Department of Planning & Environment Major Project Team - Submissions Lodged through Major Projects Website



To Whom It May Concern,

Re: Submission to State Significant Development No. SSD7684 Site: 241-249 Wheat Road, Cockle Bay Proposal / Proposed Development: Stage 1 Concept ('Built Form Envelope') Applicant: DPT & DPPT Operator Pty Ltd Submission on behalf of: Tianlong Ribbon Pty Ltd (Future Owners of 'The Ribbon Hotel' at 31 Wheat Road)

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The submission seeks to object to some aspects of State Significant Development No.7684 known as the redevelopment of Cockle Bay Wharf at 241-249 Wheat Road, Cockle Bay ('Site') which is a Stage 1 Concept Proposal (building envelope and broad concepts only) ('Proposal' or 'Proposed development').
- 1.2. This submission is prepared on behalf of Tianlong Ribbon Pty Ltd (ACN 611 605 399) as future owners of 'The Ribbon Hotel' approved development located at 31 Wheat Road (known as the 'IMAX Site'). The Proposed Development is immediately adjacent to The Ribbon Hotel and may have substantial impacts not only on that development but also on the public domain that surrounds that development.
- 1.3. I am a Town Planning & Urban Design Consultant with a Masters in Urban Development & Design (UNSW) and I act on behalf of Tianlong Ribbon Pty Ltd.
- 1.4. This submission reviews the relevant information on the Department of Planning & Environment's website, but predominantly the Architecture Report by FJMT Architects ('FJMT Report') and the Environmental Impact Statement by JBA Urban Planning Consultants ('EIS').
- 1.5. This submission only objects to <u>parts of the development proposal</u>. We <u>broadly support</u> the concept of redeveloping the Site for Grade A commercial uses, retail and ancillary functions that rejuvenate and align with the aspirations of Cockle Bay. We also support any attempts to improve the urban design and public domain outcomes associated with connectivity to Cockle Bay from the Sydney CBD, public domain upgrades, and parkland and open space. We appreciate that the costs of these upgrades are significant and need to be supported by a sustainable development.
- 1.6. We also accept that this is a Stage 1 Concept Application for a building envelope with flexibility to support a range of development options so the amount of detail is limited. However, there is either insufficient assessment or significant potential for the Stage 2 Detailed Building Design to have excessive impacts and we suggest that the building envelope requires modification / reduction.

2. Summary of Key Issues

This submission is the Proposed Development, particularly the podium and tower building envelope (see Figure.1 below) is excessive for the following reasons (addressed in more detail in sections below):

- 2.1. The **Podium envelope** extends over vital public open space to the south of the existing Druitt Street pedestrian overbridge and is too close to the 'southern boundary' and adjacent development. This will impact on connectivity and views from Druitt Street/ Wheat Road through to Cockle Bay and The Ribbon Hotel and is an overdevelopment of public land in this location.
- 2.2. The **Southern Pavilion or Tower envelope** is located too close to the 'southern boundary' and adjacent development, blocks connections and sight-lines from Druitt Street to Cockle Bay, and it will overshadow the public domain of Cockle Bay waterfront and The Ribbon Hotel.



- 2.3. The Northern Tower envelope is excessive in that it is:
 - a) located too close to the waterfront and impacts on the 'human scale' and amenity of the waterfront promenade / public domain;
 - b) too high and the height is inconsistent with surrounding building heights and the CBD skyline, not suitable for this location on the Harbour, not required to create a 'gateway' development, and produces unacceptable impacts on the public domain and surrounding development;
 - c) too bulky and of an excessive dimension to support the intended tower floor plates;
 - d) inconsistent with the adopted planning policies and strategic direction for Cockle Bay and surrounding development, particularly relating to building heights in close proximity to the waterfront;
 - e) has potential to create significant wind and shadow impacts on the public domain and adjacent buildings to the south.
- 2.4. The **overall building envelope** is excessive, does not integrate with the context or city skyline, and inconsistent particularly with the requirements of the Sydney Regional Environmental Plan (Sydney Harbour Catchment) 2005 Aims including, but not limited to,

"(b) The public good has precedence over the private good whenever and whatever change is proposed for Sydney Harbour or its foreshores" and other similar requirements in relevant planning instruments and policies.

