

30 April 2015

The Hon. Rob Stokes, MP
Minister for Planning
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Dear Minister

MP06_0162 MOD 8 - Modifications to Barangaroo Concept Plan

Barangaroo presents significant and unique opportunity to improve public access to the harbour and provide new parks and open space, and needed education and childcare services, transport, and commercial and residential space including affordable housing. But for Barangaroo to be a world-class development, the public experience of the site must be at the forefront of planning.

The latest proposal for Barangaroo South follows a history of modifications to the winning plan which increase bulk and scale to promote private benefit at the expense of public outcomes.

Modification 8 proposes massive increases to gross floor area (GFA) and privatisation of waterfront land, creating unacceptable impacts including wind, overshadowing and loss of views, particularly from public space. It would also create serious traffic congestion.

The approved GFA must be retained, the hotel relocated within other built areas of the Barangaroo South site with the public park kept on the waterfront and no increase in private parking spaces.

Hotel Location

Locating the hotel on waterfront land currently dedicated for public recreation is unacceptable.

I share community concern that the existing approved site for the hotel on the water would privatise the harbour and result in poor planning outcomes but privatisation of prime waterfront land is equally problematic and objectionable.

The site is Barangaroo's only waterfront public recreation space and is crucial to Barangaroo South's desirability as a place to live, work and visit. The proposal would relegate this open public waterfront park to a mere inner city pocket park to privatise this waterfront location.

The original winning design for Barangaroo set tower buildings back from the waterfront to ensure public access and enjoyment of the foreshore.

The proposed hotel location leaves a small part of foreshore land for public use around the perimeter of the hotel that would be dominated by the casino: it will not provide a harbour experience or a place where the general public will wish to linger.



The hotel tower would dominate most views of the site from adjacent areas and reduce Barangaroo South's integration with the CBD. The location of the approved waterfront park helps link South Barangaroo with Central Barangaroo and the Headland Park through continuous open space. Building a tower on this site would create a physical barrier that would reduce integration across Barangaroo.

Location of the proposed tower would erode the environmental amenity of Barangaroo South and adjacent areas through wind, overshadowing and lost harbour outlooks.

The proposed location provides little public benefit; it is nothing more than a private grab for prime public land. It should be rejected and the building moved to areas of Barangaroo South already dedicated for development.

Bulk and Scale

The proposed additional GFA marks another significant departure from the winning planning framework that would result in unacceptable amenity and traffic impacts.

The initial Barangaroo concept plan, approved in February 2007, had a GFA of 388,300 square metres (sqm); approval of this latest modification will bring it to 605,911 sqm with a subsequent expected modification raising it to 661,686 sqm. The maximum approved GFA for Barangaroo South is already more than the initial concept plan for the whole of Barangaroo and under this proposal it will increase by 8.5 per cent.

The proposed hotel would increase in height from 170 metres to 250 metres: a taller building is claimed necessary to make the building "landmark" and establish it as a "world class six-star hotel". A residential tower would also be increased from 41.5 metres to 250 metres to allow a step down in the skyline in keeping with the adjacent proposed hotel tower.

It is false to claim that height has anything to do with the status of a hotel – design excellence is far more important, in fact, the trend in expensive hotels is the smaller boutique style. The claim must be rejected as a mere excuse to increase the scale of the project.

The proposed excessive bulk at Barangaroo South will reduce integration with the CBD, the rest of the Barangaroo site and Darling Harbour. Increased GFA and heights under the proposed modification would result in massive amenity impacts through overshadowing of public space, reduced harbour views, wind and traffic congestion. These are unjustified.

The proposed additional GFA should be rejected.

Loss of public space

Relocation of the waterfront park to Hickson Road would reduce Barangaroo South's world class status.

The harbour must be a major part of the experience for future workers, residents and visitors. It is not enough to provide foreshore access around the perimeter of the site, the harbour must provide the focus for public recreation; it is the harbour that will make recreational space vibrant, interesting and special.

Significant residential growth at Barangaroo and adjacent areas in high rise apartments with little or no private open space will significantly increase the need for public open space: urban consolidation is only sustainable if ample open space is available. There are limited and diminishing opportunities to provide new space for passive recreation in the inner city and it is essential that Barangaroo South's required provision is not reduced.

The reduction in public recreation space at Barangaroo South is unacceptable and space dedicated for development should be transferred to recreation to ensure there is no loss.

Overshadowing

Solar access is essential to the success of public space.

The proposed modification would result in significant overshadowing of the Barangaroo South foreshore including Globe Harbour in the morning to early afternoon between Autumn and Spring. Lunch time is when the foreshore should be in highest demand but during the colder months there will be no sun and strong winds, making this open green space unpleasant and unattractive. Workers will not want to take breaks there and few will want to spend any time there for passive recreation.

Sydney Wharf and Darling Island would also be overshadowed and it is unclear whether open space and residential dwellings will be affected. This must be clarified, with overshadowing prevented.

