISIBLE TO THE RIGHT OF THE BRIDGE TENSION RODS AND THE NEW TOWER WOULD SIT BEHIND THE YELLOW PARAPET OF THE BUILDINGS TO UNION STREET AND IN FRONT OF THE RESIDENTIAL TOWER VISIBLE MID SLIDE



ENLARGEMENT OF VIEW ABOVE

The existing Casino and the future tower are visible from the pedestrian bridge leading to the Monorail station and Pymont Bridge upon approach to the lift tower (see images above). However the Casino is seen as part of a composition of buildings both in the foreground and distance with bridge structure, flag poles and the curved form of the Maritime Museum as the main visual elements. As can be seen from the photo below (despite a Sydney fog) the new tower would be roughly the same height as the residential building visible to the right and left of the first tension pole for the bridge and will blend into the setting of Pymont.

Conclusion – Low impact views and considered acceptable

iv. MILLERS POINT

The western edge of the CBD peninsular includes the Patrick Stevedore site that has been master planned to provide new development and parkland for the CBD. Whilst currently relatively inaccessible, in the future it will provide numerous major viewing points across to Pymont and Darling Harbour.



PHOTOS LOOKING SOUTH WEST FROM THE PARKS IN MILLER STREET TOWARDS PYRMONT SHOWING THE EXISTING CASINO TOWERS AS PART OF THE SILHOUETTE OF THE PENINSULAR



ENLARGEMENT OF VIEW ABOVE



PHOTO LOCATION MAP

Within the Millers Point area there are a number of narrow residential streets and public parks that are valued by the community and have wonderful views over the harbour and across Darling Harbour to Balmain East and Pyrmont. Such places include Observatory Park, Clyne Reserve and Palisade Park on Merriman Street. As can be seen from the

photos above the new tower will be visible as a taller element to the left hand side of the photo adjacent to the existing southern tower of the Casino behind the fly tower for the Lyric Theatre.

Conclusion – Potentially medium impact – see Section 6 analysis

b. MEDIUM DISTANCE VIEWS

i. COCKLE BAY VIEWS

Cockle Bay is located at the waterfront on the western edge of the Sydney CBD. It is located to the south of Pyrmont Bridge and enjoys views to Ultimo across Darling Harbour. Due to its low elevation and location south east of the Casino only the existing towers on the Casino site are visible set back above Festival Market Place with the view dominated by the Grand Mecure and Ibis hotel and apartments.



PHOTOS FROM COCKLE BAY FORESHORE WALK LOOKING NORTH WEST TOWARDS PYRMONT BRIDGE AND STAR CITY BEYOND. ONLY THE EXISTING TOWERS WILL BE VISIBLE WITH THE GRAND MECURE OBSCURING THE NEW TOWER



ENLARGEMENT OF VIEW ABOVE



PHOTO LOCATION MAP

Conclusion – No impact

ii. KING STREET WHARF VIEWS

King Street Wharf is located on the foreshore edge of the Sydney CBD to the north of the Pyrmont Pedestrian Bridge. The foreshore walk along this section of Darling Harbour has extensive views over the eastern slope of Pyrmont including views to the Casino Towers and the proposed new hotel tower on the Switching Station site.

The existing Casino towers can be seen over the foreground development including the Maritime Museum, the vegetation of Pyrmont Bay Park and the wharf redevelopment at Pyrmont Bay. The new tower will also be visible generally behind the fly tower for the Lyric Theatre. Its effect will be to reduce slightly the extent of sky visible above the Pyrmont silhouette as part of the broader context of taller landmark buildings along the spine of Pyrmont.





