

16 October, 2019

Ms Dianne Leeson,  
Commissioner,  
Independent Planning Commission NSW,  
Level 3, 201 Elizabeth Street,  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Commissioner,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Greater Sydney Commission's (GSC) findings and recommendations.

It is important to note that this review was carried out in 6 weeks. This, in our opinion, was inadequate to undertake the necessary work. It did not give stakeholders, including us, adequate time to prepare, nor did it give the GSC time to gather all appropriate information. This has been identified as an issue by a significant number of other stakeholders throughout the Review and Report.

We were pleased by the review's emphasis on the importance placed on retaining the character of Pyrmont as well as maintaining and enhancing the village nature of Pyrmont - its heritage and liveability and its attractiveness to residents, visitors and innovative businesses (Report p2) - then developing principles and controls around these characteristics (Review p25). This is particularly highlighted by Map 3 (Review p8) which shows the Heritage sites in the area. They should not be compromised (individually, collectively, inside, outside etc) by any new building whether or not within current or future planning controls, by over shadowing or any other detractor.

### GSC Report in principle

In principle, we support the concepts of the GSC Report. Particularly the recommended place-based planning approach outlined in the report and a simplification of the planning system which:

- Eliminates the "project by project" approach currently operating (p18 review).
- Removes instruments such as declarations of Sites of State Significance (often perceived as being political, rather than planning decisions).
- Stipulates the need for a planning framework which is developed in partnership with all stakeholders, including community representatives who can provide critical information to the processes and in turn welcome the certainty for making future decisions e.g. property investment, where to rent
- "brings together cumulative considerations" associated with provision of physical and social infrastructure, both of which should be considered as a whole within the strategy already in place for the implementation phase of the plan, rather than as ad hoc after-thoughts or catch-ups.

### **GSC Recommendations**

As stated above we agree with the report in principle, however we do not agree entirely with the recommendations.



The GSC made the following recommendations:

1. Align the current planning framework with the Greater Sydney Region Plan (GSRP) and Eastern City District Plan (ECDP)
2. To develop a Place Strategy for the Review Area that:
  - includes a masterplan, economic strategy and simplified planning framework;
  - is supported through collaborative and inclusive arrangements involving State Government, industry, Council and community members; and
  - considers the individual character and potential of sub-precincts
3. To establish a timeframe and options for implementation of the Place Strategy.

We have concerns regarding the alignment process with the GSRP and the ECDP. In the Review Attachment 3 Eastern District Plan Extract (p 32 note 25) it states “Review as required, planning controls to facilitate economic activity on the job targets”. Such a statement or any similar one on which to base controls for a large area will not work. The review clearly states there are other factors that need to be taken into consideration not least heritage and liveability.

We seek reassurance that once the alignment takes place (Rec 1) no planning controls will change (Rec 2) without the Place Strategy and Implementation (Rec 3) measures being in place. Otherwise there is a danger that the Strategy may not get delivered on time, and/or may not be implemented ie the report appears to put the cart (Rec 2) before the horse (Rec 3). In such a scenario development would then continue in a wholesale and uncontrolled fashion to the detriment of those developments which were protected by previous planning laws.

The above concerns us greatly as do the comments from the Premier of NSW that “Today we are sending a clear message that Pyrmont is open for business and ready to be taken to the next level,” and that it is the “New frontier”. It is equally concerning that the Government has already said it will be changing the planning controls for Pyrmont yet has not done the ground work. We understand this is likely to happen but would like to see it happen in a controlled manner, as no strategy has yet been developed and no consultation and community participation has taken place. This will then ensure all agendas and requirements are met.

## **Community Participation**

As stated above community participation and consultation are critical. The community has a greater understanding of each area, its potential, requirements, and issues if given the appropriate time and forum within which to discuss them. It is imperative that the consultation measures are put in place and operating **prior to** the development of a place strategy. Stakeholder input must not be constrained by prior Government decisions made in reference to the development of a master plan. Furthermore, the draft Terms of Reference should be open for public comment before being finalized by the NSW Government.

In the report Recommendation 3 (p26) requires the NSW Government, as part of the Implementation of the Place Strategy, to develop an “effective collaborative governance model”. Having participated in many different Community consultation



processes, we strongly recommend the following model, ie “a bespoke arrangement specific to the Place Strategy area”. It is based on the structure and operation of the original Bays Precinct CRG, established by the former Labor Government and which provided a very satisfactory model for engagement on large projects.

- The membership should include representatives of the various precincts which would be affected by development. This would include Pyrmont, Ultimo and Glebe, but could also include Haymarket.
- Include representatives of local businesses, including from the Pyrmont Ultimo Chamber of Commerce, and including from small, medium to large companies
- The proposed engagement could include representatives from UTS, TAFE, the Powerhouse, and the ABC to provide educational and cultural perspective
- Representatives of government agencies including RMS, Department of Transport, Department of Education, Department of Planning
- Local government representation, ie City of Sydney

## **Co-ordinated approach**

The map on p 63 of the ECDP also includes the White Bay Power Station in the Innovation Corridor. We strongly recommend that the Planning in general, and Community participation in the development of the Innovation Corridor, is not restricted to just Pyrmont and Ultimo, but include other Bays Precinct sites and beyond, when necessary, to ensure a coordinated approach, especially when it comes to considering the physical and social infrastructure that will be required to support new developments in the precinct.

