



New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

**RE: HARBOURSIDE SHOPPING CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT – PUBLIC
DOMAIN AND BRIDGES (SSD-49653211)**

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER MEETING

PANEL:	ANDREW MILLS (CHAIR) SHELLEY PENN AM RICHARD PEARSON
OFFICE OF THE IPC:	KENDALL CLYDSDALE TAHLIA HUTCHINSON
EXTERNAL ATTENDEES:	GUY DIBENEDETTO JOSEPHINE DIBENEDETTO ELIZABETH ELENIOUS
LOCATION:	ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE
DATE:	12:30PM – 1:00PM WEDNESDAY, 21st MAY 2025

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

MRS JOSEPHINE DIBENEDETTO: Good afternoon. My name is Josephine DiBenedetto and this is my husband ...

MR GUY DIBENEDETTO: Guy DiBenedetto.

MRS DIBENEDETTO: And this is Elizabeth Elenius from Pymont Action, and the Convenor.

MR ANDREW MILLS: Good afternoon, all of you. Unfortunately, we don't have the benefit of seeing you at the moment, so that –

MRS DIBENEDETTO: Oh, that's okay.

MR DIBENEDETTO: It might be better that you don't have to look at us.

MR MILLS: Oh, yes we can, that's great. Thank you. Well, good afternoon and welcome. I just have a short opening statement for the record. This is being recorded.

MRS DIBENEDETTO: Okay.

MR MILLS: But before I begin, I'd like to acknowledge that I'm speaking to you from Gadigal land and I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of all the lands on which we virtually meet today and pay my respects to their Elders past and present.

My name is Andrew Mills. I am the Chair of the Independent Planning Commission and of this Commission Panel. Joining me are my fellow Commissioners, Shelley Penn and Richard Pearson. We are also joined by Kendall Clydsdale and Tahlia Hutchinson, both from the Office of the Independent Planning Commission and who are slightly off camera to you, but they are here.

As you are aware, due to there being no registered speakers, the Commission has decided not to proceed with the public meeting for the Harbourside Shopping Centre Redevelopment – Public Domain and Bridges State Significant Development Application (SSD-49653211) which is currently before the Panel for determination.

The Commission Panel understands that there were personal circumstances which prevented you from registering to speak at the public meeting, and accordingly, the Commission Panel has agreed to meet separately with you today to hear your views on the application.

In the interests of openness and transparency and to ensure full capture of the information, today's meeting is being recorded, and a complete transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission's website.

I might add if there is anything that you would like to say in the meeting that you feel is private and you would like not to be published, we can redact it from the transcript and make sure that it doesn't appear.

We have about 10–15 minutes today to hear your views and allow the Commissioners to ask any questions. With that, we would now like to begin. We do have the benefit of your email submission as well. Thank you very much for that.

Would you like to present anything to us in particular?

MRS DIBENEDETTO: We don't know. What do we want to say?

MS ELIZABETH ELENIOUS: Well, the main thing is to ensure that the planting that's going on, on the roof on the top of the podium in front of 50 Murray Street is planted such that it does not impede to the views of the people who live there. That's really important.

Another issue is the hours that will be open. As I understand it, it's 24/7, and that is not acceptable to the people who live right next to it. And the other issue is having the direct connection from the harbour frontage of 50 Murray Street to the Pyrmont Bridge. I think those are certainly the main issues.

We have the latest visual representation of the proposal. It does not appear to show the bridge, which is at the moment sort of hanging over Darling Drive and where we would like to receive absolute assurance that that link to the bridge will go ahead, and all the other sort of ancillary things that Josie has outlined in her letter. They are some things.

MR MILLS: Thank you, Elizabeth, if I may call you by your first name.

MS ELENIOUS: Yes, of course.

MR MILLS: The plans that are before the Commission incorporate the bridge, as well as a lift access down to the garden area. So, that is what is before the Panel and that's what we will be considering.

MS ELENIOUS: That's what you're considering, or is that assured?