VARIOUS VIEWS OF THE CASINO OVER DARLING HARBOUR TOWARDS THE EASTERN EDGE OF PYRMONT. THE EXISTING TOWERS OF THE CASINO ARE VISIBLE AS PART OF THE PYRMONT SKYLINE OVER THE FOREGROUND DEVELOPMENT CREATED BY THE MARITIME MUSEUM AND WHARF REDEVELOPMENT



PHOTO LOCATION MAP

Conclusion – Potential Medium impact – see discussion in the next section.

iii. PYRMONT BRIDGE VIEWS

Pymont Bridge provides the major pedestrian and monorail link for commuters and visitors between Pymont and the Sydney CBD. The Bridge is an icon itself and it has continuous views to the foreshore areas of both Cockle Bay and King Street Wharf and to the west the areas of Harbourside Darling Harbour, the Maritime Museum and historic boats and the Wharf redevelopment at Pymont Bay.

Views at the city side of the Pymont Bridge towards the Casino site illustrate that the existing towers are generally hidden behind the foreground development of the new Commercial development at 60 Union Street and the historic pub on Murray Street.



VIEWS FROM THE CITY SIDE OF THE PYRMONT BRIDGE LOOKING TOWARDS THE CASINO SITE AND UNION STREET



PHOTO LOCATION MAP

The views to the Casino become more discernible the closer pedestrians are to Harris Street both on the bridge and on the Monorail as can be seen from the photos on the next page.



VIEWS MOVING ACROSS THE PYRMONT BRIDGE TOWARDS PYRMONT LOOKING TOWARDS THE CASINO SITE AND UNION STREET



PHOTO LOCATION MAP

The images above show that the Casino site is likely to be slightly visible as part of the skyline from midpoint on the bridge. At the western end of Pyrmont Bridge a more direct view of Union Street becomes available which is likely to include a view of the new tower and to a lesser degree the podium along Union Street. The existing tree cover and street furniture tend to obscure much of the street level view to the base.

Conclusion – No impact for the majority of Pyrmont Bridge but possibly low to medium impact at tower level from the Pyrmont end of the bridge.

c. IMMEDIATE VIEWS

i. UNION STREET

The Switching Station site has its major frontage to Union Street therefore the podium and tower will be visible to the streetscape from the east and west along the street. The existing streetscape varies from a 3 storey scale to the east to a 2 storey scale to the west.

This site defines the change in character from the larger scale warehouse typology to the finer grain of the Pyrmont ridge line and Union Square. Under the requirements of the competition brief the podium height has been set at 15m above street level which relates to the adjoining building scale and is within the range defined by the UDP as a maximum of 1-1.5 storeys above the existing building height.



PHOTO LOOKING DOWN UNION STREET TOWARDS THE WEST – THE SWITCHING STATION SITE WILL FORM PART OF THE STREETScape. NOTE THAT THE TOWER FORM TO 60 UNION STREET DOES NOT FORM A MAJOR ELEMENT IN THE STREETScape DUE TO ITS SETBACK



PHOTOS SHOWING THE PREDOMINANT STREET WALL HEIGHT ADJACENT TO THE SWITCHING STATION SITE



PHOTO LOCATION MAP

Conclusion – The relationship of the podium of the Switching Station site to the predominant street wall height will be important in creating the correct scale response to Union Street. However the building will be read as part of an overall street wall composition. – Low visual impact given design briefs required podium height which dictates the scale outcome.

ii. UNION SQUARE

Union Square provides the major urban open space to the middle ridge in Pyrmont. The location of the open space provides views to the north western corner of the site at the intersection of Union Street and Pyrmont Street as well as a view of the frontage of the Switching Station site to Union Street.

The height of the podium is critical in creating a relationship that responds to the scale of the Union Street and achieves the change in character from the taller warehouse scale to the eastern edge of Pyrmont to the finer lower scale grain of Union Square.

The tower will be visible rising above the podium height and will occupy a reasonable proportion of the existing sky over the heritage terraces and the site. It must be remembered that the Switching Station site has been vacant for a considerable period of time and historically buildings would have occupied this site.

The area of the tower likely to have greatest impact is where it extends above the height of the existing tower element for the commercial building across Edward Street. From the northern and central portion of the square the tower is likely to screen views to Mid City Centre tower. For the southern shareway and footpath the tower will screen distant views to the western edge of the city. Within this view no particular building form distinguishes itself.



