

Cockle Bay Wharf Redevelopment SSD 7684

Statement by Elizabeth Elenius, representing Pymont Action Inc to IPCN 5 March, 2019

This redevelopment has been proposed in a “rules-free” precinct. There is no Master Plan, Local Environment Plan or DCP against which to evaluate its conformity to well understood planning parameters – building height, scale, floor space ratios and zoning – providing certainty to members of the community.

In recent years, residents of Pymont and Ultimo have been walled off from the CBD by the “anything goes” redevelopment of the Western side of Darling Harbour. Donald Trump could get some lessons here. And now developers have moved to the Eastern side.

Pymont Action members’ main concern about the Cockle Bay redevelopment is its scale so close to the harbour. The Department recommends a reduction in height which will result in a 42 storey tower which it proposes should be moved South, away from the heritage Pymont Bridge by a total of 72.9m which is an improvement, but results in a moderate to severe impact on views on W facing apartments in the Astoria residential tower. We recommend that the building envelope be further reduced in height and bulk and that controls, outlined in the application, Appendix C, be mandated such that no later Modification can be submitted to alter the approved controls. Our submissions have proposed that the tower be no more than 35 storeys thus reducing its overshadowing of public spaces, including the proposed Town Hall plaza, the foreshore promenade up to 11am, and the harbour, and, possibly the severity of the view losses of Astoria residents.

Whilst the recommended width of the foreshore promenade maintains the status quo ie 8m, the scale of the proposed building is vastly different from the existing structure which doesn’t loom over the walkway. We ask for an increased setback of the podium to take account of its overwhelming impact on public space and the water. We agree with the Department’s recommendation that there should be no further alienation of the harbour by an over-water boardwalk.

No adopted contributions plan applies to the site to enable provision of appropriate social infrastructure in what is now an area of extremely high building density, including residential apartments and student housing. We have long sought provision, through developer levies, of a public indoor sporting facility to compensate for the removal some years ago of popular courts from Darling Harbour to make way for commercial development. The proposal should also include a childcare centre and a community centre to encourage and support social cohesion within the CBD and Haymarket. The Department considers provision of open space enough of a contribution ignoring the total lack of sporting facilities in Pymont/Ultimo and Darling Harbour/Haymarket. The only social infrastructure provided via the redevelopment of Darling Harbour and Darling Park is a library and a childcare centre. Yet many thousands of additional residents and workers have been added to this area, with more to come via the IMAX and Cockle Bay redevelopment. If this development proceeds, provision of sporting facilities must be included, if not indoors, then as part of the open space provision.

We continue to deplore the lack of a cohesive traffic and transport plan to improve access to the Darling Harbour/Cockle Bay precinct. We ask that such a plan be developed as a matter of urgency to address the need for new and improved public transport, pedestrian access, and involving meaningful consultation with community and business representatives from both the CBD and Pymont/Ultimo, noting that the cumulative impact of recent developments at Darling Harbour has

resulted in increased congestion on local roads, and consequent unreliability of the scarce public transport serving the peninsula. It should also be noted that advice from Transport for NSW states that the Anzac Bridge is at full capacity, so any additional traffic will cause more backup congestion in city streets. And the area is poorly served by public transport necessitating provision of 150 car spaces, with resultant increase in congestion, especially when added to the traffic impact of the IMAX redevelopment.

Above all, if this development is approved, the approval must contain a condition that future development applications cannot use its approval to justify the imposition of other tower buildings in its vicinity. This should include the proposed Harbourside tower, and the proposed 61-storey Ritz Carlton hotel/residential tower above The Star. The proponent of the latter has, quite specifically, argued in its Report of Environmental Factors, that the Sofitel hotel and proposed Harbourside tower set a precedent for an even higher tower in Pyrmont. We note with alarm the many references in the Department's assessment to "the precedent for towers adjacent to the harbour has been established by sites in the immediate area" as a justification for the Cockle Bay tower's inappropriate scale. Yet in its assessment report, the Department also states "any development of surrounding land would be the subject of separate development applications assessed on their merits and would be subject to height, floor space ratio and other planning controls." I have news for the department – there are no rules for the Harbourside site, nor the Ritz Carlton tower site in nearby Pyrmont.

We also seek an undertaking by the IPCN and the Department of Planning that any conditions that might be imposed on the Cockle Bay redevelopment cannot be overturned by a subsequent MOD as has been the case in the recent approval by the Minister for Planning of a MOD which substitutes a commercial party boat marina on a Public Recreation site which was to accommodate the not for profit Sydney Heritage Fleet museum and moorings for heritage vessels. In this instance the PAC 's original DA consent contained conditions which restricted the SHF marina's use to vessels *of the Sydney Heritage Fleet or other affiliated maritime heritage organisations...Private vessels/boats **must not be moored at the maritime facility at any time.*** MODs have become increasingly popular with developers as a way of getting what they wanted all along, without the more intense scrutiny applied to new DAs.

We are heartily sick of the ad hocery of the current planning laws (one can't call it a system, or even planning). We look forward to a day when development is in accordance with strategic Master Plans developed in partnership with local governments and the communities they serve.