Already, the amended plans for WestConnex have been identified by Port Authority of NSW as having a major and detrimental impact on plans currently in the assessment pipeline proposed for Glebe Island, and, in particular, on the operation of traffic associated with the White Bay Cruise Passenger Terminal. The Traffic report provided by the WestConnex proponent proposes removing an existing access route into the port (via James Craig Road) citing a forecast peak hour demand to be about 40 vehicles in the morning peak hour, a number challenged by the Port Authority. If implemented, substantial port traffic would be channelled on to local roads in Rozelle residential areas instead of being able to use James Craig Road. In planning for implementation of the Plan, it is important to look beyond the boundaries of the Review Area to ensure that access between the various precincts of the Innovation Corridor is optimised, not curtailed by tunnel vision.

## **GSC Review and The Star’s Ritz-Carlton Hotel Residential Tower**

In respect of the Star's proposal it is difficult to reconcile the rhetoric from both the Premier and the Minister for Planning in the Government's press release (10/10/19), “Pyrmont to be the new gateway to Sydney CBD”, with the description of the Innovation Corridor outlined in the ECDP. The Minister talks about “a prime jobs and tourism precinct” whilst the Premier appears to be promoting Barangaroo as an exemplar of what Pyrmont and Ultimo are destined to become. But the ECDP writes about the need for Planning controls which will allow a sufficient supply of workspaces and provide flexibility for digital and creative enterprises (ECDP p62).



Heritage – The GSC emphasised the importance of retaining the character of Pyrmont as well as maintaining and enhancing the village nature of Pyrmont, its heritage and liveability and its attractiveness to residents, visitors and innovative businesses (Report p2); then developing principles and controls around this (Review p25).

Whilst there are few references in the Review report to the significance of heritage items which form part of the character of Pyrmont and Ultimo, the ECDP (p51) provides an overview of GSC thinking in this regard. It states: Heritage identification, management and interpretation are required so that heritage places and stories can be experienced by current and future generations. The GSC states: “Sympathetic built form, controls and adaptive re-use of heritage are important ways to manage conservation of heritage significance.” The ad hoc placement of the Ritz-Carlton hotel/apartment tower in Pyrmont cannot be said to “respectfully combine history and heritage with modern design...” as it towers over next-door heritage terraces and casts unacceptable shadows over other heritage and more recent low-density precincts, including Union Square. This was confirmed by the Dept of Planning review and The Star Casino MP08\_0098 MOD13 Review of the independent Assessment and Design Advice p12

Commercial vs Residential development - We are further concerned to note under “Actions” (p61) of the ECDP associated with Priority E7, that an aim is to “strengthen the international competitiveness of the Harbour CBD and grow its vibrancy by..... providing residential development without compromising commercial development”. This appears to prioritise commercial development over residential, in Pyrmont and Ultimo.

Affordable Housing - The report (p7) identifies the shortfall in provision of Affordable Housing in the Review Area. The Sydney LEP 2012, in conjunction with *Revised City West Affordable Housing Program (June 2010 and SEPP 70 Affordable Housing Scheme* “aims to provide about 600 rental units for very low to moderate income households as development continues” but only 450 have been built in Pyrmont-Ultimo since the commencement of the scheme. The GSC principles in the *Eastern City District Plan* (p43) include “more and better access to supported and/or subsidised housing”. We support alignment with the ECDP in this regard in the context of the development of a Place Strategy (p25 report). The Bays Precinct developments, including that planned for Blackwattle Bay, provide opportunities to meet this principle. The Star Ritz-Carlton proposal includes 204 residential units and 220 hotel rooms none of which contributes to affordable housing. Its current alternative offer of a neighbourhood centre is inadequate as the facilities are in fact the equivalent of a carpark with significant columnar structures in place throughout.

Night-time economy - Another action is the provision of “a diverse and vibrant night-time economy in a way that responds to potential negative impacts”. As the residents of Potts Point/Kings Cross have found, the only way to mitigate such impacts is to limit the hours of operation of venues. The residential population of Pyrmont and Ultimo is currently ~22,000 and the few 24-hour venues operating (eg The Star) now attract anti-social behaviour which causes much distress to those living nearby. (Ref. submissions to the IPC and GSC by Zena Vaassen). Whilst we welcome more “vibrancy” in Pyrmont and have proposed the inclusion of a cinema and more live



performance space in large-scale developments such as the Star, it has not been forthcoming to date.

**Summary**

We trust that these comments are helpful in the IPCN's finalisation of its recommendation regarding the proposed Ritz-Carlton hotel/apartment building at the Star. We are encouraged by the Planning Minister's reported comments (Sun-Herald 6/10/19 p10) that "We can support larger-scale development and maintain the unique heritage nature of Pyrmont – it's not an either/or choice".

We are of the view that the Ritz-Carlton development is not consistent with the place-based approach now being recommended by the GSC. Pyrmont cannot be compared with Barangaroo which was an abandoned port and was originally Master-planned, until the Crown Casino was imposed within the precinct, thus compromising what was a cohesive development which was not inappropriate, given its context of the CBD. We fail to understand how a luxury 61-storey hotel/apartment tower can meet the need of digital and cultural industries for "affordable and diverse housing options that can be multipurpose..." (ECDP p63), nor maintain and enhance the village nature of Pyrmont its heritage and liveability and its attractiveness to residents.(report p 2). Pyrmont is a geographically contained peninsula and such a building has the potential to detract in many ways not least by overshadowing of resident and heritage areas.

