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Department of Planning Industry & Environment (DPIE)

Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy (PPPS) Implementation

## Submission

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Pyrmont NSW 2009

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## Introduction

We pay our respect to the traditional custodians of the land and waters of the Wangal and the Gadigal people. Their land always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

In the Minister's foreword Mr Stokes mentions that Pyrmont was once a place people travelled to for picnics. He says residents have spoken to him about their passion for Pyrmont and their enthusiasm to maximise opportunities to enhance foreshore access, walkability access to public open space and to protect heritage items from demolition.

He says everyone agrees that the time is right to improve access to the harbour and public spaces, and yet he plans to sell off prime and precious harbourside land to private developers.

He also describes Pyrmont as an extension to the CBD.

Pyrmont is NOT and never should be an extension to the CBD. It is certainly an area that attracts innovative technology and media companies and creative and arts-based industries. This is because it is NOT like the CBD but is a welcoming, diverse and established community. It is a place that still fosters community and collaboration. These light commercial enterprises thrive in low to medium rise buildings that exist amongst the many diverse forms of residential buildings in one of the most densely populated areas of Sydney.

These attributes will be diminished or lost if the proposed Pymont Peninsular Place Strategy is implemented with the proposed zoning and planning changes.

Throughout the document it is apparent that the major goal of the government is to take maximum commercial advantage of future private development on the peninsula. It will sell off public land with increased allowable height and building density capabilities to maximise their financial return and the potential profit for private developers.

For example, the document is based on 10 key directions. Number 1 is “Jobs and industries of the future”.

Last at Number 10 is “A collaborative voice”!

Of the “Five Big Moves” the last is “More, better and activated public spaces”.

On page 10 (About the Place Strategy) it states “the strategy is built on the aspirations of business, industry, visitors, local and future residents” an indication of the NSW government’s order of priority that the aspirations of local and future residents comes last!

My submission covers four major areas of concern.

- Community Consultation and Collaboration
- The Transition Zone and Peninsula Height Strategy
- The Sites Capable of Change
- The Sub Precincts of Tjerruing/Blackwattle Bay and Pymont Village

## 1. Community Consultation and Collaboration

The Purpose of the PPPS (p11) clearly outlines the governments agenda. Of the nine bullet points the first seven list first and foremost references to

- economic aspirations,
- economic transformation,
- promote the Peninsula as a jobs hub and economic driver
- identify sub precincts suitable for growth and change
- guide the location of new development

The last bullet point is

- establish a platform for multiple stakeholders to collaborate to deliver on the shared vision for the peninsular.

This is not happening, has never happened, and is clearly a very low priority for the government.

Throughout the document priority is consistently given to economic development and business interests and growth. Section3 Context is entirely about the economic context.

While this is important, preserving history, retaining publicly owned land, and opening up public space and improving access and amenity in the public domain is equally important.

No consideration has been given to the recommendations proposed by the community for incorporation into the plan. The Implementation report (p38) outlines the Next Steps in the implementation of the PPPS. Whilst there is reference to “engagement” with community groups, no mechanism for such is provided in the documentation.

With no formally recognized seat at the table, once again the voices of community groups such as

- Pymont Action INC,
- Friends of Pymont Community Centre,
- Pymont Ultimo Chamber of Commerce,
- Council of Ultimo Pymont Associations (CUPA)
- Representation from Public and Affordable Housing residents and the
- Ultimo Primary School P&C
- Pymont Cares Inc.
- Pymont Community Group

and other community groups will not be heard during the next stage of implementation.

**We call on the NSW Government to require and support The City of Sydney to establish a PPPS Implementation Steering Committee to include community representatives to meet regularly to review and provide input to the proposed Implementation plans.**

## 2. Transition Zone

The Transition Zone was not identified explicitly in the Cabinet approved PPPS. Therefore, the question arises as to the validity of inclusion of this new element within the Implementation recommendations (p35).

We strongly oppose the introduction, without any consultation at all, of this “Transition Zone” and the height objectives for this zone.

The boundaries of the Transition Zone (map p35) include a small section of Bowman Street, already occupied by the towers and podiums of Jacksons Landing. All the Saunders Street/Quarry Master Drive/Jones Street precinct are occupied by medium density residential developments, including Public Housing.

John Street/Mount Street/Harris Street/Miller Street precincts, also incorporate medium density residential developments (including Public and Affordable Housing estates), as well as the Pymont Community Centre and the Maybanke Community Centre site.

Most of the existing development within this Zone sits harmoniously within the topographic character of the precinct, with newer developments in John St, Mount Street and Harris Street complementing the height profile of heritage buildings including those adapted for commercial uses as outlined in Direction 2 of the PPPS.