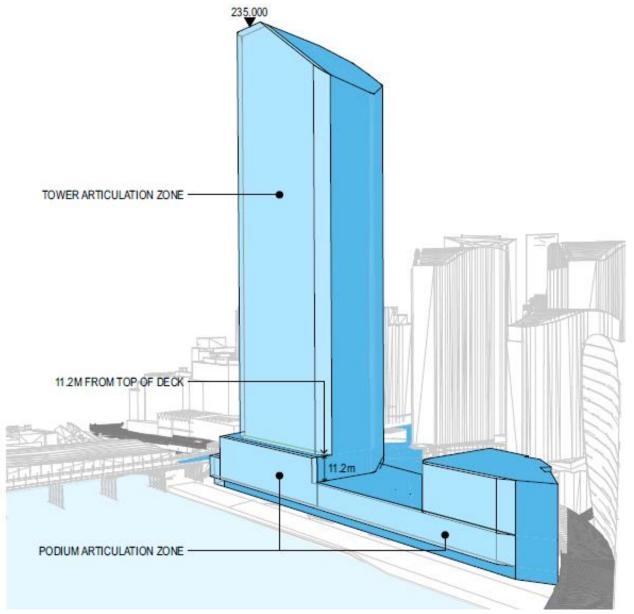


Figure 1: FJMT Report p.84 3D Views of Building Envelope.



3. Site Boundaries

- 3.1. One difficulty with understanding the nature of the development proposal is the 'site boundary'. As the EIS recognises, Cockle Bay and surrounds is unique in terms of its land ownership in that it is within the Darling Harbour Precinct, owned by the NSW State Government, and administered by Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority ('SHFA').
- 3.2. Any private interests are on the basis of long term leases that may not correspond to Lot/DP boundaries. The EIS (p.16) notes that up to 16 lots/titles are potentially affected by the proposal. However, it is unclear how the proposal's 'site boundaries' align with existing leases, the public domain, or legal titles and there is a concern that the development extends beyond what are suitable boundaries for this development (particularly to the south of the existing buildings).

4. Podium - General

- 4.1. Envelope floor plans show that the envelope takes up a 'site boundary' that extends from the Western Distributor in the south, to the waterfront promenade in the west, over Wheat Rd and the Western Distributor to the east, and to within 2m (with articulation zone) to Pyrmont Bridge to the north.
- 4.2. We support any attempt to reconnect Cockle Bay back to Market Street and the CBD to the east and have no comment on the envelope separations to the north. Our primary concerns arise from the extension of the envelope to the south of the existing building line and Druitt Street pedestrian overbridge (see section below).
- 4.3. A minor concern is that the podium envelope has a western frontage / waterfront length of ~220m and up to 3-5 storeys in height (see FJMT Report Section p.79). There is little information about how this podium envelope will be broken down / articulated into discrete elements with visual breaks to break up the massing. The indicative Market Street to Waterfront Connection may provide some of this articulation but there is insufficient detail.
- 4.4. A minor concern is that the upper levels of the podium have an 'articulation zone' that extend up to 3m outside / to the west of the 'site boundary' and over the waterfront promenade. Whilst the Applicant clearly states that they do not take up any of the existing waterfront promenade, this development over and above the promenade (articulation zone up to 40% of the frontage) is taking up the public 'air-space' and may have significant impacts on the amenity and scale of the waterfront area that is not sufficiently assessed or justified. If development of the airspace is to be justified then the development should consider providing additional width to the promenade at the ground level.

