

Cockle Bay Wharf Redevelopment Objection

I wish to object to the proposal on the grounds that the scale, massing and nature of the development have an unacceptable impact both on the visual setting of the Pyrmont Bridge but more importantly, will have a deleterious effect on the character and original planning intent of Darling Harbour.

My key concerns in relation to this submission are:

That the heritage impact assessment does not address the issue of having such a large scale building in such close proximity to the eastern approach to Pyrmont Bridge and has no qualms in sanctioning the degradation of the fabric of the bridge with further breaches of the structure on the eastern end.

The scale of the podium level is considerably higher than the existing complex and will have a major impact on the character and amenity of Darling Harbour including over looking Pyrmont Bridge. With a setback of only 2m at the podium level and not much more at the tower level, the eastern approach to the bridge is going to lose the sense of beginning. It should be noted that a proposal to redevelop the Harbourside Shopping Centre by Mirvac placed a tower this close to the bridge on the western end. It was severely criticised for detracting from the heritage value of the structure, and subsequently in the scheme currently on exhibition the tower was moved 50m to the south.

The lack of justification for a commercial tower of the bulk and mass proposed

The impact on the vision for Sydney as a global city – which requires the city to maintain a distinctive identity. In the case of Sydney, the relationship with the harbour is critical to its identity. By locating tall buildings and dense urban development along the very edges of the most visited part of the harbour there is the real risk that the special relationship will be lost. The planning concept that buildings rise in steadily increasing height, shape and bulk from the valley floor has been completely turned on its head by siting a tower of this height and bulk between buildings less than half its size between it and Cockle Bay. This together with the fact that the podium and tower are in such close proximity to the waters edge a mere 8 to 10 metres makes this development unacceptable in the context of a Darling Harbour's original planning consideration and framework as a precinct for people with open spaces (not overshadowed by immense office blocks) and highly accessible and varied leisure activities. Should this development proceed in its current form it will have the distinction of being the highest building closest to the harbour on the western side of Sydney's CBD. Even the massive Barrangaroo development had the decency to set its towers back from the water by providing a wide boardwalk and low rise buildings as a buffer. Not so for this development.

The EIS cites the Darling Harbour South master plan as a justification for the development of this type and scale on this site, which raises the question as to why a master plan was not formulated for Darling Harbour North. The lack of effective planning controls has seen developers take advantage of this vacuum, and exploit it to realise a windfall commercial gain. The first building out of the ground is the ICC Hotel, closely following is the development on the IMAX site and now the Harbourside Shopping Centre and Cockle Bay Wharf are about to get the same treatment.

Enough is enough. Halt this process and develop a meaningful master plan for Darling Harbour North, or whats left of it.

