

Level 17
9 Castlereagh St
Sydney NSW
Australia 2000
T 612 9232 5877
F 612 9221 4139
www.ptw.com.au

Principal Directors
A Andersons AO
J Bilmon
D Jones
A Rossi
S Stinton
A Thorp

Directors
T Brabazon
C Hines
S Parsons
N Samyia

Practice Directors
S Bai (China)
K Everett (Urban Design)
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Associates
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T Uleman
K Vrdoljak
M Yip

Chief Operating Officer
T Wong

Sydney
Beijing
Shanghai
Hanoi
Ho Chi Minh City
Abu Dhabi

Peddie Thorp & Walker P/L
ABN 23 000 454 624
trading as PTW Architects

NSW Architects Act
Nominated Architects
A Andersons AO Architects No. 2822
J Bilmon Architects No. 3916
D Jones Architects No. 4778
A Rossi Architects No. 5057
S Stinton Architects No. 6599
A Thorp Architects No. 5047

WELLES THOMAS PLAZA Architectural Design Statement

PTW Architects
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Design Description

The proposed development comprises 2 towers with approximately 45,000 sqm GFA of Commercial, Residential and Retail space. Parking and Loading areas are located below ground within 5 basement levels. The two towers are separated by a large landscaped public plaza which is activated at ground level by retail outlets and the lobbies of the commercial and residential towers. The plaza comprises a landscaped area for passive relaxation and incorporates public art elements to invigorate the space which also acts as a mid-block pedestrian connection from Albert Avenue to Thomas Street and is the focal point at ground level.

The commercial tower is located on the south western portion of the site so as to form a strong statement defining the CBD edge when approached from the south along Pacific Highway. This is consistent with the iconic stature of the towers at the northern edge of the CBD and provides a corresponding gateway statement to the south.

The residential tower is orientated to maximise solar access to the apartments, to take advantage of view corridors and to minimise its impact on surrounding buildings to the north by way of its slender east-west dimension. The building is designed to complement the commercial tower in its overall form while the interplay of balconies and window types provides an interesting and expressive facade.

The lobbies to the towers are generous in scale and have double-height frameless clear glazing to provide a sense of grandeur. The commercial lobby in particular is designed to be as transparent as possible so as to promote views through the site from Albert Avenue to the public plaza giving a sense of openness to the site throughout the public domain at ground level.

Both street frontages are activated by shops or lobbies and the public plaza allows easy disabled access. A café is proposed for the Thomas Street frontage which will spill out onto the public plaza by way of external seating. A glazed awning provides covered access from Albert Avenue to Thomas Street

Level 1, directly above ground level, is also devoted to retail and commercial usage whilst Level 2 of the Residential tower comprises resident facilities such as a gym and indoor swimming pool.

Car Park and Loading Dock access is provided at the south-eastern corner of the site on Albert Avenue. The entry is located at the lowest point of the site so as to reduce the visual impact of the entry and to minimise vehicular ramping within the site. Separate loading docks are provided for both the commercial and residential components of the development and separate gated entries within the basement provide secure access to each of the the public, residential and commercial parking areas.

The uppermost basement level also contains space for ample bicycle parking and amenities along with large waste management facilities and resident storage.

Details of the proposed development are as follows:

Site Area:	4,323sqm	
Residential GFA:	21,494sqm	(4.97:1 FSR)
Commercial/Retail GFA:	23,657sqm	(5.47:1 FSR)
Total GFA:	45151 sqm	(10.44:1)

Residential Mix

Studios:	16
1 Bed:	16
1 Bed + study:	2
2 Bed:	132
2 Bed Dual Key:	8
3 Bed:	34
Total:	208

Cars

Public:	250
Residential:	192
Commercial:	64
Total:	506

SEPP 65 Design Quality of Residential Flat Development

1. Context

- The proposed development forms the southern edge of the Chatswood CBD and is consistent in scale and function with surrounding nearby CBD developments.
- Ground level is largely devoted to public usage and pedestrian access is promoted via through-site links and accessible shopfronts and lobbies off the main public plaza space which aligns with Katherine street to the north.