PHOTO LOOKING EAST FROM UNION SQUARE WITHIN THE SQUARE TOWARDS THE SWITCHING STATION SITE – THE PODIUM WILL COMPLETE THE STREETScape BEYOND THE HERITAGE TERRACES (CENTRAL TO THE VIEW AND THE TOWER FORM WILL REDUCE THE EXTENT OF SKY VISIBLE OVER THE TOWER ELEMENT TO 60 UNION STREET AND POTENTIALLY THE MID CITY CENTRE TOWER



PHOTO FROM THE SOUTHERN SHAREWAY LOOKING TOWARDS THE NORTH WEST CORNER OF THE INTERSECTION OF PYRMONT AND UNION STREET. THE PODIUM WILL BE BARELY VISIBLE, THE TOWER FORM WILL BE STRONGLY VISIBLE AND WILL INFILL THE MAJORITY OF THE SKYLINE FROM THIS VIEWPOINT TO A HEIGHT EQUIVALENT TO THE EXISTING CASINO TOWER

Conclusion – Potentially medium to high visual impact to the view from Union Square to Mid City centre and the extent of sky visible but unlikely to block views to the Centre Point tower, potentially medium impact view at street level – see detailed discussion in Section 6.



PHOTO LOCATION MAP

iii. PYRMONT STREET

The character of Pyrmont Street varies along its length from the finer terrace grain to the south increasing in scale from the intersection of Union Street towards the north with taller warehouse building forms and the large scale of the existing podium to the Casino.

The new podium to the Switching Station site will create the corner to Pyrmont and Union Street. The scale needs to relate to both the heritage building to the north western corner of Union Street but also to the existing podium height and greater massing of northern Pyrmont Street.



PHOTOS LOOKING TOWARDS THE SWITCHING STATION SITE FROM FURTHER SOUTH ALONG PYRMONT STREET ILLUSTRATES THAT EXISTING TREES AND VEGETATION WILL SCREEN THE TOWER FORM AS CURRENTLY OCCURS FOR THE EXISTING SOUTHERN TOWER



PHOTOS LOOKING NORTH EAST ALONG PYRMONT STREET FROM THE INTERSECTION WITH UNION STREET AND LOOKING AT THE EXISTING PODIUM OF THE CASINO WITH THE SOUTHERN TOWER ABOVE



PHOTO LOCATION MAP

From Pymont Street the new corner will be read against the existing commercial/industrial building and will form part of the transition from the taller wall type buildings to the finer grain of the terrace houses. The proposal includes a range of height elements as part of the podium structure with a recessed corner inviting movement into the arcade area. Its scale must mediate between the low single and two storey scale up to the more monolithic scale of the existing casino podium base.

The proposed design includes a range of elements and heights as well as materials that enables the podium to relate appropriately to all of these scales.

Conclusion – Low impact to views from south along Pymont Street or to the corner view of the proposal and therefore acceptable.

iv. EDWARD STREET

The amenity and form of this street is not ideal with the existing podium to the Casino and tower form on the eastern side of Edward Street providing a large scale character responding to the warehouse typology identified in the UDP.

The existing Casino Podium creates a high and dominant street wall to Edward Street near Pirrama Road that would not be appropriate at Union Street. The topography of the street rises to the south and therefore the existing height visually reduces.



PHOTOS LOOKING NORTH ALONG EDWARD STREET FROM THE SOUTHERN SIDE OF UNION STREET (ABOVE) AND FROM THE INTERSECTION WITH UNION STREET. THE EXISTING PODIUM HEIGHT HAS A CONSIDERABLE SCALE TO EDWARD STREET. THE IMPACT OF THIS HEIGHT WILL BE REDUCED BY THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE STREET



PHOTO LOCATION MAP

The proposal provides an inset at the street corner linking to the retail podium with an internal street link across the length of the Union Street frontage. This inset further reduces the scale of the new podium. The tower to the Switching Station site will be visible along Edward Street. The setback to the tower and its position will be seen against the existing fly tower of the Lyric Theatre and it will create a dialogue with the tower form to 60 Union Street and therefore the visual impact is considered low and acceptable.

