

## **Submission Objecting to the Kogarah Golf Club Redevelopment – Concept & Early Works SSDA**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to object to this proposal in its current form.

I make this submission not as someone opposed to redevelopment, but as someone who has spent more than twenty years using and observing the Cooks River. I regularly kayak from my home in Marrickville to Brighton-Le-Sands and run and cycle along the river corridor throughout the year. Over time I have witnessed a slow but remarkable transformation in the health of the river. Water quality has improved, habitat has slowly returned, public access has expanded, and the many agencies responsible for the river have increasingly recognised its environmental, recreational and cultural value.

I am also a member of the Cooks River Valley Association and have recently become involved in a volunteer water quality monitoring program undertaken in partnership with government agencies, monitoring freshwater inflows to the Cooks River. This experience has reinforced my appreciation of the river as a living ecological system that is steadily recovering after generations of degradation.

Professionally, I am an architect. I understand the need to balance employment lands, economic development and environmental protection. My objection is not to redevelopment itself, but to a masterplan that appears driven primarily by maximising floor space rather than by creating an enduring piece of city-making.

The proposal represents an extraordinary concentration of logistics, warehousing and data centre development on one of the Cooks River's most significant remaining redevelopment sites. While I acknowledge the importance of employment lands within metropolitan Sydney, this site is simply the wrong place for such an overwhelming concentration of logistics uses. There are extensive industrial precincts, including the Port Botany employment lands, that are inherently better suited to accommodating logistics at this scale. This site, by contrast, occupies one of the most significant riverfront locations remaining on the Cooks River and should be planned accordingly.

**My strongest concern is that this masterplan has failed the public interest test. This is a once-in-a-generation redevelopment of more than 30 hectares on Sydney's second-largest urban rivers. The question is not whether employment uses can be accommodated on the site, but whether this masterplan delivers the best possible outcome for future generations. In my opinion, it clearly does not.**

Unfortunately, the proposal reflects an outdated attitude towards the Cooks River, treating it largely as the edge of a development parcel rather than the organising landscape that should shape the entire precinct. The river should not be regarded as infrastructure to be engineered around; it should be recognised as a natural system capable of ongoing restoration, ecological regeneration and significantly enhanced public use.

The redevelopment may well be appropriate in principle; however, the masterplan presented is fundamentally the wrong response for this site.

The proposed buildings are grossly oversized for their location and are positioned unnecessarily close to the river. Rather than allowing the landscape to define the development, the proposal allows the development to dominate the landscape.

This land represents perhaps the single greatest opportunity remaining along the Cooks River to significantly widen the riparian corridor, restore native ecology, improve flood resilience and create an exceptional public waterfront. Instead, the proposal appears to maximise building footprint while minimising the river's opportunity to recover.

The proposal also fails to recognise the type of urban environment that should exist beside a major metropolitan waterway. Logistics facilities and data centres typically employ relatively small workforces relative to their scale, generate little public activity and provide almost no meaningful relationship with surrounding public space. If these uses dominate the site, the river will become bordered by inactive building edges rather than places that contribute to civic life.

A site of this significance should instead accommodate a carefully considered mix of employment, commercial, recreation and community uses that create active frontages, passive surveillance, cafés, public destinations and opportunities for people to engage directly with the river.

Importantly, Attachment 2 – Agency Advice from Bayside Council reinforces many of these concerns. Bayside Council identifies the need for an adequate 20–40 metre riparian setback, a continuous foreshore corridor, improved building interfaces with the river, increased tree canopy, passive surveillance and a far more rigorous design excellence process to explore alternative masterplan options. These are not minor technical matters but fundamental questions about the quality of the overall planning outcome.

Rather than asking how the maximum amount of development can be fitted onto the site, the fundamental question should instead be:

**What development pattern best restores and celebrates the Cooks River while still accommodating appropriate employment uses?**

This site is unquestionably large enough to answer that question positively.

The development footprint should be substantially reconsidered and moved further from the river, allowing a significantly wider riparian corridor capable of delivering genuine ecological restoration, flood resilience, habitat creation and an exceptional public landscape befitting this important waterway.

As someone who has experienced the river over many years, I can say with confidence that every improvement made to the Cooks River has increased its environmental health, recreational value and community appreciation. This proposal moves in the opposite direction. It represents a missed opportunity to build upon decades of investment and

collaborative work by government agencies, councils, community organisations and volunteers.

The Cooks River deserves better than becoming the service corridor for one of Australia's largest logistics precincts.

It should instead become the organising landscape around which development is carefully arranged.

Future generations will judge this project not by how many square metres of warehouse floor space were achieved, but by whether we had the vision to restore one of Sydney's great urban rivers while we still had the opportunity.

The true measure of this project will not be the efficiency of its warehouses or the quantum of its floor space. It will be whether, when presented with one of the last great opportunities to repair the Cooks River, we had the foresight to place the river—not the buildings—at the heart of the masterplan.

For these reasons, I urge the Department to refuse the proposal in its current form and require a fundamental redesign of the masterplan before any approval is considered.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Neil Mackenzie', with a stylized, flowing script.

Neil Mackenzie

June 30, 2026