It is quite clear that new developments to a height of RL90 will not comply with the aspirations outlined in the PPPS.

The Transition Zone covers 3 sub-precincts – Blackwattle Bay, Darling Island and Pymont Village, all of which have place priorities. RL90 translates to 22-25 storey buildings.

The PPPS (p49) cites

“transition building heights from Union Street (and higher land around Harris Street) to the harbour so taller buildings are located to respect privacy, open space (eg Union Square) views to and from the northern end of the Peninsula from the harbour, heritage items and existing buildings”.

Harris Street is centrally located within the Pymont Village sub-precinct and the PPPS recommends (p75)

“ensure new development complements the low-medium rise built form, heritage items and conservation areas and the special qualities of Harris Street”

Blackwattle Bay sub-precinct (PPPS p67) seeks to

“establish controls to ensure development protects sunlight to existing and future open space” and

“reinforce Sydney’s peninsula street character of streets extending to the water’s edge”

The introduction of the Transition Zone, and the Height Objectives for this Zone which indicate a maximum height of RL90 up to the northern boundary of the Transition zone around 120m north of, and parallel with Union Street, along Bowman Street and along Bank Street does not fulfil the aims of the PPPS.

**We call on the government to remove the Transition Zone which allows building heights up to RL90 on the basis that such heights in these sub-precincts will compromise sunlight, privacy, views, heritage, and public open space.**

### 3.Sites Capable of Change

The state government intends to accommodate several thousand more people in Pyrmont and Ultimo. This will be achieved by promoting the construction of high-rise, high-density apartments. Some existing buildings will therefore be replaced.

So which buildings are “capable of change”?

Discussions with Department representatives reveal that:

- Heritage buildings have some legal protection, and
- It is difficult to acquire strata-titled high-rise buildings with multiple owners.

The Department will therefore seek to acquire buildings owned by the Government or by individuals, i.e. public housing, affordable housing and individually owned houses.

Potential development and renewal on these sites will contribute towards the up to 23,000 new jobs and up to 4,000 new dwellings forecast under the PPPS. Owners of high-rise strata title apartments need not be afraid.

Everyone else should be. Department representatives agree that public and affordable housing are most at risk.

They say that it is not their intention to concentrate on these buildings, but that is the most likely outcome of their approach.

The first thing to note is that these sites were identified in complete absence of input from members of the local community, especially those most at risk of being removed from their homes, ie Public and Affordable Housing tenants.

Six such sites in Pymont are included in Fig 6 – the Bowman Street Public Housing; the John Street/Harris St Affordable Housing; the Public Housing sites between Upper Mount Street and Harris Street; the Public Housing in the Quarry Master Drive/Saunders Street/Jones Street precinct; and that on the corner of Wattle Street and Wattle Crescent. There is one Public/Affordable Housing complex in Ultimo (East of Wattle Street), the Henry Ave/Jones Street complex, also identified as capable of change.

**We call on the NSW Government to guarantee retention, in public ownership the seven Public/Affordable Housing sites identified as “capable of change” (Fig 6, p11) and retain them specifically and solely for that purpose. If they are redeveloped residents should be housed temporarily and resettled within their community and their social networks.**

It is difficult to comprehend the identification of the Nokia Building (cnr Bowman/Harris St) and the recently completed 21 Harris Street opposite to the South, as sites “capable of change”. These commercial buildings are located near the foreshore and any redevelopment involving an increase in height would completely block views and sunlight from much of the surrounding residential development and would be contrary to the Pymont Village place priority (PPPS p75) which states:

**“ensure new development complements the low-medium rise built form, heritage items and conservation areas, and the special qualities of Harris Street”**

Similarly, any increase in height of the existing office buildings in Bank Street would further plunge the area between Bank St, Quarry Master Drive/Saunders St and the high point of Harris St further into darkness,

**The existing height parameters for these sites as proposed in the current LEP should be retained.**

## Sub-Precincts

### Blackwattle Bay Sub-Precinct

The PPPS plans for Blackwattle Bay are completely at odds with the INSW State Significant Precinct Plans.

It is hard to see the point of commenting on the plan for Blackwattle Bay, when the Urban Design Report contains this caveat:

**Note: The INSW proposal for Blackwattle Bay is subject to a separate planning assessment process as a State Significant Precinct.**

The INSW proposal flies in the face of all the assurances of the PPPS.