Conclusion – Low impact that is acceptable

v. HERITAGE WALK

The heritage walk connects to Jones Bay Road and provides access to the northern streets of Pymont. The existing Casino development terminates the view along the heritage walk approaching from north to south. The foreground views of the walk are created by the vegetated top of the existing podium with a portion of the southern tower of the Casino visible in the distance.

The proposal extends the northern built form on top of the podium to the east towards the water. The new built form is one storey in height and will be slightly visible. However it will be seen as part of the roof forms of development currently seen behind the landscaping on the roof. The extension will reduce the amount of vegetation on the podium which in the short term will increase the visibility of the extension. The proposal replants the northern edge of the podium which over time will replace the existing vegetation and create a similar view from the walk.



PHOTOS LOOKING SOUTH ALONG THE HERITAGE WALK FROM THE MID DISTANCE TO CLOSER TO JONES BAY ROAD. THE PROPOSAL WILL SLIGHTLY REDUCE THE VEGETATION VISIBLE ON THE PODIUM AND THE NEW TOWER WILL BE ON AXIS WITH THE VIEW AND WILL REDUCE THE EXTENT OF SKY. HOWEVER THE FLY TOWER AND SKY BEYOND THE NEW TOWER WILL STILL PROVIDE VISUAL INTEREST AND A REASONABLE VISUAL IMPACT



PHOTOS LOOKING SOUTH (ABOVE) AND NORTH (BELOW) ALONG PIRRAMA ROAD. THE PODIUM IS HARDLY VISIBLE LOOKING SOUTH, WITH INCREASED VISIBILITY LOOKING NORTH. THE PROPOSAL WILL CONTINUE THE EXISTING SCALE OF THE PODIUM ALONG PIRRAMA ROAD, THE NEW TOWER WILL BE VISIBLE CLOSE TO THE SITE LOOKING SOUTH WEST BALANCING THE EXISTING TOWER VISIBLE IN THE CENTRAL PHOTO



PHOTO LOCATION MAP

The design will increase activity and passive surveillance within the streetscape and of the park on the opposite side of the road. Currently the Casino entry statement does not contribute to the street edge enclosure or activation. The scale of the entry feature is dealt with in the next point.

Conclusion – Low impact to Pirrama Road that is considered acceptable.

Potentially medium impact to the view close to the site where the entry feature is more visible.

vii. PYRMONT BAY PARK

Pyrmont Bay Park is located adjacent to the foreshore on the north eastern side of Pirrama Road. It provides a major open space on the foreshore boardwalk and offers a green element in the urban edge of Pyrmont and Darling Harbour. Views taken from the park back towards the existing Casino show that there is very little visibility to the podium due to the double row of Figs planted along the edge of Pirrama Road. Therefore changes to the podium will have little impact on these views.





PHOTOS FROM VARIOUS VANTAGE POINTS IN PYRMONT BAY PARK SHOWING THAT WHILST A SMALL PORTION OF THE NEW TOWER WILL BE VISIBLE OVER THE EXISTING FLY TOWER TO THE LYRIC THEATRE AND EXISTING DEVELOPMENT ON THE FORESHORE ROAD IT WILL BE PART OF THE OVERALL SKYLINE AND WILL HAVE MINIMAL IMPACT



PHOTO LOCATION MAP

The existing Casino towers are visible over the tree planting as middle ground elements. The greater setback to these towers results in the heights of the towers generally reading as similar to that of lower scale buildings located on the southern side of Edward ST and Pirrama Road. A small portion of the new tower is likely to be visible above the existing Lyric fly tower but it will blend into the skyline profile of the existing Casino. Therefore its visual impact overall is low.

Conclusion – Low impact which is considered acceptable

viii. COMMUNITY PARK AND FORESHORE BOARD WALKS

The continuous foreshore walk available along the eastern edge of Pyrmont and Darling Harbour is a major amenity and attraction for both visitors and residents. The views and vistas from these locations are an important part of creating a sense of place. The boardwalks are further away from the Casino and therefore offer longer views towards the podium and tower with less visual capacity to absorb the new tower within the existing built form.