5. Podium – Southern End & Southern Commercial 'Pavilion' or Tower

- 5.1. Our key concern regards the 'southern boundary' of the podium and its associated southern commercial 'pavilion' or tower immediately adjacent to The Ribbon Hotel.
- 5.2. The <u>existing</u> southern end of the Cockle Bay Wharf development sits north of the Druitt Street pedestrian overbridge and nearly 50m from The Ribbon Hotel (there is a 'site boundary' line in that rough location) providing a wide pedestrian connection and sight-line and plenty of building separation.
- 5.3. Whilst not clearly dimensioned on the Envelope Plans, the proposed envelope's southern setback would appear to be approximately 4-5m from the Western Distributor and 8m (Ground Level) up to 20m (Level 3 Podium Terrace) to The Ribbon Hotel.
- 5.4. The proposal extends beyond the <u>existing</u> building line to encompass the roughly triangular additional 'site boundary' including the existing Druitt Street pedestrian overbridge and appears to block nearly the entire Druitt Street / Wheat Road connection and sight-line to Cockle Bay.
- 5.5. Whilst this may (or may not) be part of the legal long term lease there are serious issues with permitting development over or above a section of significant public domain and pedestrian connection. It is accepted that integration with the Druitt Street pedestrian overbridge necessitates some development in this location but it should not extend beyond the sight-line from Druitt Street or south of the existing overbridge.
- 5.6. Whilst the Druitt Street / Wheat Road 'connection' may be less important than say, the Market Street 'connection', it is still an important visual and physical connection that hasn't been examined in sufficient detail in our opinion. There is no detail on what pedestrian connection would be retained on ground level to Wheat Road and protection of sight-lines both at ground level and along the Druitt Street pedestrian overbridge.

- 5.7. Whilst this is a maximum envelope, the fact that there is a southern commercial 'pavilion' or smaller tower above this suggests that it is an essential part of the development form and no further setbacks are likely.
- 5.8. The southern tower extends up to RL31m or approximately 5-6 storeys in height. In addition, the EIS (p.38) refers to an architectural roof form being permitted above this tower form which suggests that additional height, shadow, and other impacts may not be clear from the application.
- 5.9. There is insufficient information provided to assess the impacts of a 5-6 storey tower immediately adjacent to the waterfront, a key ground level pedestrian connection, and in close proximity to The Ribbon Hotel.
- 5.10. In some images the southern tower is setback above the podium (from the southern and western boundaries) but the envelope for the tower extends to the southern edge providing <u>potential for</u> a 5-6 storey vertical interface with the public domain and associated wind and shadow impacts.
- 5.11. A building setback of 8m is insufficient to provide pedestrian sight-lines from Druitt Street / Wheat Road to Cockle Bay, it provides a significant barrier to pedestrian movement (particularly during major events), it will impact on pedestrian and waterfront amenity and it consumes 'public' land for a 'private' development with limited assessment or justification.
- 5.12. For these reasons the podium southern envelope is inconsistent with the requirements of the Sydney Regional Environmental Plan (Sydney Harbour Catchment) 2005 Aims including "(*b*) The public good has precedence over the private good whenever and whatever change is proposed for Sydney Harbour or its foreshores."
- 5.13. These setbacks do not allow for appropriate building separation to The Ribbon Hotel, the podium of which extends under the Western Distributor and would be as close as 8m to the proposed envelope. There is no visual separation between these two building forms to allow for light, views and amenity.
- 5.14. The construction of a small tower at the southern end will also have the potential to conceal the eastern end of the iconic 'The Ribbon Hotel' development and impact on views from that end of the development. Whilst private views and forms are not as important as public domain outcomes they suggest that the southern end of the envelope requires a significant reduction and increased separation.
- 5.15. The approval for The Ribbon Development includes a Public Domain Plan (Aspect Studios) that extends over to and under the Druitt Street pedestrian overbridge with road connections and landscape. The Proposed Development and the realignment of Wheat Road would appear to be entirely inconsistent with this Public Domain Plan.
- 5.16. The Approval Authority should be careful to distinguish between attempts to 'create' open space (using the parkland across the Western Distributor that does not form part of the Site) and attempts to reduce the public domain at the waterfront and ground level connections.

6. Northern Tower - General

- 6.1. A new tower is proposed towards the northern end of the Site. We agree that this is the most appropriate location for any additional height (though not the height or bulk suggested by the envelope) to minimise overshadowing of Tumbalong Park, allow view sharing for the Darling Park Towers, and minimise impacts on development to the south. However, the FJMT Report focusses on Tumbalong Park and the Darling Park Towers with little consideration of other adjacent public domain or development (particularly The Ribbon Hotel).
- 6.2. A key foundation for the justification for the height is that the substantial amount of public domain upgrades and the new connection across the Western Distributor will be at significant cost. The EIS (p.45) suggests this cost is *'around \$80 million'* yet details of the proposed upgrades will not be provided until the Stage 2 application. There is little information to show the correlation between the costs of these works and the floor space / height that is required to pay for those works (or whether alternative methods of funding these works were considered).
- 6.3. The western edge of the tower envelope extends to within 3m of the site boundary / podium (though a further 5m setback may contain articulation). This is an inappropriate setback for a tower element adjacent to the waterfront and inconsistent with current planning strategies for Cockle Bay area (see Height discussion below).