We also fail to see the relevance of a hotel/apartment building to the proposed Innovation Corridor, and it contravenes the existing, and appropriate planning controls.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Elenius,  
Convenor,  
Pyrmont Action Inc,

████████████████████  
████████████████████  
████████████████████  
████████████████████

cc Hon Rob Stokes, Minister for Planning, Clr Clover Moore, Lord Mayor of Sydney,  
Lucy Turnbull, Chair, GSC, Alex Greenwich, Member for Sydney



## Appendix A – Errors and Omissions in the GSC Report

In our submission to the Review (attached), we provided details of Pyrmont's present profile, development constraints and current physical and social infrastructure. No doubt, as a consequence of the rushed timetable in which the review was conducted, some facts have either been overlooked, or included in error.

- *Page 20, Community Infrastructure Facilities should include the International Grammar School (IGS).* The report only mentions Ultimo Public School but there is also the IGS (Primary and Secondary) in Ultimo which, like the new UPS under construction, has virtually no open space. Both UPS and IGS share (on a rationed basis) use of part of Wentworth Park to enable the children to run and exercise. As UPS is to grow from ~350 students to 800, open space is required for children who, by and large live in apartments, and which is at a premium already. Future planning should take account of the needs of children from both schools, not just UPS.
- *Page 7, Community Facilities includes the Glasshouse swimming pool.* This is not a public facility as it is owned by Jacksons Landing Community Association (JLCA) and is only available to owners/renters of strata properties in Jacksons Landing. Similarly, the only 2 full-sized tennis courts in Pyrmont and Ultimo are similarly privately owned by JLCA.
- *Page 9, Infrastructure Capacity, there appears to be an error on a key freight route.* The last dot point includes Pyrmont Bridge Road (between Wattle Street and Bulwara Road). Bulwara Road is, in fact, a dead end at Pyrmont Bridge Road and no traffic can enter. Perhaps the report writers meant the Pyrmont Interchange which funnels traffic on to the Anzac Bridge or the intersection of Pyrmont Bridge Road and Harris Street which is also a major point of peak hour traffic congestion, both are major constraints future development.
- We also note in the *Eastern City District Plan* (pp 62-63) the ABC's omission from major organisations which currently make up the Innovation Corridor, Harbour CBD. As you will be aware, the ABC is both a significant innovator and cultural institution, heavily utilizing digital technology.



## **SUBMISSION TO GREATER SYDNEY COMMISSION REVIEW OF PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR THE WESTERN HARBOUR PRECINCT, INCLUDING THE PYRMONT PENINSULA FROM PYRMONT ACTION INCORPORATED**

16 September, 2019

In the terms of reference, you have been asked to undertake an assessment of the current planning standards and controls for the for the Western Harbour precinct, including the Pyrmont Peninsula to deliver the Governments vision of a "vibrant mixed-use precinct in proximity to the global Sydney CBD".

We are pleased to advise that the Pyrmont peninsula as it is currently described in the LEP for the area, already meets this criterion and would be happy to conduct a site visit for Commissioners to demonstrate the success of this urban renewal precinct, currently one of the highest urban density areas in Australia. However, we acknowledge that planning continues for the western edge of the peninsula associated with the Bays Precinct project, now being undertaken by Infrastructure NSW.

### **Pyrmont Today**

Currently, the character of Pyrmont is defined by a mix of old terrace housing, retained as valued heritage assets; new terrace houses incorporated within Master Planned precincts such as Jacksons Landing in North Pyrmont; former industrial buildings such as the Goldsborough Mort wool store re-purposed for residential, commercial and mixed uses; new commercial buildings eg 55 Miller Street; and residential apartment blocks ranging in height from ~5-6 storeys up to 20-storeys. These are largely owner-occupied.

There has also been a significant investment in Social and Affordable Housing, integrated throughout residential-zoned precincts, largely facilitated by a developer Affordable Housing levy which still applies under the NSW Government's *Revised City West Affordable Housing Program* (June 2010) held by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure (Sydney LEP 2012).

It should be noted that a number of sites within the Review Area are owned by Government and are not subject to zoning, height restrictions or other planning rules associated with the 2012 LEP and DCP, including:

- Wentworth Park
- The head of Blackwattle Bay
- Jetties adjoining the current Sydney Fish Market
- A boardwalk at Pirrama Park
- Jones Bay Wharf boardwalk
- Sydney Wharf boardwalk
- National Maritime Museum precinct
- Darling Harbour and light rail depot
- Darling Walk, Haymarket

The Cabinet-endorsed *Bays Precinct Transformation Plan*, October 2015 commits to retaining Wentworth Park as public open space (p34). The head of Blackwattle Bay is part of what was named *Bays Market District* which is now the subject of the *Blackwattle Bay Master Plan* being produced by FJMT Architects for Infrastructure NSW (formerly Urban Growth) to be put on exhibition by the end of 2019. The Sydney Fish Markets (SFM) is planned to move to the head of Blackwattle Bay and the DA was supposed to be put on public exhibition mid 2019.