MR MILLS: Well, if the Commission determines to approve the application with the conditions that are currently before it as recommended conditions, it will be effectively part of the development; it will be required to be completed as part of the development.

MS ELENIOUS: Well, we strongly urge that these things are included and are mandated.

MR MILLS: Thank you.

MS ELENIUS: The hours of operation are the other issue.

5 **MR MILLS:** Well, with the hours of operation, what is before us, again, you say 24/7, but there's also security that attends to that. I'm not quite sure if you have access to any information in relation to that, but –

10 **MS ELENIUS:** Is the security public security from the government or is it private security from the tenants?

MR MILLS: So, security obligations from Mirvac as the people who will have and operate that area. They will be obliged to provide the security. The bridge itself will be, once completed, will be handed over to ...

15 **MS SHELLEY PENN:** Placemaking.

MR MILLS: Placemaking NSW. Thank you. And they will then be responsible for security in relation to the bridge itself.

20 **MS ELENIUS:** Right. Do you want to make any comment?

MS DIBENEDETTO: Can I just – I can't hear you real well, so can I have a bit of a fiddle with my microphone and see if I can get it a bit louder?

25 **MR MILLS:** Sure, of course.

MS DIBENEDETTO: Dear me, what have I done now. No, I haven't been able to make it any louder. Anyway.

30 **MR RICHARD PEARSON:** We'll talk more loudly.

MS DIBENEDETTO: Okay, that's good, we're old people.

35 **MR PEARSON:** So are we.

MS DIBENEDETTO: We're in our eighties.

40 **MR DIBENEDETTO:** On the earlier meeting, we were assured, guaranteed that the bridge and the lift would be – if it got damaged, it would be reinstated as it was at the beginning. As we said on our email, that that bridge is our backdoor. Our building, it was built with that bridge connected to it, and also the walkway behind the Ibis and goes out to Murray Street further up, that the locals use.

45 For us, it's very important that bridge, because we find that the intersection of Murray and Darling Drive, it's extremely dangerous and it's very busy. The cars come around the corner and, as my wife said, I'm 86 and I hate going to that corner.

So, we would love to have that bridge back. As I mentioned on the email, the bridges break down a lot. I notice there's a lot of bridges up the other end of the Pymont Bridge, there's one at the lift, at the light rail and that, and the one we used to have here – they used to be broken down all the time.

So, what I'm suggesting is maybe they could have an inclinator, what do you call it ...?

MRS DIBENEDETTO: A travelator.

MR DIBENEDETTO: A travelator too, so if it breaks down, people can still use that crossing and go from our backdoor to the bridge. Also, it's a safety matter. Say we have a fire, it's one way to escape at the back, and as we mentioned in the email, this is not just 50 Murray Street, it's also the Ibis is connected to our building, the two buildings are one, we share a lot of things in this.

So, the gentleman that I met – his name was ... Angelo?

MRS DIBENEDETTO: Angelo Colangelo.

MR DIBENEDETTO: Colangelo. He absolutely assured us that bridge would, and the lift, would be replaced. And we're very upset that they're talking about maybe not. Because the simple reason being that there's a few new tenants on the lower, on the first floor, that have bought recently, and this bridge would interfere with their view. So, they're pushing to avoid the bridge because it'll improve their property. But there's 112 people in units in this building, just 3 or 4 apartments it's going to impede on the value of the building, and our comfort to walk to the bridge.

MS ELENIUS: I think the main thing is there has to be a link. Whether it's in the form that it currently is, is immaterial. It could be another way that isn't visually intrusive. But there must be that link. It's not just – it's all the other hotel, what's the other hotel?

MR DIBENEDETTO: Ibis.

MS ELENIUS: The Ibis.

MR DIBENEDETTO: The Novotel.

MS ELENIUS: There's a lot of residents living in this southern section of Pymont. And it's really essential that that link be maintained. The form of that link is up to the developer. But it's really very significant.