7. Northern Tower - 'Gateway' Status

- 7.1. The FJMT Report states that the tower will provide a 'gateway' entrance to the CBD from the west (p.4.), a 'gateway building' that 'fits within the Darling Harbour and city context, and contributes positively to the city skyline' (p.7), and to '[c]omplement other slender built forms that surround the valley floor' (p.7).
- 7.2. The use of the term 'gateway' is not always synonymous with height and visual dominance. Other design mechanisms can achieve a similar sense of 'arrival' or 'entrance' without the associated impacts. There is little discussion of key vistas, arrival points or need for a building of significant height at this location to improve way-finding or an awareness of the location or importance of Cockle Bay as an 'entertainment precinct'.
- 7.3. The existing CBD skyline already provides a sense of arrival when heading east along the Western Distributor.

8. Northern Tower - Height & Bulk

- 8.1. The FJMT Report states that the tower form was chosen to 'create' open space, maximise separation from adjacent buildings, and visual and pedestrian permeability (p.4.).
- 8.2. The FJMT Report (Section 4 Urban Design Controls) shows alternative massing for the site but uses a range of exaggerated urban forms with obviously poor urban outcomes to justify a single northern tower form of significant height. This method may not produce the only or most appropriate development outcome and is somewhat simplistic in its approach.
- 8.3. The Tower Proposal will have a maximum RL of 235 from a ground level at the waterfront promenade of ~RL2.3 (so the tower height from ground is ~232.7m but not confirmed). JBA suggests the proposal will be approximately 40 storeys but this may not count the podium and the height envelope could potentially permit up to 58-64 storeys including the podium (at 3.6m-4m floor to floor).
- 8.4. The Tower is an odd shaped 6-7 sided envelope that appears to be the product of the remaining space between the viewing angles that the Applicant suggests should be protected. This suggests the envelope floorplate is insufficiently resolved and overly generous in size.
- 8.5. The multi-facetted envelope makes it difficult to quantify the size and impacts of the envelope. Some key dimensions (measured off plan but not documented clearly) are:
 - a) Nearly 80m along the western façade facing the waterfront but expanding to a maximum north-south dimension of approximately 86m;
 - b) Up to 94m at its longest diagonal dimension (north-east to south-west) and 82m (north-west to south-east);
 - c) Approximately 56-61m maximum east-west dimension (depending on how much of the western façade adopts the 3m or 8m setback).
- 8.6. It is noted that the final detailed design for the Tower is not to exceed 60% of that envelope and a maximum width of 65m suggests a 'slimmer' and lower impact form <u>could</u> result.
- 8.7. The FJMT Report shows three (3) potential building 'fill' scenarios (circle, elliptical, square), none of which seem to require the building envelope to extend up to 80m along the western frontage. We suggest that the envelope could be rationalised to more closely resemble the tested infill scenarios and reduce the risk of additional bulk, scale and associated impacts whilst still allowing some flexibility in architectural expression.
- 8.8. Whilst the 'intent' is that only 60% of this envelope is filled it is common that development pressures put an upward pressure on outcomes as the application progresses so the full envelope and measurable floor space should be assessed for impact and/or a more detailed design shown for such an important site.
- 8.9. Our concern is that if this envelope is approved and the Applicant does not achieve their desired height then a likely outcome is that the architects will produce a shorter but 'fatter' tower that nearly completely fills the envelope floorplate shown with substantial additional impacts. This would still comply with the 60% rule but may vary the max. 65m length rule and would be highly undesirable.
- 8.10. Even if the maximum dimension of the tower is 65m this is a large floorplate and building massing in close proximity to the waterfront and the impacts have not been fully assessed.



9. Northern Tower - Inconsistency with CBD Skyline & Context

9.1. The Northern Tower is inconsistent with the CBD Skyline and creates an unacceptable visual impact that is not properly addressed in the JBA Visual Impact Assessment.