The current SFM site is zoned Commercial, as are the waterfront sites in Bank Street north to the Bank Street Public Recreation Area.

It is difficult to see where additional development can take place at Darling Harbour other than the now-approved Cockle Bay commercial tower and podium and the redevelopment of the Harbourside site as apartments above a retail/commercial podium area. We await the developer's Response to Submissions for this project. The ICC buildings effectively wall off Pyrmont from the CBD, the Ribbon building (under construction) walls off the fast diminishing water from the public areas behind it; the proposed Harbourside redevelopment, if approved, will impact views, light and privacy of residents of 50 Murray Street and cast shadows over a wide area of Pyrmont. The Darling Walk precinct is crowded with commercial, retail and residential apartment blocks so is unlikely to be further developed.

In addition, the Government owns a number of sites in Pyrmont currently zoned Public Recreation:

- Bank Street (RMS and Property NSW)
- Glebe Is Bridge Abutment (RMS)
- Waterfront Park (Property NSW)
- Cadi Park (Property NSW)
- Refinery Square (Property NSW)
- Gibba Park (Property NSW)
- Upper and Lower James Watkinson Reserve Park (Property NSW)
- Metcalfe Park and others on Garden Island (Property NSW)
- Pyrmont Bay Park (Property NSW)
- Carmichael Park (Office of Strategic Lands)
- The Knoll (Office of Strategic Lands)
- Western Escarpment Urban Bushland (Office of Strategic Lands)

Virtually all the remaining sites in Pyrmont have been redeveloped over the past ~30 years of urban renewal. Developments currently under construction, or awaiting approval include:

- 14-16 Mount Street (residential, under construction)
- 86 Harris Street (commercial, awaiting DA determination)
- 108 Miller Street (residential, under construction)
- Fig/Wattle Street former Council depot site (mixed use, early planning stages)
- 21 Harris Street (commercial, under construction)
- Ritz-Carlton residential/commercial tower (awaiting IPCN determination)

It should be noted that the new commercial building at 21 Harris Street alone will bring up to 2,000 new workers to Pyrmont, with a similar number anticipated for the 86 Harris Street development.

## **Opportunities for Further Development**

We maintain that the current development standards and controls have delivered a "vibrant mixed-use precinct in proximity to the global Sydney CBD". Many of our members have lived through the ~30 year transition of Pyrmont from an abandoned industrial precinct to a vibrant residential/commercial suburb, complementing, but not of the Sydney CBD.

Residents have moved here to be close to the City, and businesses, many of which are technology companies, both large and small, which have been attracted to the area, in



particular because of its proximity to universities, TAFE and entities which deploy innovative new technologies (the Innovation Corridor). Pyrmont and Ultimo also attract tourists who visit institutions such as the Powerhouse Museum, the Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney Fish Markets, The Star Casino and the many heritage precincts such as Union Square.

It is a must-see destination for secondary school students studying relevant subjects such as geography in which they are shown the outcome of urban transformation, informed by good planning and planning instruments which established Pyrmont's zonings and other parameters such as height of buildings, floor space ratios, and building footprints.

Whilst we see few, if any, opportunities for further development in the areas of Pyrmont already redeveloped or in the planning pipeline, we accept that further development will occur on the current SFM site (Government-owned), and on privately-owned sites in Bank Street eg Hymix and Poulos Bros.

These sites are currently zoned Commercial. It may be more appropriate to re-zone the SFM site Mixed Use and/or Residential. The privately-owned sites should continue to be zoned Commercial given that they are largely in a mixed use zoned area supporting commercial development, and their amenity is compromised by proximity to the Western Distributor and the Anzac Bridge.

Any review of the parameters in Sydney LEP 2012 should be undertaken by the Department of Planning and the City of Sydney in accordance with the legislated processes. Infrastructure NSW (the proponent) is now charged with overseeing the Master Planning process, but its determination is the responsibility of the Department of Planning. Of course, the GSC can make a submission, along with other stakeholders, including the local community, and should be heard, on the same basis. We are advised by Infrastructure NSW that work on the Blackwattle Bay Master Plan will resume once the DA for the new Sydney Fish Markets goes on public exhibition (within the next two months) and this work should not be compromised or influenced by this rushed GSC review.

*Recommendation 1: Planning for the Bays Precinct should continue to be undertaken by the team within Infrastructure NSW informed by the cabinet-approved planning principles in the Bays Precinct Transformation Plan 2015, in particular Principle 4 "allow the time to invest in genuine and early engagement with, and broad acceptance of ... plans from, all categories of the public, government and industry"; and should be broadly in line with current provision of LEP 2012 and other current, official planning instruments. The Department of Planning should advise the Minister for Planning on the outcome of its assessment.*

Commercial buildings in Bank Street should not be dramatically higher than those in the surrounding precinct. We have already opposed MOD13 for the Ritz-Carlton tower on a number of grounds, including its contravention of LEP 2012 zoning (Commercial), and height provisions which do not respect its context, and would similarly oppose any proposal for similar towers in the Blackwattle Bay Master Plan precinct. However, we are not averse to the construction of a hotel on the Star Casino site which meets LEP 2012 provisions if it is considered that more luxury hotel facilities are required. However, it should be noted that in recent years, Star Casino has converted its Astral Hotel into serviced apartments, so perhaps the need is not so great after all.