Overshadowing will also limit the potential to introduce solar powered initiatives such as solar powered street lighting.

The proposed hotel tower must be relocated with its height and other residential tower heights scaled back to reduce overshadowing.

Overshadowing impacts would be avoided or reduced if the increase to GFA is rejected.

Harbour Outlooks

Barangaroo planning should not be at the expense of adjacent areas but should promote integration and complementary benefits.

The proposed modification would restrict historically significant panoramic views from adjacent public parks and reserves. Historic Observatory Hill outlooks will be dominated by massive towers with the sky and horizon blocked. Towers will also dominate views from Clyne Reserve and Munn Reserve, as well as Ballarat Reserve and Pyrmont Park. These inner city parks have long provided water views and the proposed changes would severely impact on their character and amenity.

The proposed hotel will alter views and terminate view corridors from Hickson Road, Gas Lane and Lime Street. View corridors through the site to the water are fundamental to making Barangaroo a world-class redevelopment – more important than providing tall towering buildings – and these must be retained.

Views are important to the wellbeing of apartment residents, who live with no private open space. A view can connect someone inside an apartment with the outside world and create a sense of space. Loss of views to apartment residents is a major impact that should be avoided.

Residents of the Stamford Marquee and Stamford on Kent would significantly lose views of the sky and water and there would be less variability in outlook with tower blocks dominating the view. Residents of the Highgate and Georgia will also see less sky and have less variability in their outlook.

Height and GFA in the hotel and residential towers must be reduced with the hotel relocated to avoid view impacts in adjacent areas.

Wind

New building heights and relocations will increase wind tunnels along the Waterfront Promenade and in public lanes particularly Lime Street. Some spots are now identified as only safe for walking by able-bodied persons. Barangaroo South would become inaccessible for some and challenging and unpleasant for others.

This is unacceptable for a planned redevelopment of prime public land.

Mitigations such as awnings and screens are limited and would only create clutter and reduce public space.

Wind impacts are another reason to reject the proposed GFA and relocation of the hotel on the waterfront.

Traffic and Transport

I strongly oppose the proposed increase in off-street car parking.

The modification proposes 500 new car spaces to cater for the casino section of the hotel, based on an assessment of Crown Casino in Melbourne parking demands, which are 800 cars at the maximum and 100 cars at the minimum. This is an absolute overestimation and must be rejected.

Melbourne's Crown Casino is open to the public whereas the planned second Sydney casino is claimed to be restricted to 'high rollers' with limits on gaming including no poker machines and minimum bets. Parking space demands would not be close to that of Melbourne Crown's.

The site is difficult to drive to and the Barangaroo integrated transport plan estimates that 96 per cent of visitors to the site will travel by public transport or bike, or walk. Providing 500 parking spaces would encourage casino patrons to drive and add to congestion.

There is no justification for this increase in private parking spaces. The government must ensure that all planned public transport options are implemented.

Removal of most kerbside parking is also proposed however the environmental impact assessment does identify how much will be removed or explain why spaces are being removed. I share community concern that it is to provide road space for expected traffic congestion from cars travelling to and from the casino car park.

Loss of kerbside parking will intensify the Barangaroo South road network by increasing the volume of motor vehicles on roads. It will make crossing streets more dangerous for pedestrians with additional lanes to traverse. Without parked cars adjacent to the footpath, pedestrians will lose a buffer between them and fast moving traffic, making streets more hostile and diminishing amenity. This will harm Barangaroo South as a destination to live, work and visit.

The proposal is a further privatisation of public land and should be rejected.

Sydney Observatory

Impacts on Sydney Observatory's operations through blocked views of four key target objectives due to proposed changes to buildings 4A and 4B are unacceptable.

Claims that Sydney Observatory is in an "inappropriate" location to function as an observatory because of the existing light spill from the CBD and Sydney Harbour Bridge and the smog and pollution should be rejected. Sydney Observatory provides residents and visitors to Sydney opportunities to learn about astronomy and see stars and has served this purpose since the 19th Century. It must continue to do so for future generations.

Additional GFA should be rejected with building configuration and locations changed to prevent interruptions of Sydney Observatory target objectives.

Community cynicism over the Barangaroo planning process is widespread. The winning design has already been significantly altered to increase the bulk and scale of the redevelopment and erode the future public experience of the site. The private land grab must end with planning refocussed on public amenity and outcomes.

The proposed modification further privatises private land including the waterfront, placing what would be the tallest tower in the CBD on the waterfront. Barangaroo South would become windswept and shaded, adjacent parks would lose harbour outlooks, traffic congestion would worsen and parts of the year Sydney Observatory would lose views of constellations like the Southern Cross.

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We need to restore faith in the planning process for Barangaroo and show its aims are more than squeezing as much private gain from public land on to the site as possible.

The modification should be rejected with no further increases to GFA than already approved, relocation of the hotel within built areas of the site and with private parking limited.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'AG' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Alex Greenwich
Member for Sydney**