And also I'd like to sort of talk about the security. We have no idea what that actually means. The experience elsewhere in Pymont, particularly around Jones Bay Wharf where you've got function centres galore and then residents living

directly opposite those function centres, and they were there before the function centres. It's sometimes absolutely untenable, the security have no real power on footpaths and things like that to actually control drunkenness and loud noise and yahoos, which occur frequently.

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And those premises close at around 11 o'clock. To have a 24-hour access to this public site, it could make the lives of the people in 50 Murray Street and in the hotels even, really untenable. And we would like to have it mandated that the hours of operation there are reasonable, as outlined by Josie in her letter.

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MR DIBENEDETTO: Most the people who don't live here don't realise that we can hear the yahoos, I call them "yahoos" because they go to the pub across the road (it's 24/7) and the Star's just down the street, and when they leave there, they like to hear their voice echo over the bridge. And we can hear them in our apartment here. And that's – the bridge is further away than where this garden is going to be. The garden will be right underneath our balcony.

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And the other thing is, I haven't been able to find out officially, but the word is that there's going to be a bar on that garden space.

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MR MILLS: No, there's not.

MS DIBENEDETTO: He's shaking his head.

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MS ELENIUS: Well, that's good.

MS DIBENEDETTO: That's good. That's very good.

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MR MILLS: It's not part of what's before us. In fact, there is no food trucks even allowed in that garden.

MS DIBENEDETTO: Oh, that's wonderful.

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MR DIBENEDETTO: Well, that's a blessing to hear. Thank you very much.

MR ELENIUS: Maybe drugs.

MR PEARSON: Alcohol-free.

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MR MILLS: And it's an alcohol-free zone.

MR DIBENEDETTO: Wow.

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MR MILLS: No events allowed. Alcohol free. It's a passive park.

MR DIBENEDETTO: Okay. That's a bit more pleasant.

MS DIBENEDETTO: How is that going to be policed, the alcohol?

MR MILLS: The security, that's the point of the obligation to have security.

MS DIBENEDETTO: Okay.

MS ELENIUS: But how – will security be there 24/7?

MR MILLS: Yes.

MS PENN: Yes. And those are enforceable conditions. So, if they're not enforced, you're within your rights to, you know, complain that they're not being met, that people are using alcohol or they're having events. Or if security is not present.

MR MILLS: Remember that they've got security as well for the shopping centre underneath and the commercial around – so the whole area will need to have security.

MR PEARSON: There's also a plan of management required for the space as well. But that'll give some further surety, if you like, to what can and can't be done in the park.

MS ELENIUS: And will that plan be made available for the community to comment on?

MR PEARSON: Yes. I think – well, I don't know about comment, no, "comment" is probably the wrong word. But I think it's provided as part of the approval documentation. So, but I think they're pretty clear on the community's views about wanting it as a passive, quiet space in a noisy city, for people to interact with the harbour. So, I don't – it is definitely not proposed to be an active, noisy place, and I think Mirvac's intending very strongly to manage it in that way.

MS PENN: Can I just –

MS ELENIUS: Yes, I mean, one of the issues at Jones Bay Wharf is they come out and then they linger. I can just visualise if there are function centres in the podium, that the next step for them is to go drunk into that garden. That will have to be policed very strongly.

MR MILLS: Yes.

MR DIBENEDETTO: My understanding is that right in front of us, next to the bridge, the ground floor there's going to be an Italian restaurant, and then the first floor there's going to be a – the whole floor is going to be taken up by a function centre. Now, if they've got exit to the garden, it's going to be a hullabaloo. I don't know if you're aware of that, about the whole floor. But I sort of overheard him that he was going to put a bar upstairs in the garden, where that's where –

MS DIBENEDETTO: They've said no, so that's good. That's good.

MR DIBENEDETTO: You've said no, I maybe dreaming.

MS DIBENEDETTO: Can I just ask a question, is – sorry.

MS PENN: Sorry, I was just saying that's specifically excluded from the uses. They're not allowed to have alcohol, let alone a bar on there. They're not allowed to have events.