*Recommendation 2: MOD13 should be rejected in its current form for the reasons outlined by the Department of Planning in its recommendations to the Minister for Planning – it is unrelated to its context within Pyrmont, is inconsistent with and would*

*adversely affect the established character of Pyrmont and dominate the skyline; and does not comply with current planning provisions.*

*Recommendation 3: High quality hotel accommodation the impacts of which are consistent with those reasonably expected from an LEP-compliant envelope may be acceptable on the site of the Star Casino.*

Of particular concern are the reports that the “independent think tank”, the Committee for Sydney and its spin-off, the Western Harbour Alliance, neither of which include community representation, have been providing advice to the Minister for Planning (*Daily Telegraph*, 8/8/19) about the future of Pyrmont and Ultimo, and Urban Taskforce (a developer lobby group) has also come up with its “vision” which was presented at the Independent Planning Commission public meeting held on 27 August, 2019. The IPC is tasked with determining whether MOD13 should proceed in its current form.



*Figure 1 Pyrmont - Now*



*Figure 2: Urban Taskforce Vision*

The developer lobby's “vision” depicts towers covering most of the Pyrmont Peninsula and Ultimo. Most alarmingly, the image shows new towers on sites now occupied by Social and Affordable Housing estates. Recently, we have received advice from a Social Housing tenant that 4 units in the Mount Street Social Housing estate have been empty for four months, despite a huge waiting list of those needing this form of accommodation. This was a tactic adopted by the Government when it compulsorily removed Social and Affordable Housing tenants from Millers Point and we seek GSC confirmation that this form of housing in Pyrmont and Ultimo is NOT at risk of being sold off to developers.

*Recommendation 4: The existing Social and Affordable Housing estates in Pyrmont and Ultimo must be retained in their current form and not sold to developers.*

## **Constraints on Future Development**

Of course, along with possible further opportunities lie constraints. Pyrmont and Ultimo are poorly served by public transport and have seen services removed, rather than expanded over the years, despite the residential population increasing to ~14,000, and the large influx of workers to the expanded commercial precincts.

The monorail was not just a tourist service but was also used by Pyrmont residents and workers, being the only direct transport link to the city's commercial/retail centre. The 449 bus service to Broadway Shopping Centre was also terminated. Google withdrew from its tender to redevelop the White Bay power station and associated land because of the lack of public transport. And the efficiency of the bus services which run down Harris Street, is severely compromised in peak hours by traffic congestion, especially in the vicinity of Pyrmont Bridge Road and the infamous Pyrmont interchange.

### ***Traffic Constraints***

Pyrmont Action Inc is represented on the Bays Precinct CRG and members of the Pyrmont community have enthusiastically participated in all consultation opportunities presented by Urban Growth (now disbanded and merged with Infrastructure NSW).

With regard to the planning for the new SFM and the development of the Blackwattle Bay Master Plan, it is clear that lack of public transport and traffic congestion are the major constraints on further development in the Bays Precinct. We have been advised by a representative of Transport for NSW that, in the context of the Westconnex and other major road projects discharging additional traffic in the vicinity of the Bays Precinct, there can be no additional traffic on the Anzac Bridge as it is currently operating at full capacity. So, the traffic jams currently experienced, not only in peak hours, but at weekends, associated with tourist destinations eg the SFM, can only worsen in the roads channelling traffic on to the Anzac Bridge. Pyrmont is a peninsula, served by local roads which are often choked at peak hours, so any further major influx of tourists, residents and workers will exacerbate an already dire traffic situation.

### ***Transport Provision***

We are advised that the Government is considering inclusion of a station in Pyrmont associated with the Metro West rail line to the CBD. The former Labor Government was well advanced with plans for a station in the vicinity of Union Square and we understand that provision was made for a Metro under the Star Casino's Darling Hotel development. In order to alleviate road traffic impacts in the vicinity of both the Casino and the new SFM, a station would, ideally, be situated equidistant to both tourist destinations.

It is also proposed to commence, in late September, 2019, an at-call ferry service running between Barangaroo and Blackwattle Bay (Glebe), calling at Pirrama Park and the SFM. Passengers will be able to request a stop at their desired wharf via a phone app. The frequency of service will be constrained by the slow speed limits operating in the Bays Precinct, including Johnstons Bay, and negotiations are continuing to ensure that popular on-water recreational sports, eg rowing and dragon boating can continue in safety.

*Recommendation 5: Incorporate a station in Pyrmont in plans for the proposed West Metro, ensuring that it provides appropriate access to tourist attractions as well as for*

residents and workers and does not have an impact on heritage areas eg Union Square.

*Recommendation 6: Transport for NSW with Bays Precinct stakeholders, including its communities, to implement an appropriate ferry service to the CBD and other harbour locations, serving Pyrmont, Blackwattle Bay and White Bay.*

But even with additional public transport, there will still be a large number of visitors to the SFM, especially from suburban Sydney, who will elect to drive because of the difficulty of travelling on trains and buses with large cooler boxes containing their purchases. The current SFM plans include only the same number of parking spaces as provided at present, yet it is envisaged that visitor numbers will more than double.

