

Desecrating Our Darling

The Sydney Morning Herald of 22 December 2012 gave extensive coverage to the proposed redevelopment of Darling Harbour. It provided illustrations of the architectural designs that the developers have prepared. The developers, the Darling Harbour Live consortium, have since displayed models of their intended buildings.

As residents of the Chinatown precinct, we have some serious concerns about this redevelopment, which are four-fold:

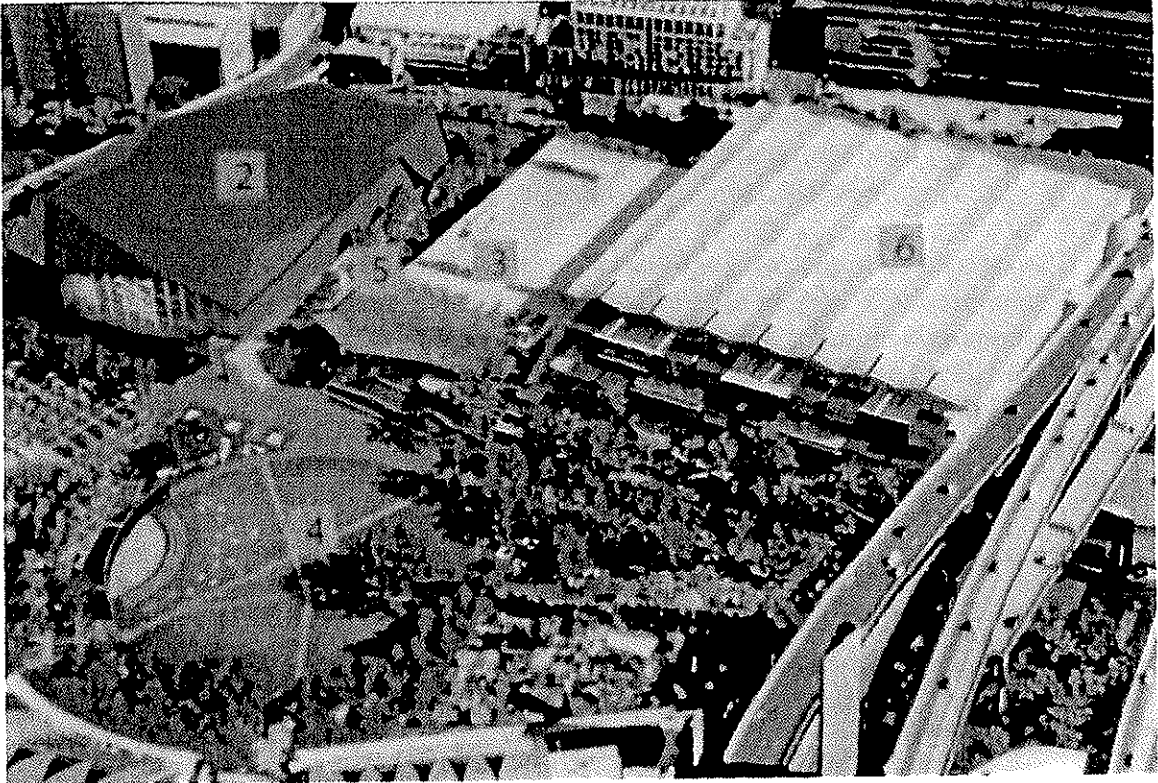
- the destruction of buildings of architectural merit that should have been given heritage value, and their replacement with buildings which have no such merit;
- the pedestrian and traffic congestion that is threatened by the diminution of road access and parking facilities, including the half closure of the only road providing western access to the Darling Harbour facilities;
- the disregard for, and apparent overruling of, the height restrictions that apply to the whole of the Chinatown precinct to serve the advantage of a commercial, profit-orientated residential development. While Darling Harbour is not contained in the SCC area of Chinatown, both Chinatown and the Chinese Gardens will be dwarfed by high-rise towers;
- the extraordinarily costly redevelopment of facilities that are, and remain, manifestly adequate to their purposes: but funded by the taxpayer to the extent of some two and a half billion dollars.

1. Architectural Merit.

There is little merit in the architectural quality or originality in the designs demonstrated in the Destination Sydney consortium's drawings and models. These were most disappointing, exhibiting a paucity of architectural imagination - commonplace, unexciting and undistinguished, messy, deficient in architectural freshness and ingenuity. The Sydney Morning Herald gave some prominence to architect Philip Cox's condemnation of the destruction of the Exhibition Centre as "an act of vandalism".

When the Sydney Opera House was in its planning stage a competition invited architects worldwide to provide design concepts for the proposed building: this resulted in the exalting originality of the new theatre. Surely, if we were to tear down the Darling Harbour bicentennial buildings, this could only be justified by our constructing replacements that are architecturally original and exciting - elating! Therefore, should not the consortium have been in the very first place promoting a means whereby our most creative, innovative and distinguished architects be invited to propose designs that are comparable in originality and architectural ingenuity to

those of the Sydney Opera House and of the most celebrated contemporary buildings erected in major international cities?



2. Access

Has Government considered that transferring the Entertainment Centre into the middle of Darling Harbour will take pedestrian pressure from its patrons' access routes from the Central Station area via Chinatown, placing this pressure instead fairly into the far more congested Town Hall area?

Similarly, has it considered the impact of halving the width of Darling Drive to a single, and presumably one-way, lane to make space for its proposed new structures?

The present multiplicity of high-rise constructions, both recently completed and underway, on the Broadway/Ultimo Road/Quay Street areas are likely to accelerate the local traffic congestion and parking difficulties with which both visitors and residents are trying to cope. Parking for private vehicles is already problematic in this whole area - a problem that will be exacerbated by the multiple apartment blocks proposed with limited parking facilities. Is there a traffic management plan for the commercial retail, 1,400 residential units, plus public and disability, parking?

3. The Purpose of Darling Harbour

Darling Harbour is Sydney's tourist, pleasure and recreational area. The proposed redevelopment injects a gross and totally unacceptable invasion of our City's

We, the undersigned, feel exceedingly strongly about this desecration of Darling Harbour; about the high and unnecessary costs of this whole scheme; about the overruling of the height restrictions that apply to the Chinatown area in respect of the proposed high-rise residential developments; and the profit-orientated, long-term contamination of the Darling Harbour reserve that will be caused by this proposed injection of high-rise blocks of residential flats and the accompanying traffic congestion.

Yours Sincerely



Name Signature

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