2. Scale

- The Residential tower is consistent in scale with the major commercial and residential towers of the CBD.
- The lower 3 levels are defined by a different architectural language to that of the tower and have a strong interface with the public plaza via the shops and lobbies.
- The ground level is generous in height to provide a sense of grandeur and openness in proportion with the large public plaza whilst still maintaining a human scale via the continuous glazed awning and landscaping elements.
- The treatment of the balconies and fenestration to the tower serves to break down the traditional repetitive nature that can be characteristic of residential towers. The interplay of solid and glazed balustrades, dark and light coloured panels and feature materials serves to create a layered effect that provides variety and interest.

3. Built Form

- The Residential Tower comprises a 3 storey base and 26 storey tower.
- The lower 2 levels of the base contain retail facilities and the residential lobby while the third level comprises resident facilities such as a gym and indoor swimming pool.
- The form of the building is expressive of its function. The exterior of the building is modulated with balconies and a variety of window types to give an interesting and expressive facade.
- A variety of materials and coloured surfaces are used to express a hierarchy of elements and to provide a consistency of architectural expression between the residential and commercial towers.

4. Density

- The FSR for the residential tower is approximately 5:1 yielding 208 apartments.

5. Resource, energy and water efficiency

- High performance glazing used to minimise solar heat gains in summer.
- Provision of high efficiency air conditioning plant and equipment.
- Provision of energy efficient appliances. 4 star water efficient fixtures and fittings utilised throughout.
- Rainwater recycling system for landscape irrigation purposes and for common area toilet flushing and filling of pool water.
- Landscaped areas to have drip-feed irrigation with timed switching.
- Fire systems designed to save water during test mode. Test water from the system will drain into basement tank for reuse.
- Water meters installed for all major water uses. Meters to be connected to a Building Management System for monitoring to provide a leak detection system.
- Provision of chlorine elimination system for the pool and spa backwash facility to enable recycling for landscape irrigation purposes.
- Compliance with BASIX water requirements to achieve 40% saving in potable water use.
- Indoor Environmental Quality improved by provision of natural ventilation to apartments.
- Materials with ozone-depleting substances in their manufacture will not be used.
- Reductions in the use of volatile organic compounds within the occupied areas including low VOV paints and flooring. All composite timber products specified to be of the low formaldehyde type and sourced from either post-consumer re-used timber or Forest Stewardship Council certified Timber.
- Waste will be reduced by waste management and provision of recycling facilities during construction, and by provision of appropriate facilities in the building on completion to encourage recycling.
- Waste storage area for recyclable waste provided on each floor of the building.
- A minimum of 60% of construction waste to be recycled for reuse.

- Solar access or cross ventilation for clothes drying.
- External lighting will incorporate low cut-off luminaires that direct light onto surfaces and not toward the sky.
- Provision of car parking kept to a minimum due to proximity of alternative modes of transport.
- Ample cyclist facilities provided

6. Landscape

- The central open space area is the focus of the design proposal, with the feature spaces and elements providing a high level of practical amenity for passive recreation, retail related spaces, and an interesting and vibrant cross-site pedestrian link.
- Design analysis has considered the orientation of the space to sun and wind, and the character and context of the space relative to the Chatswood CBD and adjoining areas. The site will complete a significant missing piece of this area of Chatswood, and has the potential to create a lively, dynamic civic space activated by the residential and commercial population on the site and from adjacent areas. It is important to create an appropriate balance that respects the different needs of the residential and commercial user groups, as well as the general public. The proposal comprises a suitable mix of passive lawn area, lunchtime seating areas, whimsical and creative public art components, formal forecourt spaces, and active retail frontages with potential cafe seating areas.
- Other significant considerations that have been considered and addressed include:
 - Streetscape identity and relationship as part of the CBD and residential environs;
 - Sun and Shade patterns and influence on character and appropriate use of the space;
 - Wind characteristics and potential to ameliorate this to the benefit of the possible use of the space;
 - Lighting, security monitoring and general design for safety and comfort, and ensuring it is a suitably comfortable, welcoming hospitable space generally suitable for purpose;
 - Accessibility, and also links to other sites, railway and CBD area, and nearby open space;
 - Pedestrian and vehicular sightlines for arrival and identity, and issues associated with retail and commercial building signage.
- Consideration has also been given to the character and functioning of the space at night. Given the linear form of the main space, consideration of lighting to ensure that at night the space joins with, and contributes to the overall environs of

adjacent streets, and creates a safe and inviting area with appropriate lighting and consideration of CPTED principles. Design of paving and walls is to include design and elements to discourage skateboards and similar inappropriate activities.