The GSC's concept of a 30-minute city is already unachievable for most of us, except for the most athletic, as it can take 1 hour to drive from the corner of Bank Street to Pyrmont Bridge Road, and a similar time to travel by 389 bus from Fig Street to Bowman Street along Harris Street in peak hours. Congestion along Darling Drive and other roads leading to the Star Casino are similarly choked now, especially when there are events taking place at Darling Harbour.

There can be no prospect of major new developments of a comparable scale to the proposed Ritz-Carlton tower in Pyrmont or Ultimo unless current traffic and transport deficiencies are addressed.

*Recommendation 7: Current and anticipated traffic impacts on local roads must be resolved before any further major developments are permitted in Pyrmont and Ultimo.*

## **Social Infrastructure Constraints**

### **Community Facilities**

With the residential population of Pyrmont alone now exceeding 14,000, with more people to move to apartment buildings under construction and in the planning stages, social infrastructure is somewhat constrained. Community facilities include:

- Pyrmont Community Centre (cnr Mount and John Streets) – City of Sydney
- Ultimo Community Centre (cnr Bulwara Road and William Henry Drive) – City of Sydney
- Maybanke Centre (Harris Street) – City of Sydney
- Harris Community Centre (Quarry Street) – Uniting Church

These facilities provide focal points for social interactions in Pyrmont and Ultimo. Pyrmont is not just bricks and mortar, but a successful new community which has come together, not only as a result of people's individual efforts, but also through the good planning of our low and mid-rise suburb.

Those residents who have moved to Pyrmont over the past 30 years, from many different places in Sydney, Australia and from overseas have formed a vibrant, creative, and generous community with a focus on serving those who need help, both financial and practical. For example volunteer members of the Friends of Pyrmont Community Centre compile a bi-monthly *Pyrmont What's On* which provides local news, and details of activities and events, and distribute the newsletter to 6,000 households across Pyrmont. The Committee for Christmas in Pyrmont (all volunteers) organizes the annual street celebration held in John Street and John Street Square, next to the Pyrmont Community Centre. This

event is strongly supported by local businesses and volunteers and last year raised (net) \$90,000 which was disbursed to 3 nominated charities. Pymont-Ultimo Landcare volunteers have established attractive bushland on weed-ridden public land to extend an existing wildlife corridor. Similar community activities involve members of the Ultimo community, supported by their local centres.

*Recommendation 8: Provision of accessible, centrally located local community centre space, both indoor and outdoor, must keep pace with any substantial increase in the residential and worker population of the Western Harbour Precinct, including Pymont and Ultimo to facilitate social cohesion. These should be designed with the community to meet specific community needs and they must be given priority access to them on an ongoing basis.*

### **Educational Facilities**

Four childcare centres currently operate in Pymont, all with substantial waiting lists, with additional facilities to be incorporated within the commercial building at 21 Harris Street; in the new development on the site of the former Council-owned Fig/Wattle Street depot; and one in the new Ultimo Public School (UPS) now under construction in Wattle Street. The school, which has been planned on Dept of Education projections which do not take into account population growth in Pymont associated with the Bays Precinct developments, will accommodate up to 800 students.

Sydney Secondary College, with campuses at Balmain, Leichhardt and Blackwattle Bay is the only public secondary school serving students from Pymont, Ultimo, as well as from a much wider catchment. Pymont and Ultimo students have been excluded from the catchment of the proposed new inner-city high school which is more easily accessed by public transport. Access to Leichhardt and Balmain campuses is challenging and forces parents to drive their children to school, exacerbating traffic impacts especially in the morning peak hour. The private International School in Ultimo has limited capacity to expand on its current site and has to share with UPS and others, open space at Wentworth Park, for play and informal sports.

The new UPS includes one full-sized multi-purpose court which will be made available to the local community out of school hours. It should be noted that there are currently NO full-sized courts in Haymarket, Pymont or Ultimo to enable the establishment of local teams which bring people together, those at Darling Harbour having been removed and not replaced in its subsequent redevelopment. However, a sporting centre incorporating 2 full-sized courts will be provided in the new development at the Fig/Wattle Street depot site. The Pymont community since 2006 has sought the redevelopment of the Maybanke Centre site into a Sports and Recreation Centre to serve Pymont, Ultimo and Haymarket/CBD residents and workers, and will continue to discuss this with the City of Sydney.

*Recommendation 9: Department of Planning, the Department of Education, the City of Sydney, and stakeholders including the local communities to work together to ensure that childcare, educational and active recreational facilities are appropriate to cater for resident and worker population growth associated with major new developments in Pymont, Ultimo and the Western Harbour Precinct, eg Blackwattle Bay Master Plan.*

### **Social and Affordable Housing**

Probably the most urgent social infrastructure need across the Eastern City District, is the provision of significantly more Social and Affordable Housing. The numbers requiring shelter continue to rise, and we see both in our CBD streets and parks, and in parks and public

spaces in Pyrmont and Ultimo, people sleeping rough. There is also a severe lack of safe refuges for women and children fleeing domestic violence.