The proposal will have highest visibility along the northern boardwalk of Pyrmont Bay roughly level with the new parkland. Closer to the Casino the impact is lessened by the angle of view and the vegetation and height of the existing podium and further back along the boardwalk the angle of view encompasses more of the Pyrmont skyline so that new tower will be seen as part of the overall composition.

The new tower is to be located to the left hand side of the existing tower visible in the image below. The angle of the tower will offer the broader face of the building towards the boardwalk roughly on axis with the view. The new tower will reduce the extent of sky visible and will increase the visibility of the Casino from the bay and the water. Therefore the design of the tower from this view is important so it responds to its visibility.





PHOTOS FROM THE BOARDWALK AROUND PYRMONT BAY – ABOVE VIEWS FROM THE SOUTHERN BOARDWALK LOOKING SOUTH WEST AND BELOW LOOKING FROM THE SOUTHERN BOARDWALK LOOKING WEST. THE PODIUM WILL BE SEEN AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF THE EXISTING TOWERS AND LYRIC THEATRE FLY TOWER. THE NEW TOWER WILL BE VISIBLE OVER THE FLY TOWER NEAR THE SOUTHERN TOWER. IT WILL OCCUPY SKY ADJACENT TO THE EXISTING TOWER WITH ITS GREATEST IMPACT VISIBLE FROM THE SOUTHERN BOARDWALK WHERE IT IS EFFECTIVELY ON AXIS.



PHOTO LOCATION MAP

Whilst the tower will reduce the visible sky and increase visible building bulk it will not obscure any major views of other landmarks or vegetation and will be seen as part of the built form edge against the sky.

The design of the entry feature of the building will be highly visible from this view and therefore has the potential to have a high or medium impact.

Conclusions – Medium impact – see discussion in Section 6.

d. VISUALLY PROMINENT VIEWS

The analysis illustrates that the visually prominent views where medium impact is likely to occur are the following locations which have been considered in greater detail in the next section.

Long Distance Views –

- King Street from the northern footpath between Kent and Clarence Street.
- Millers Point from the Stevedore site and the two pocket parks.

Medium Distance Views –

- King Street Wharf across Darling Harbour.
- Pyrmont Bridge close to the western end looking down Union Street.

Immediate Views –

- Union Square looking east at the tower location relative to city views and setback to Union Street.
- The northern boardwalk along Pyrmont Bay looking back towards the Casino.

Therefore photomontages have been prepared for the above views showing the visual impact of the proposed development.

6. ASSESSMENT OF VIEW IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The views below have been identified in the previous section as views where the new proposal for the Casino and Switching Station site may have either a medium or high potential impact. These views have been further analysed to determine whether the impacts of the proposal are reasonable and acceptable given the context of the proposal, the desired future character identified by the existing controls and the design brief endorsed by the Department of Planning.

The section below discusses the impacts based on the photomontages provided by the architects and where the impact is considered unacceptable GMU proposes mitigation measures to improve the proposed outcome.

a. LONG DISTANCE VIEWS

i. KING STREET CORRIDOR

The view within King Street between Kent Street and Clarence Street is likely to be most affected as the tower is likely to obscure the sweep of the pylon and its tie wires. The impact is demonstrated by the existing view and comparison photo montage adjacent to it. The pylon provides a visual reference to assist way finding in the city and also is one of the few views to the drama of the Anzac Bridge Pylon from the east west city streets.



EXISTING PHOTO AND MONTAGE SHOWING THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED NEW TOWER

As can be seen from the montage the new tower will obscure the lower portion of the pylon. The top of the pylon and some of the guy wires will be visible around the new tower roof. The composition gives more emphasis to the existing star sculpture at the base of King Street. Therefore this element takes over the role of the pylon in way finding.

The position of the tower and its proximity to the existing tower to the north has been dictated by the competition design brief which was endorsed both the applicant and also by State Government. Therefore the impact on this view must be deemed to have been considered an acceptable outcome to achieve the new development. Therefore on the basis of the above it is considered that the tower has a medium but acceptable visual impact.