- It is envisaged that the area provides a positive focal space, with lighting and sculpture elements to dramatically contribute to the role of the space as a feature of the overall Chatswood CBD. A specialist lighting consultant will be engaged in order that the plaza and building forecourt lighting is fully coordinated with the lighting scheme for the adjacent lobbies and the building areas as a whole.
- The blank wall of the existing two-storey building on the adjacent site is to be significantly screened by boundary native shrubs and canopy trees. The planter elevates the planting above the adjacent lawn. A quality fence will be reinstated to the boundary where appropriate, and fire egress stairs are located to open onto Thomas Street.
- A broad lawn (approximately 12 x 3.5 metres) is provided for passive recreation, with the slight elevation assisting the comfort for users by elevating their position relative to passing pedestrians. The lawn is in a sunny location, and the trees are selected and located to reduce wind. The edging wall and the solid bench elements that intersect 'into' the lawn area will all provide seating.
- The Fleet Lane frontage is to be upgraded with a cafe terrace, and at the junction with the open space spine across the site, with a feature civic sculpture proposed on the alignment with the laneway to reinforce this as a laneway / pedestrian link.
- The cafe terrace will have sun through the majority of the day, ameliorated by being just under the edge of the building in a colonnade type arrangement. The slope of Fleet Lane requires small flights of stairs at each end, with flush access midway along the lane. Low boundary planters will separate vehicles from pedestrian areas, whilst allowing visual access and views out from the terrace.
- A formal apron of paving marks the entry to the residential building and creates an appropriate sense of address and setting for this significant building, linking it into the adjacent plaza space. Paving pattern making continues the rhythm of benches and paving inlays down the space. The forecourt paving extends across to the open lawn area, providing a suitable setting and amenity for the residents. Extensive open space near to the site will provide a high level of amenity.
- The broad pedestrian stair to Albert Avenue creates an address to the street, with it's offset from the main alignment of the plaza above placing the large tree as a terminating element on the main visual axis down the space. The residential apartments opposite on Albert Avenue are screened by large trees already, but it was felt it was appropriate to contain the space with landscape as part of the civic space. The ramp adjacent provides equitable access.
- Council's paving is delineated from site paving along Thomas Street, showing that

the footpath widens to suitably engage with the large civic space. This also occurs on Albert Avenue. Street trees are not yet shown, but it is understood that they will be located appropriately in consultation with Council to suit species and tree spacings in the street.

- Councils footpath paving is a honed concrete paver with a mid-range cream colour. A similar material, or quality stone is proposed on the site, with stone cladding to planter walls. The paving design shows a number of 'overlapping' forms, with the background intended as a light grey; the linear feature inlay as a very light colour; the longer perpendicular paving strips to be a mid-gray; and the benches and shorter inlays to be dark grey.
- A light coloured paver is to provide a linking, linear element along the length of the space, providing a signature design element that will provide interest and distinctive identity to the site. Motion sensors will detect passing pedestrians, and lighting will respond and then slowly fade, giving the effect of a 'jet trail' to each person. This has been trialled in a project in Scotland, and would provide a unique feature in Australia. Developing of an interpretive layer to the design will refer to the passing generations of people in Chatswood.
- Select native trees will be installed to provide a high and broad canopy of foliage. A tree species such as *Ficus rubiginosa*, (but selected with aid of current best available stock and for best result in these conditions) will provide shade that will punctuate the space, and will green the view down the plaza, as well as reduce wind to assist pedestrian comfort. Uplighting will highlight the trees at night.
- A substantial public art piece will provide a central feature to the civic area, also being located to feature in views down Fleet Lane. The artwork sits in front of the commercial tower, and will reinforce the setting of the building as being in a significant public space. An artist will be engaged to develop a site specific response.