MR MILLS: And in terms of the use of the underlying floors, yes, it is understood that there will be restaurants at the water level, I'll call it that, but you know with the level of the ground floor is the retail area. I don't know that – and it's not within our approval process as to what use is made of any intervening floors. But I understood it was meant to be commercial, so that the intervening levels were meant to be commercial, so I'm not sure about ...

There is no applications for, as far as I understand, there is no applications for the use of that space as yet.

MS ELENIUS: So, the space around the harbour, will that be an alcohol-free zone as well?

MR MILLS: No, that's restaurants and so on, so that won't be alcohol-free.

MR PEARSON: It's the park, is alcohol-free. The commercial areas around the harbour, well, that'll be restaurants, cafés that ...

MS ELENIUS: So, people can drink outside?

MR PEARSON: Sure, yes.

MS ELENIUS: 24/7?

MR PEARSON: Well, I don't know about 24/7, because they won't be open 24/7, the retail offerings, but for the hours that they're open, some of them will be – you know, in the normal way of restaurants, you will be able to have a drink with your meal, similar to what was there, only a better quality of offering, I would say, than the existing, you know, the previous shopping centre.

MS PENN: Can I just reassure you on the previous point, because you went from the bridge, and our understanding, as Andrew has said, is that, well, certainly what's before us is that the bridge will remain and be repaired and function with a brand new lift. So, that's definitely what's before us to consider. There's no proposal to not do that.

MS DIBENEDETTO: Good.

MR MILLS: And maintenance of those facilities is obviously, it comes with the

building of them, the maintenance of them is required.

MS DIBENEDETTO: Okay. And when will you be able to decide, or have you already decided, if it's going to be 24/7 guardian square or is it going to be maybe considered to be closed for a few hours, like, I don't know, 11 until 7 or 6 or something or other. Is that on the cards at all?

MR MILLS: Well, all the conditions associated with the development are before us. We haven't made decisions at all at this stage.

MS DIBENEDETTO: Okay.

MR MILLS: Our decision comes after listening to everyone and reading all of the submissions that are made, all the written submissions as well.

MR DIBENEDETTO: Can I just ask ... What's the idea of mounding the soil on top of where the garden is?

MR MILLS: So, you can plant trees.

MS ELENIUS: How high will that be?

MR MILLS: The trees will be ...

MR PEARSON: They can get up to around 12 metres.

MR MILLS: 12 metres, I think at the tallest, once they're fully mature.

MS PENN: That's the top of the tree canopy. The soil is about 800 millimetres with very, it's localised, you need about a metre for a tree to grow to some sort of maturity other than a shrub.

MR DIBENEDETTO: Why I imagine when they saying "mounding soil" is that on a peak, like a volcano shape, that's the way I imagine ...

MS PENN: No, much more gentle. It's more like a landscape you almost wouldn't notice it because they'll have low shrubs and things, and that's just the trunk of the tree, just to give the tree a bit more depth for its roots to get water and so on, and stability.

MS ELENIUS: And there will be gaps between the trees, so that, you know ...

MR MILLS: Yes.

MS PENN: Definitely.

MS ELENIUS: If you've got one stuck in front of your window, you can look past it.

MS PENN: Exactly. And they've spread them out, is my understanding, in response to concerns that people had. They've got less of them.

5 **MR MILLS:** Yes, there's fewer than the original plan envisaged.

MR DIBENEDETTO: As I mentioned at the beginning, why can't we have a beautiful garden with shrubs and flowers and things like that near the bridge, so that we could – it looks beautiful, that people go out of their way to go and have a look.

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Over at Cockle Bay where the Commonwealth Bank is, they've got a garden in there, they've got some trees around the perimeter, mostly olive trees, and they don't grow very tall and they're always green. But in the middle of the garden, they've got herbs, they've got flower

15 s, they've got water features. It's beautiful. People go out of their way to go and have a look at this garden.

So, why can't we have a nice flower garden, shrubs, that people who'll be on the bridge taking photos of this beautiful garden.

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MS DIBENEDETTO: More like a botanic garden type of thing.