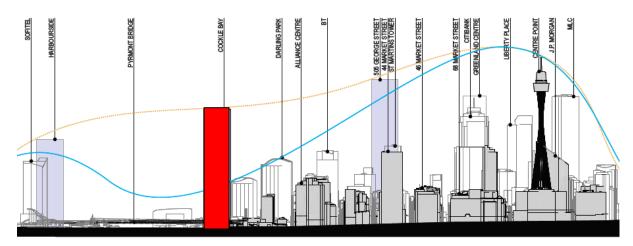


Figure 2: FJMT Report P.78 Market Street Section Study (Proposal in Red)

- 9.2. The justification for a 'modified' skyline (see Figure.2 above) is weak and shows little relationship to the Darling Harbour 'valley' or stepping down of building heights towards Cockle Bay.
- 9.3. The surrounding context on the western edge of the CBD is predominantly a height of 80m (City of Sydney Submission 16/6/16). Whilst the Subject Site may be outside the City of Sydney Planning Controls this context is relevant to height and scale.
- 9.4. The FJMT Report attempts to use Barangaroo and Circular Quay as case studies to support the proximity of higher buildings to the waterfront. We suggest these references are inappropriate because:
 - a) There are no existing / approved towers with this sort of scale present so close to the Cockle Bay waterfront;
 - b) The current Barangaroo and Circular Quay towers are setback greater than 8m from the lower waterfront development;
 - c) The Barangaroo / Crown Tower has a unique set of circumstances and politics that have driven that outcome;
 - d) As stated below, the planning policies for the Cockle Bay area are also significantly different and inconsistent with the proposed development.
- 9.5. The Ribbon Hotel has clearly sought to respond appropriately to the height controls and has maintained a maximum height of only 90m that steps down towards the west to not dominate or overshadow Tumbalong Park and the nearby public domain. It would be inappropriate to then approve a tower >200m adjacent.

10. Visual Impact

- 10.1. Excerpts from the Visual Ideas (2016) *Visual Impact Assessment* (Figures 3-6) below show that the Tower envelope (even the reduced indicative building within the envelope that appears to be incorrectly modelled) has a height, massing and scale that is entirely inconsistent with and clearly dominates the Darling Harbour waterfront and its surrounding context and does not even fit within the backdrop of the CBD.
- 10.2. The FJMT Report shows perspectives taken predominantly from an elevated viewpoint attempting to show how the tower height and scale sits in a 'backdrop' of CBD towers. It is only in the Visual Impact Assessment that true views taken from ground level are shown and these are fairly limited around the Cockle Bay waterfront promenade. However, those that are shown clearly demonstrate that the height of the tower would be inconsistent with and sit above the existing / desired stepping down off building height to Cockle Bay.





Figure 3: Visual Impact Assessment - Page 13 - View No.4 from Wharf 7, Pyrmont Bay



Figure 4: Visual Impact Assessment – Page 27 – View No.10 from Harbourside Promenade





Figure 5: Visual Impact Assessment – Page 17 – View No.6 from Murray St & Union St, Pyrmont



Figure 6: Visual Impact Assessment – Page 29 – View No.11 from Cockle Bay Promenade



11. Northern Tower – 'Human Scale' & the Public Domain

- 11.1. As stated above, the front (western) façade of the tower envelope extends to within 3m of the site boundary (accepting that a further 5m setback may contain articulation) and extends up to 232.7m above the waterfront promenade / deck.
- 11.2. The FJMT Report talks about 'Human Scale' in Section 3.5 and states that 'built form above the podium should be limited in footprint, setback from the podium edge and provide generous open space and access to lights and views' (p.53). However, there is virtually no discussion of how the proposed form (can achieve a 'human-scale' at the critical public domain along the waterfront.
- 11.3. Section A (Figure.7 below) provides an east-west section through the tower back to the CBD in which the tower envelope can be seen to 'dwarf' the waterfront promenade in height, depth, bulk and scale (see also Figure.6 above).
 A 3-8m setback above the podium would have little impact in terms of mitigating the tower dominating the waterfront.