The first Women's Shelter, Elsie, in Glebe closed its doors some years ago as did many others across Sydney when funding was removed. We note the GSC principles in the Eastern City District Plan (p43) include "more and better access to supported and/or subsidised housing". The Bays Precinct developments, including that planned for Blackwattle Bay, provide opportunities to meet this principle.

*Recommendation 10: Infrastructure NSW to ensure, in the development of Blackwattle Bay Master Plan and other Bays precincts, that new Social and Affordable Housing is incorporated in these plans.*

### **Health and Emergency Facilities**

There is absolutely no health infrastructure in the area under review. The nearest such facilities are:

- Sydney Eye Hospital
- Balmain Hospital
- Royal Prince Alfred Hospital
- Randwick Children's Hospital
- Prince of Wales Hospital
- Sydney Hospital

We have seen the closure of Princess Alexandra Children's Hospital in Forest Lodge and its transformation into a large residential precinct in recent years, but little or no expansion of hospital facilities in the Harbour CBD, despite a very large population increase.

*Recommendation 11 – In planning for further expansion in residential, worker and visitor population in Pyrmont and Ultimo, a priority should be incorporation of health facilities to serve new developments.*

Pyrmont is fortunate to host a Fire Station in Pyrmont Street but the local police station in Scott Street closed around 20 years ago, and the Water Police headquarters, which provided 24-hour access to the local community was moved to Balmain. We have sought a permanent police station in or close to The Star Casino, whose locale remains the locus of criminal and anti-social behaviour, albeit that it reportedly runs an effective internal security regime. Our request has yet to be met with a positive response. So, despite a very large increase in residential, worker, and visitor population, we have lost accessible police facilities.

*Recommendation 12 – Any new development or refurbishment associated with the Star Casino should incorporate a 24-hour police station.*

### **Cultural Facilities**

To ensure that Pyrmont and Ultimo become even more "vibrant" than at present, and provide a focus for "creative industries", as well as a tourist destination, there can be no greater imperative than to retain the Powerhouse Museum at Ultimo.

It is the site of the Ultimo Power Station which powered the first trams which ran along Harris Street. It houses the huge engine which provided that power. It is in its relevant context, and has alongside it, the Innovation Corridor, comprising UTS, TAFE, the ABC and a myriad of large and small innovative businesses.

The recent Legislative Council Enquiry demonstrated that the Government's business case for moving it lock, stock and barrel to Parramatta and far removed from its historical, and modern context, doesn't stack up. It is a historical, technological, cultural and tourist icon, in its place, in Ultimo.

Parramatta should also have such a cultural facility, but one which is of relevance to that place – Western Sydney – with its rich agricultural and migrant heritage.

*Recommendation 13: The Powerhouse Museum and Tram Sheds should remain as part of the Innovation Corridor in Ultimo. These sites should not be sold for private development but retained as the southern-most tourist destination in the corridor stretching from Central Station to The Star Casino.*

We have sought, as part of earlier Star Casino developments, provision of a cinema in Pymont, not only to serve the local community, but to encourage the thousands of Pymont workers to remain in the area after work, thus stimulating business for the many cafes and restaurants in the village precinct. This would create jobs, activate the street frontages to Harris Street and create "vibrant public places". Patrons and staff of the Casino as a rule dine in-house (the Casino provides food and beverage facilities for its several thousand staff), thus denying nearby local businesses their patronage. And it has refused our pleas for a cinema, as well as activated street frontages for its premises, instead funnelling visitors into tunnels to eat, then to gamble, well away from views of the harbour. We do acknowledge, however, that The Star Casino provides the people of Sydney, and elsewhere, with the Lyric Theatre and its productions which are well patronised.

*Recommendation 14: Planning for Pymont should examine opportunities for inclusion of a cinema in appropriate new developments in proximity to areas zoned Local Centre on the Sydney LEP 2012; ensure new buildings or refurbishments of existing buildings in the Local Centre precinct incorporate activated street frontages to enhance its vibrancy.*

## **Planning Processes**

Over the ~30 years of Pymont's and Ultimo's transition to a "vibrant mixed-use precinct", we have seen a progressive weakening of planning laws by the introduction of political powers which enable exceptions to be made within rules-based Local Environment Plans and other official instruments. These include spot re-zoning, Part 3A exceptionalism, and Sites of State Significance declarations. They have corrupted the orderly planning process.

Darling Harbour is the most egregious example where Infrastructure NSW was able to prepare a "design brief" with no community involvement, then go to a very limited tender which was awarded to a consortium led by Lendlease. The subsequent "community engagement" was rendered useless, as every request for amelioration of impacts on Pymont and Ultimo were met with the statement from both INSW and the consortium, that such changes "were not in our design brief".

It is our contention that the Planning Act must be strengthened to ensure that ALL precincts are developed by plans based on planning parameters established through independent, professional and transparent processes, not via developer lobbying for exclusion of their projects from established plans, developed in partnership by the Planning Department.

In the context of planning for Pymont and for the Bays Precinct, Infrastructure NSW, or the GSC, can legitimately put forward plans as a Proponent, but any changes of zonings,

heights, size of building envelopes, FSRs, etc. should be subject to the same Departmental/Local Government processes for scrutinizing such proposals, as any other development application, with early and genuine community engagement in that process.

