

Trust Action

Barangaroo in Review

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The National Trust was the first organisation to meet with the chairs of the Barangaroo Independent Review. Ms Meredith Sussex AM and Ms Shelley Penn received the Trust's submission. The Trust argued that systemic subversion of the planning process had created poor design and heritage outcomes at Barangaroo.

The National Trust's Submission to the Barangaroo Independent Review identified three key decision-making gaps. These disconnects in the planning process are emblematic of wider concerns that have challenged the post competition planning process.

Firstly the Minister for Planning approved a modified concept plan that offers support for the construction of a hotel outside the boundary of the Barangaroo Delivery Authority (BDA) operational area and in contravention of state planning policy. A new hotel in the water is not permissible under the *Sydney Harbour Regional Environmental Plan (Sydney Harbour Catchment) 2005*. The REP states that 'Sydney Harbour is to be recognised as a public resource owned by the public, to be protected for the public good'.

Similarly, the 'public good has precedence over the private good whenever and whatever change is proposed for Sydney Harbour or its foreshores'. The REP goes on to state that 'Sydney Harbour and its islands and foreshores should be recognised and protected as places of exceptional heritage significance.'

Furthermore, the BDA has provided assurances that its deed of agreement with Lend Lease and subsequently with the eventual hotel operator will prevent an incremental conversion of the hotel to apartments. The Trust questions how the BDA can encourage and regulate an activity outside its statutory operational area?

Secondly, the Design Excellence Review Panel advocated a public open space configuration that failed to comply with the project brief, the Director General's Requirements and Ministerial conditions set on the initial concept plan approval through to modification 3, which required the construction of a cruise ship passenger terminal. It is the Trust's opinion that the panel exceeded its remit by designing rather than reviewing; with its advice significantly altering the approved concept plan.

The proposed headland is immense and entirely uncharacteristic of original Sydney Harbour promontories (see images). Proposed within the headland is an undefined, unplanned and unfunded cultural centre and car park the size of the proposed UTS School of Business building. At the heart of the proposed headland is a financial black hole.



Contour comparison of original and proposed Millers Point headland

The actions of the Design Excellence Review Panel are not recognised by the Burra Charter as the headland neither qualifies as preservation, restoration or reconstruction. It is best described as an architectural folly, eccentric in design and with no true purpose beyond the ornamental. It is nothing but an expensive Arcadian fantasy devoid of historical foundation.

Certainly, the decision to create the headland at the expense of the existing wharf is contrary to the *Sydney Harbour Regional Environmental Plan (Sydney Harbour Catchment) 2005* which states that 'foreshore sites should be retained so as to preserve the character and functions of a working harbour, in relation to both current and future demand'. The headland will remove another irreplaceable deep water berth from Sydney Harbour.

The Trust strongly holds that the rich and diverse heritage of Millers Point informs any interpretation of the landscape. Millers Point has operated as shipping port for 200 years consecutively, beginning with P&O's activities at Moore's Wharf in the 1830s.

This is why the Trust contends that the former Minister for Ports erred when he relocated the cruise ship terminal to White Bay, without examining the feasibility of a mid or north Barangaroo option to comply with the design brief and conditions set on the approved concept plan. Indeed the Minister excluded mid and north Barangaroo from the Cruise Passenger Terminal Steering Committee's terms of reference ensuring that their recommendations were restricted to Glebe Island and White Bay locations.

The project brief for Barangaroo (East Darling Harbour) was specific. The then Premier Bob Carr said 'East Darling Harbour must retain its physical function as a harbour passenger port'.

From convicts, colonists and cargo to cruise ships, Millers Point's shipping heritage is clear and unbroken. Cruise ships have inherited the spirit of the working harbour.

The National Trust anticipates that the Barangaroo Review will deliver its findings to the Minister for Planning by late July 2011. The Minister is then expected to take the report to Cabinet for consideration.

To view the National Trust's Submission to the Barangaroo Independent Review....

<http://www.nsw.gov.au/barangarooreview>

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Millers Point, 1865