7. Amenity

- The proposed development provides excellent public amenity at ground level with the landscaped public plaza and retail and café spaces.
- Easy access to the residential lobby is provided for all age groups and degrees of mobility.
- The apartment layouts are designed to promote natural ventilation where possible and provide excellent daylight access to the majority of units.
- The planning of the individual apartments places an emphasis on minimising interruptions in air flow through the apartment. The majority of apartments have little or no floor area devoted to internal corridors. Planning is generally such that one space flows onto another enabling the movement of air from one room to the next.

- Approximately 50% of apartments are corner apartments which receive outstanding cross flow ventilation.
- Approximately 42% of apartments are stepped in plan around a recessed balcony enabling cross flow ventilation to part of the apartment.
- 8% of apartments are studios which do not receive cross flow ventilation but have generous openable windows with good proximity to natural air.
- The building is orientated to maximise the number of apartments receiving direct natural light. All apartments have either a northerly, easterly or westerly aspect.
- The only south facing apartments are corner apartments enabling direct solar access to some habitable spaces within all apartments.
- 75% of apartments are orientated to receive direct natural light to living rooms or habitable rooms and private open space between 9am and 3pm in mid winter. The lower levels will however be overshadowed by neighbouring buildings.
- The communal open space defined by the public plaza receives direct daylight access between March and September and provides shaded areas in summer via the landscaping.
- The depth of all single aspect apartments is minimised and all kitchens, living rooms and bedrooms have direct access to natural light, ventilation and views.
- All apartments except studios have balconies off living rooms.
- All north facing windows have horizontal projecting sun shades.
- High performance glass is used in all apartments.
- The majority of apartments are planned to minimise noise transmission between units by locating bedrooms adjacent to neighbouring bedrooms or away from party walls.
- The apartments are configured such that no apartment impedes upon the privacy of another.
- All rooms to all apartments are rectilinear in shape and well proportioned to enable them to function efficiently for the required use.
- Private storage is located predominantly within the basements within close proximity of the lifts. Where possible additional private storage is located within the apartments.
- 59 apartments (28%) have large (14-21m³) lockable storage zones located

adjacent to their car bays in the basement. The remaining apartments have access to a resident storage room in the basement of approximately 200m³ in total which has the ability to be divided separately.

8. Safety and Security

- Though not facing the street directly the building entry is highly prominent and located off the main pedestrian plaza which will be well illuminated at night.
- The entry is clearly visible from the street.
- All lower level west facing units enable casual surveillance of the entry and the main lobby will provide sole secure access to the building.
- Living rooms and balconies are oriented such that they allow opportunities for casual surveillance of the public plaza at all times.
- The residential component of the car park is separated from the other areas of the car park via boom gates and a security office is located adjacent to the entry.
- The residential lifts have direct access to the secured basement and will have exclusive access for residents only.
- The residential car park will be well lit and all car bays are within close proximity to the lifts.
- All resident facilities are located at level 2 and are accessible only via secure lifts.
- All apartments are inaccessible from neighbouring buildings

9. Social dimensions and housing affordability

- The proposed development provides affordable housing in accordance with WLEP 1995

10. Aesthetics

- The building design is expressive of its function and the displacement of the apartment mix creates an interesting and expressive façade.
- Materials, finishes and colours are selected to enhance the modulation of the façade. Aluminium façade panels are utilised to define the main framework of the façade and relate to the façade panelling of the commercial tower.
- The interplay of glazed and solid balustrading to the apartment balconies breaks down the scale of the facades, and provides a choice of balcony types to residents.

- An emphasis on high standard finishes at the podium levels (including ground level and plaza) provides high quality where people come into contact with the building.
- The main residential lobby is a double height space with high quality finishes and the plaza has a focus on public art and landscaping to produce a highly aesthetic and usable public domain.