Mitigation Measures –

No mitigation measures are considered necessary

ii. MILLERS POINT



EXISTING PHOTO AND MONTAGE SHOWING THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED NEW TOWER

The new tower will be visible from both the new foreshore edge when the Stevedore site is redeveloped and is also visible from the two pocket parks higher up on the Millers Point Peninsular. The two images below show the impact of the new tower relative to the current silhouette for Pyrmont.

The proposal will read as one of a group of towers marking the Casino as a landmark site. The UDP controls and also the design brief and site study all identify that the Casino block is to be a landmark. Whilst the UDP does not specifically include the Switching Station site within that role the design brief certainly contemplates a greater height for this site to respond to the existing forms.

In this view the new tower adds an additional taller form which results in a slight reduction in visible sky. It does not obscure key vistas to other landmarks or result in development that is out of scale or of a vastly different bulk to the existing towers.

The separation between the two towers has been dictated by both the UDP controls and the design brief at 12m. This dimension dictates the relationship between the existing northern tower and the new tower. The proposal complies with this separation and therefore the proximity of the two towers is considered acceptable.

The proposal does have an impact on the view and will read as part of the composition of taller built forms visible as part of the skyline of the peninsular and part of the grouping of towers for the Casino. This composition and punctuation of the skyline by landmark elements was always envisaged by the controls and is considered to add to the vibrancy and interest of the skyline in distance views.

The recladding of the existing towers will assist in these three towers reading as part of one development. The view impacts are therefore of a low impact and acceptable.

Mitigation Measures –

No mitigation measures are considered necessary for this view.

b. MEDIUM DISTANCE VIEWS

i. KING STREET WHARF VIEWS

The views along King Street Wharf will include the new tower element on the Switching Station site. As shown in the photomontage below the new tower will blend into the built form that is already visible along the foreshore edge of the western shore of Darling Harbour.

The UDP advocates that development along the edge of Pyrmont should respond to the warehouse and wharf typology creating a wall of larger scale buildings with finer grain development to the ridge line near Harris Street. The new tower will reinforce this goal as part of the skyline and reads as part of the overall Casino tower composition. The upgrade of the facades of the two existing towers improves their visual appearance. In fact the existing towers are more intrusive in this view than the new tower as they are read as a continuous wall whereas the new tower is read as a slimmer form similar to the prow of a ship which is appropriate given the water context. Therefore the new tower is considered to have an acceptable low impact on this view.



EXISTING PHOTO AND MONTAGE SHOWING THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED NEW TOWER

Mitigation Measures –

No mitigation measures are considered necessary for this view.

ii. PYRMONT BRIDGE VIEWS

The view close to the western foreshore is likely to offer a view of the new tower on the Switching Station site. The podium will be screened by the existing tree vegetation within the street. The tower form will be visible above the tree line as a continuation of the upper street wall, on alignment with the tower to 60 Union Street.

The impact of the tower is demonstrated in the comparison views below. The area of sky occupied by the new tower does not offer views or vistas to major placemaking elements and both ends of the street are terminated by taller built forms (the residential tower to the west and 60 Union Street). The new tower will complete the upper street wall. Therefore the proposal is considered to have a medium acceptable impact as it reads as part of the taller more industrial form of development which creates the 'wall' to the peninsular as envisaged by the City of Sydney controls and UDP.



EXISTING PHOTO AND MONTAGE SHOWING THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED NEW TOWER

Mitigation Measures –

No mitigation measures are considered necessary for this view

c. IMMEDIATE VIEWS

i. UNION SQUARE

The tower element of the Switching Station site is visible from Union Square as is the podium element. The podium relates to the taller warehouse forms on the southern side of Union Street and completes the edge of the 'industrial precinct' as well as providing some transition across to the finer grain of the square.

Although the height of the podium is greater than that of the single storey terraces on the corner the taller form gives a strong sense of enclosure to the western edge of the square which is currently missing. It complements the square and emphasises the change across the street from the wall type buildings to the smaller and more intimate terraces forming the other edges of the square.