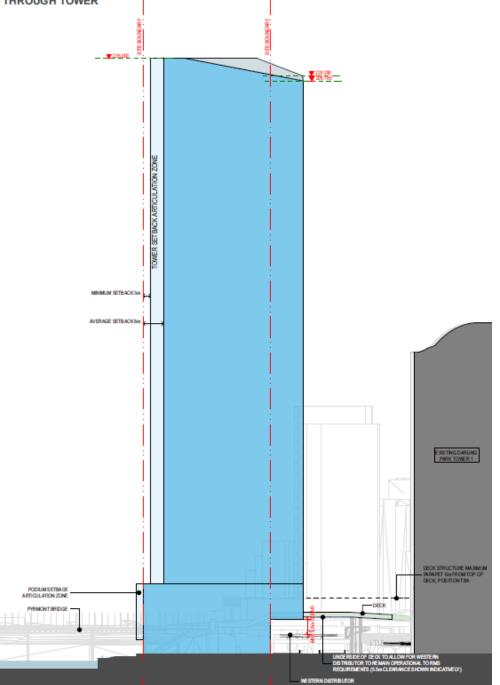


Figure 7: Section A showing an East-West Section through the Northern Tower.



12. Other Impacts on the Public Domain and The Ribbon Hotel

- 12.1. The CPP (2016) *Wind Assessment* suggests the Northern Tower will have significant impacts on pedestrian waterfront and podium rooftop amenity (particularly in close proximity to the Tower). It appears to suggest a much higher wind threshold is suitable for this area even though it is a key outdoor entertainment precinct with 'active frontages' and ground level and likely podium siting and outdoor dining areas. It relies unduly on mitigation measures in the detailed design to resolve some of the key issues. It also uses somewhat different wind modelling compared to the Air Quality Assessment (the AQA focusses more on westerly winds). The appropriate wind outcomes for such an important piece of public domain require a more transparent and detailed assessment.
- 12.2. The location of the Site and the Northern Tower means that there be significant shadow impacts on Cockle Bay, especially the public domain adjacent or near to The Ribbon Hotel, for the entire morning (see Figure.8 below). Existing building heights along the western edge of the CBD have been specifically designed to minimise these impacts so the proposal is distinctly inconsistent with this important public domain principle.
- 12.3. The FJMT Report (Section 4 Urban Design Controls p.90) attempts to show how the proposal will protect mid-Winter lunchtime sun plane to Tumbalong Park, but provides little review of the impact on the public domain and pedestrian comfort levels along the waterfront as well as adjacent development to the south, such as The Ribbon Hotel.
- 12.4. Whilst this is a 'maximum' envelope study it is difficult to assess how that envelope will be filled to determine the extent and duration of over-shadowing at key points of the day.
- 12.5. The FJMT Report and EIS show how it seeks to protect view sharing from private and commercial property but does not examine the impacts on The Ribbon Hotel, particularly for the Southern 'Tower' element / 5-6 storey podium.

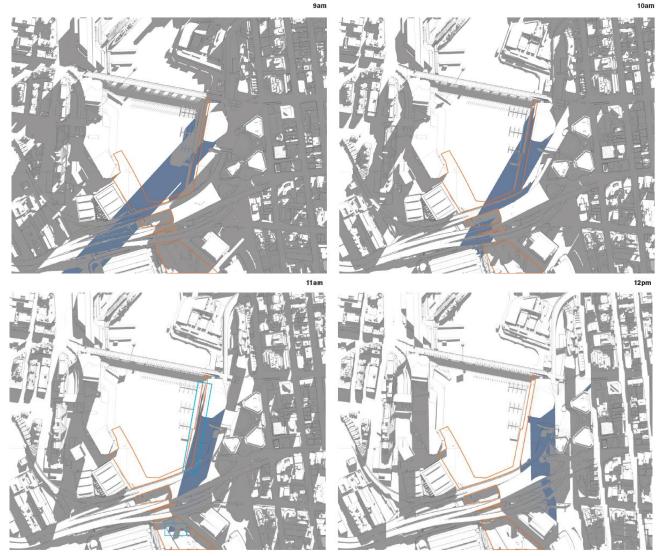


Figure 8: Shadow diagrams for 11am and 12pm (FJMT Report p.90).