MR MILLS: Yes, well, the plans before us have a combination not just of those trees but also of low plants, shrubs and things like that as well.

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MS PENN: Grassed areas, seating areas. They do have flowers, I don't think it's an English-style garden, I think it's more of a native garden.

30 **MS DIBENEDETTO:** That's all right.

MS PENN: To attract birds, native flowers is my reading of the species. It will be, hopefully, it will be beautiful.

35 **MS ELENIUS:** I've got one more issue that I'd like to raise. Before Darling Harbour was destroyed and then rebuilt, there was a sculpture called Curtain Call, which comprised three sheep and one sort of jumping through the exit after being shorn, it was a sort of shearing image, which celebrated the use of – all the wool exports that went across the world, went from Darling Harbour.

40 First of all, it was thrown into an open-to-the-elements sort of block of land just close by here. Then it was – we were assured it had been packed up and put into some sort of protective storage. We have approached Placemaking NSW to have it reinstalled on the podium. They have said, "Oh no, it can't be because of safety issues." The safety issues involve the children who used to love climbing on the sheep. You could actually mandate that it have a safety fence around it, which still

45 allowed the viewing of this sculpture. It's no use to anybody stuck in an old shed somewhere.

We would love to have this raised formally in your deliberations that it, at least a little bit of the old Darling Harbour which celebrated the wool exports, come back. And this is, to me anyway, a very appropriate site for it to come back to.

MS DIBENEDETTO: Yes.

MS ELENIUS: It would give a lot of people a lot of pleasure to see it reinstated in Darling Harbour where it was originally.

MS DIBENEDETTO: Yes, and we agree.

MR DIBENEDETTO: We walked around there with one of the gentlemen from Place Management, and there is this plaque there still that explains about all the movement of the wool from the woolsheds which are around here. And they said, their comment was, “Oh, it costs too much to reinstall.” My comment to them was, “Give me four bags of cement and I’ll put them in the ground.” They don’t have to be jumping, they can just be grazing underneath the freeway, that’s where the plaque is on the edge of the garden.

And then they came back to us, and they said that the person that made those sculptures has died, and his son wants \$60,000 to be reinstalled. I think they’re spinning a yarn, and they’re not prepared to reinstall it. I wouldn’t be surprised if they’ve gone astray. So, we would love to have this Australiana theme in this garden where people can see them from the bridge or can go walk up to them, they’re a brass/bronze material.

MS ELENIUS: And, you know, they would learn a little bit about the history of the area that they’re visiting. It would be really, if you could manage to overcome the concerns about safety, it’s doing – it’s just sitting in a shed and it really should be on display.

MR DIBENEDETTO: We assume ...

MS ELENIUS: And this is the right place for it.

MR DIBENEDETTO: And the thing is –

MR MILLS: We’ll make some enquiries. Sorry to interrupt. We’ll make some enquiries about it.

MR DIBENEDETTO: Please.

MS ELENIUS: I mean, I’ve enquired, and I’ve got the note back from Placemaking NSW, but perhaps you might have a little bit more influence than I do.

MS DIBENEDETTO: Thank you for enquiring for us.

MR MILLS: All right. I'm conscious of the time.

MS DIBENEDETTO: Okay.

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MR MILLS: It's nearly 1 o'clock. I do appreciate the submissions that you've made. We have a record of all of those and the meeting today, so thank you for being with us today. As I said at the beginning, we have recorded it and there is a transcript that will be made available on our website.

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Sorry, I may have jumped to the end without checking with my fellow Commissioners. Were there any questions that we haven't covered?

MS PENN: No, no. It's very helpful to hear you.

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MR PEARSON: It's very useful. Thank you.

MS ELENIUS: We really appreciate it.

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MS DIBENEDETTO: Thank you.

MR DIBENEDETTO: We thank you very much for your time.

MR MILLS: Thank you.

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MR PEARSON: Thank you.

MR MILLS: Thank you very much.

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[All say thank and goodbye]

>THE MEETING CONCLUDED