The tower is also visible from the square. The northern portion is obscured by an existing tree for the most part which also screens much of the existing tower as well. When viewed at a closer range the separation between the towers allows them to read as two separate forms.

The generous setback to the tower ensures that it minimises its dominance over Union Street and that the podium is the major street element.

The proposal rises to the same height as the existing towers at 66m. The height of the tower is perceived from Union Square as lower than the existing towers. This is due to its lighter architectural character and the cantilevered glass parapet rather than the more solid, more intrusive forms of the existing character. The variation of the glassy tower to the more solid sandstone podium also achieves greater emphasis and weight to the base of the building creating a strong transition to the lower streetscape scale.

The tower is seen as a simple linear element that is part of an overall back drop of buildings as a pedestrian progresses down Union Street from the square. It does not obscure views to Centrepont tower but does obscure views to the MidCity centre tower. However only the top of the tower is visible and its height is such that a lower development is also likely to obscure this view.

Therefore the proposal is considered to have a low impact at street level which is acceptable and contributes to the enclosure of the square and street with a medium impact for the tower as it obscures some of the city skyline. However the view to the MidCity Centre tower is not considered significant and the tower provides an elegant visual focus which is acceptable.



EXISTING PHOTO AND MONTAGE SHOWING THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED NEW TOWER

Mitigation Measures –

No mitigation measures are proposed.

ii. SOUTHERN / NORTHERN FORESHORE BOARDWALKS

The views towards the new tower along the northern and southern boardwalk are illustrated in the photomontages below. The tower is visible on the skyline in both views. For the northern boardwalk the tower links to the existing tower and is read as a continuation of its form. It does obscure some of the sky visible but the scale of the two towers together is similar to that of the new development on Pirrama Road and is only slightly greater than the commercial development to the east.

From the southern boardwalk the tower is visible as a standalone element. It becomes the third tower element in the composition and due to its prow shaped form adds visual interest to the view. As with the other view it is in scale with the other towers and strengthens their role as a landmark in the Pyrmont skyline.

Therefore the impact of the tower in both views is considered to be medium and acceptable as part of the composition of skyline elements.

The new entry feature is visible from both views as part of the foreshore area. It has a role both as part of the streetscape, foreshore enclosure and also as the entry feature of the Casino from Pirrama Road. The new facade use activates the new Pirrama Road frontage which improves the existing situation. The flowing facade provides a simple expression to the building which is not overbearing from the street or foreshore views. Therefore the impact is considered acceptable.



EXISTING PHOTOS AND MONTAGES SHOWING THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED NEW TOWER



EXISTING PHOTOS AND MONTAGES SHOWING THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED NEW TOWER

Mitigation Measures –

No mitigation measures are considered necessary for these views.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Study of the broader and more immediate context around the Casino and the Switching Station site show that the proposed development will unavoidably have some impacts. However the impacts must be considered against the desired future character of the controls for the area, particularly the UDP and also against the aims and requirements of the design brief that informed the chosen design competition winning scheme.

The controls seek the Casino to create a landmark tower element when seen as part of the Pymont Skyline and advocates a 'wall of buildings' around the edge of the peninsular with fine grain lower scale elements only along the ridge around Union Square.

The proposal is true to the goals of the UDP and also to the separations and setback considered within the design brief for the competition. It has medium to low impacts on various closer views as well as on some over harbour views.

In some instances the new tower creates additional visual interest and sits as part of an overall composition on the skyline of lower foreshore elements and taller more majestic tower forms. In other instances the new and refurbished building is again clearly visible but completes the street wall and creates an improved sense of enclosure to public space.

The design competition process, winning scheme, jury report and Design Review Panel all supported a slender tower form with lower podium that relates to the scale of the adjoining streetscapes and heritage items over a scheme that complies with the existing UDP and LEP controls.

The proposal is consistent with those outcomes and goal and has an acceptable visual impact on the surrounding area, Darling Harbour and city views.