

Darling Harbour Redevelopment

Good luck or good management? Below is a picture of Darling Harbour circa 1900. The Darling Harbour corridor visible in this picture has managed to survive over 100 years of development. Please note the dominance of the Goldsbrough Mort Wool Store and Pymont Power Station on the horizon.



Both of these buildings have been tastefully refurbished to satisfy the demands of the 21st century. The wave roof of the Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre has also been added more recently to this area and has won numerous architectural awards. This wave theme and height restriction has also been duplicated in the CBA building to help maintain this corridor.



However, the good management by previous Planning Committees is about to go out the window with the latest proposed development of Darling Harbour. The developer has stated bad luck residents of Sydney, there are no height restrictions. What corridor? Commercial profit is more important than the proper development of public space. Here is a crude adaption of the previous picture to show the impact on the Darling Harbour corridor of the four largest towers in the proposed development.



Here are some other problems this development fails to take seriously.

1. Unloading/Loading Trucks for the Exhibition Centre – the Developers have stated that this will be carried out underground within the complex. The proposal also includes a plan to reduce Darling Drive to one lane each way. The picture below depicts what happens at present i.e. there is a line of trucks parked in the Bike Lane in Darling Drive the week before and the week after waiting for access. There is no way the development will move all of this underground.



2. Traffic Jams – Harbour Street is used as the main North / South access when there is a problem with George Street. The inclusion of numerous apartments on the old Entertainment Centre site will exacerbate this problem. Here is a recent picture that also shows the impact on adjacent streets:



3. Foot traffic – here is a picture of queues for the Tram following a recent Senior Citizens concert. They use the Tram to get back to Central Railway. The alternative Tram Stop that will have to be used with the relocation of the Entertainment Centre will not cope with these queues. This picture also indicates how most of the foot traffic is heading to Central which will not be the case in the future.



4. Relocation of the Entertainment centre to the other side of Goulburn Street will change the whole dynamics of foot traffic. Considerably more of the traffic will use the Liverpool Street Footbridge indicated in the picture below to go to Town Hall Station rather than Central Station. Can this station cope?



Conclusion

The development of Darling Harbour over the past 100 years has managed to maintain a relatively low rise corridor on the western side of the Sydney CBD. The current proposal involves the conversion of the existing public space occupied by the Entertainment Centre into Commercial High Rise Apartments that will destroy this corridor. This will set a precedent for other similar high rise developments in the area. For example, apartments over the Imax Theatre and an increase in height of the Novatel Rockford Darling Harbour. Once this space is sold to commercial interests it will restrict more imaginative uses of this site in the future.

This development is being pushed by the need for a larger Convention complex to attract more overseas business. I am not convinced that this development will achieve this goal. If it is so important than why wasn't a more integrated structure completed on the larger Barangaroo site. There are also serious concerns about altered vehicle and foot traffic in this area caused by this development. This has received limited coverage in their submission.