13. Inconsistency with the Strategic Framework

The proposal is inconsistent with the Strategic Planning Framework for Cockle Bay / Darling Harbour as follows:

- 13.1. The Northern Tower height exceeds the 156m Obstacle Limitation Surface ('OLS') for Sydney Airport. As the tower sits apart from the clusters of higher towers in the CBD it has potential for increased impacts (see Sydney Airport submission 10/06/16).
- 13.2. Section 2 of the Architectural Report notes the Tony Caro (2006) *Darling Harbour Building Height Study* sets a height east of the western distributor of RL50-150 and west of the distributor / adjacent to the waterfront at RL30.
- 13.3. In summary, the 2006 Study intended to step the building heights down to the waterfront to reflect the 'valley floor' concept. The Architecture Study recognises that "the study has been consistently referred to by subsequent masterplans and development proposals within Darling Harbour" (p.14).
- 13.4. The Report also references the *Sustainable Sydney 2030* plan with a vision to transform the Western Distributor. Whilst the proposal certainly starts to address the Distributor's issues, nowhere in this plan or the vision was there an intention to increase building heights directly adjacent to the waterfront.
- 13.5. The Report then tries to suggest that the JPW (2010) *Darling Harbour South Masterplan* tried to 'broaden the definition of the valley floor, envisaging a free standing tower form up to 200m within the valley floor'. Firstly, it was suggested 'a tall and slender landmark tower' may be appropriate. However, it would appear this Masterplan saw these higher buildings located setback from the waterfront (e.g. the Novotel Site Redevelopment) not immediately adjacent as with the current Proposal.
- 13.6. The Woods Bagot / Infrastructure NSW (2012) SICEEP Urban Design and Public Guidelines (not strictly applicable to the Site but provide adjacent context) clearly sought to reinforce the concept of 'city scale' meeting the harbour but again defined the waterfront with maximum 21.6m and setback towers from the waterfront. Generally heights are limited to 70-153m.
- 13.7. The Report then refers to the Woods Bagot (2014) Western Harbour Precinct Design Guidelines where 'taller buildings were to "orientate so that their slender form and positioning allows for light, air and shared views to the water for neighbouring properties" (p.18). However, we would argue that the proposed envelope (even with a potential reduced internal building dimension) would be neither slender nor appropriate in that context.
- 13.8. The *Draft Central Sydney Planning Strategy 2016* has 10 key principles and we query whether the Proposal is consistent with the following:
 - a) 'Ensure development responds to context' Development of this height immediately adjacent to the waterfront is not a contextual outcome or supported by urban design principles;
 - b) *Provide employment growth in new tower clusters'* This location has not been identified for additional tower clusters;
 - c) *'Protect, enhance and expand Central Sydney's heritage, public spaces and spaces'* The waterfront would be dominated by the proposed podium extent and tower height and bulk.

14. Requested Outcomes / Modifications

The Proposal should be modified for re-assessment / re-exhibition as follows:

- 14.1. Additional details should be provided for the envelope including justification for the 'site boundary', dimensions to adjacent properties, and more detailed and transparent impact analysis on adjacent development.
- 14.2. The podium should not extend further south than the centreline of the existing Druitt Street pedestrian overbridge and should achieve a minimum setback of 40m from The Ribbon Hotel at ground and all levels.
- 14.3. The southern tower should be moved north so it is no further south than the existing Druitt Street pedestrian overbridge. If the podium is not moved north then the southern tower should be deleted.
- 14.4. The Visual Impact Assessment by JBA should be amended as the existing report clearly fails to properly assess the impacts of the bulk and scale of the Proposal in its site and statutory/strategic context.
- 14.5. The northern tower envelope:
 - a) Should be setback at least 6-8m from the western (waterfront) site boundary;
 - Floor plate should be reduced to more closely resemble the tested building scenarios (maximum dimension of 65-70m enforced) and reduce the risk of additional bulk, scale and associated impacts;



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- c) Height should be reduced to reduce the impacts on the public domain and adjacent development.
- 14.6. There should be increased transparency between the cost of providing the new public domain upgrades and connections and the need for additional floor space within the development if height above 60-80m is to be justified.

Please contact me if you have any queries.

Regards

Andrew Napres

Andrew Napier iPLAN PROJECTS