*Recommendation 15 – Planning for Pyrmont, and all NSW LGAs, should be conducted at political arms' length, by the Department of Planning in partnership with the City of Sydney with equal opportunities for input afforded to all stakeholders in the process, which is given equal weight.*

## **Conclusion**

We understand that the GSC has been ordered to undertake this rushed review by the Premier via the Planning Minister, and that the unrealistic timetable set has really only one purpose – to overturn the legal planning instruments which govern development on the site of the Ritz-Carlton tower – thus enabling it to proceed.

The recommended rejection of MOD13 by the Department has made it clear that whilst it may have to take into account the broad visions for the Eastern Sydney District Plan, that must be done within the provisions of the Planning Act, the 2012 LEP and DCP for the site. The only way the Government can acquiesce to the pressure being applied by the developer and tourist lobbies, would be to declare this a Site of State Significance. The implications for NSW citizens of such an action, are that no part of NSW can be certain that this won't happen to any local community which has participated in the orderly development of their local plans, in conjunction with the Department of Planning and their local Councils.

We have attempted to provide some constructive ideas to help the GSC develop a "vision" that is practical, meets its Terms of Reference, complies with existing planning provisions, and enhances, rather than detracts from the amenity of the Western Harbour Precinct, but we emphatically reject any attempt to turn the vibrant Pyrmont/Ultimo peninsula into an extension of the soulless Sydney CBD. A summary of our recommendations is attached.

We extend an invitation to Commissioners to meet with us in Pyrmont to enable us to show you around our vibrant mixed-use suburb that is in proximity to the global Sydney CBD.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Elenius, Convenor  
Pyrmont Action Inc.

████████████████████  
████████████████████  
████████████████████  
████████████████████



## **Summary of Recommendations**

*Recommendation 1: Planning for the Bays Precinct should continue to be undertaken by the team within Infrastructure NSW informed by the cabinet-approved planning principles in the Bays Precinct Transformation Plan 2015, in particular Principle 4 "allow the time to invest in genuine and early engagement with, and broad acceptance of ... plans from, all categories of the public, government and industry"; and should be broadly in line with current provision of LEP 2012 and other current, official planning instruments. The Department of Planning should advise the Minister for Planning on the outcome of its assessment.*

*Recommendation 2: MOD13 should be rejected in its current form for the reasons outlined by the Department of Planning in its recommendations to the Minister for Planning – it is unrelated to its context within Pyrmont, is inconsistent with and would adversely affect the established character of Pyrmont and dominate the skyline; and does not comply with current planning provisions.*

*Recommendation 3: High quality hotel accommodation the impacts of which are consistent with those reasonably expected from an LEP-compliant envelope may be acceptable on the site of the Star Casino.*

*Recommendation 4: The existing Social and Affordable Housing estates in Pyrmont and Ultimo must be retained in their current form and not sold to developers.*

*Recommendation 5: Incorporate a station in Pyrmont in plans for the proposed West Metro, ensuring that it provides appropriate access to tourist attractions as well as for residents and workers and does not have an impact on heritage areas eg Union Square.*

*Recommendation 6: Transport for NSW with Bays Precinct stakeholders, including its communities, to implement an appropriate ferry service to the CBD and other harbour locations, serving Pyrmont, Blackwattle Bay and White Bay.*

*Recommendation 7: Current and anticipated traffic impacts on local roads must be resolved before any further major developments are permitted in Pyrmont and Ultimo.*

*Recommendation 8: Provision of accessible, centrally located local community centre space, both indoor and outdoor, must keep pace with any substantial increase in the residential and worker population of the Western Harbour Precinct, including Pyrmont and Ultimo to facilitate social cohesion. These should be designed with the community to meet specific community needs and they must be given priority access to them on an ongoing basis.*

*Recommendation 9: Department of Planning, the Department of Education, the City of Sydney, and stakeholders including the local communities to work together to ensure that childcare, educational and active recreational facilities are appropriate to cater for resident and worker population growth associated with major new developments in Pyrmont, Ultimo and the Western Harbour Precinct, eg Blackwattle Bay Master Plan.*

*Recommendation 10: Infrastructure NSW to ensure, in the development of Blackwattle Bay Master Plan and other Bays precincts, that new Social and Affordable Housing is incorporated in these plans.*

*Recommendation 11 – In planning for further expansion in residential, worker and visitor population in Pyrmont and Ultimo, a priority should be incorporation of health facilities to serve new developments.*

*Recommendation 12 – Any new development or refurbishment associated with the Star Casino should incorporate a 24-hour police station.*

*Recommendation 13: The Powerhouse Museum and Tram Sheds should remain as part of the Innovation Corridor in Ultimo. These sites should not be sold for private development but retained as the southern-most tourist destination in the corridor stretching from Central Station to The Star Casino.*

*Recommendation 14: Planning for Pyrmont should examine opportunities for inclusion of a cinema in appropriate new developments in proximity to areas zoned Local Centre on the Sydney LEP 2012; ensure new buildings or refurbishments of existing buildings in the Local Centre precinct incorporate activated street frontages to enhance its vibrancy.*

*Recommendation 15 – Planning for Pyrmont, and all NSW LGAs, should be conducted at political arms' length, by the Department of Planning in partnership with the City of Sydney with equal opportunities for input afforded to all stakeholders in the process, which is given equal weight.*