The PPPS Bay Interface Zone states

“Located at the bay edges of former dockland sites (Darling Harbour and Blackwattle Bay) that are undergoing renewal for commercial, cultural and entertainment uses. These zones allow for a more intensified urban experience of the harbour edge that engages with the existing character and reinterprets the historic working harbour, while providing where feasible a continuous foreshore walk of 20 metres, with an additional 10 metres for retailing and outdoor seating where appropriate.”

The PPPS Height Strategy (p36 states

“Within the Bay Interface Zone:

17. New buildings are to ensure protection of the harbourside experience for public gatherings, pedestrian and cycle movement and enjoyment of the water as set out under the peninsula wide objectives.

18. New buildings will provide an appropriate response to the character of Pymont's foreshore in a reinterpretation of the working harbour.”

There is no way that 45 storey residential towers on the waterfront can meet any of these objectives.



The foreshore of Blackwattle Bay must provide a “world-class continuous harbour-edge walk - a strategic objective of NSW Government ... to connect key public spaces, cultural and entertainment destinations, ... allowing people to engage with and appreciate the natural setting of the harbour from Woolloomooloo to the Bays Precinct. The water interfaces, particularly in Blackwattle Bay, Darling Harbour and Cockle Bay are key areas of recreation, gathering and celebration which centre on the water which is actively used for civic and sporting events as well as other water-based activities.”

Significant features and possibilities are ruled out by the INSW State Significant Precinct Plan

- Continued water access for dragon boaters and other passive boaters.
- Children’s access to play in shallow water
- Small public boat mooring for visitors to the Fish Market
- Harbour views from Pyrmont and Ultimo towards Glebe
- Harbour views from Glebe towards Pyrmont and Ultimo
- A world-class harbourside promenade of 30m (not the narrow walkway proposed)
- Bank Street, instead of a promenade as PPPS suggests, would become a wind tunnel
- The foreshore park designed and proposed for many years would be sacrificed to the greed of property developers

Instead there will be

- increased demand for school places (denied by Department of Education)
- increased demand for residential car parking
- massively increased traffic (especially when Bowman Street carries more traffic and the Glebe Island bridge reopens (according to the PPPS plan)

- Fumes and noise from ANZAC bridge which would prevent residents and workers in the high-rise buildings jammed against the Western Distributor from opening their windows
- Minimal green space and dangerous wind tunnels

The Blackwattle Bay sub-precinct should be designated part of the Harbour Interface with similar controls to Pirrama sub-precinct. It has much in common with this adjoining site. The plans for this site should reflect this.

The Bay Interface Zone in which Blackwattle Bay has been designated is inappropriate. Blackwattle Bay should not be treated as a satellite CBD. It bears no resemblance to Cockle Bay and Darling Harbour. It is removed from the CBD. Its proximity to the new fish market and situation on the part of the harbour which is already a centre for recreational water activities makes it a perfect site for passive and active recreational activities and a centre for cultural and artistic activities

The proposed high-rise, high-density INSW plans for Blackwattle Bay have been roundly rejected by the people of Sydney as is evidenced by the unprecedented number (greater than 2000) of submissions objecting to it.

It is vital that the INSW proposal for high rise residential towers be scrapped, so that genuine community engagement can be undertaken on Blackwattle Bay foreshore. It is a special part of the Pyrmont peninsula, and provides the opportunity for a world-class foreshore walk, honouring its industrial heritage, providing access to the water for recreational activities, playing space for children and young people, an entertainment precinct, a high-quality pedestrian and cycling network, public boating facilities. It would be the perfect site for a National First Nations Art and Cultural Centre in recognition of our indigenous, honouring our Aboriginal heritage.

All these objectives outlined in the Blackwattle Bay Sub-Precinct Plan are possible, provided the INSW is not pursued, and is acknowledged by government to be inimical to the aims of the Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy.

**We call on the NSW Government to abandon its plans for dense high rise commercial and residential buildings and work constructively and collaboratively with community groups and stakeholders to establish a world class tourist, entertainment and cultural precinct in Blackwattle Bay/Tjerruing.**

### [Pymont Village Sub Precinct](#)

The Pymont village needs revitalisation. What is needed are facilities and infrastructure which attract visitors and locals to visit and remain in the village precinct, not just speed through or around it. There are two proposals which have not been included in the PPS that would make a huge contribution to making Pymont Village a destination.

Three years ago, it was proposed by Friends of Pymont Community Centre to reconfigure and reanimate Union Square. As the PPP Strategy does not take the opportunity to make Union Square more accessible and usable by the public, we restate their ideas.

Union Square is the community's natural outdoor venue. It comes into its own on ANZAC Day and for Christmas Carols when seats, awnings and a sound system are provided by local bodies. Due to its present configuration, however:-

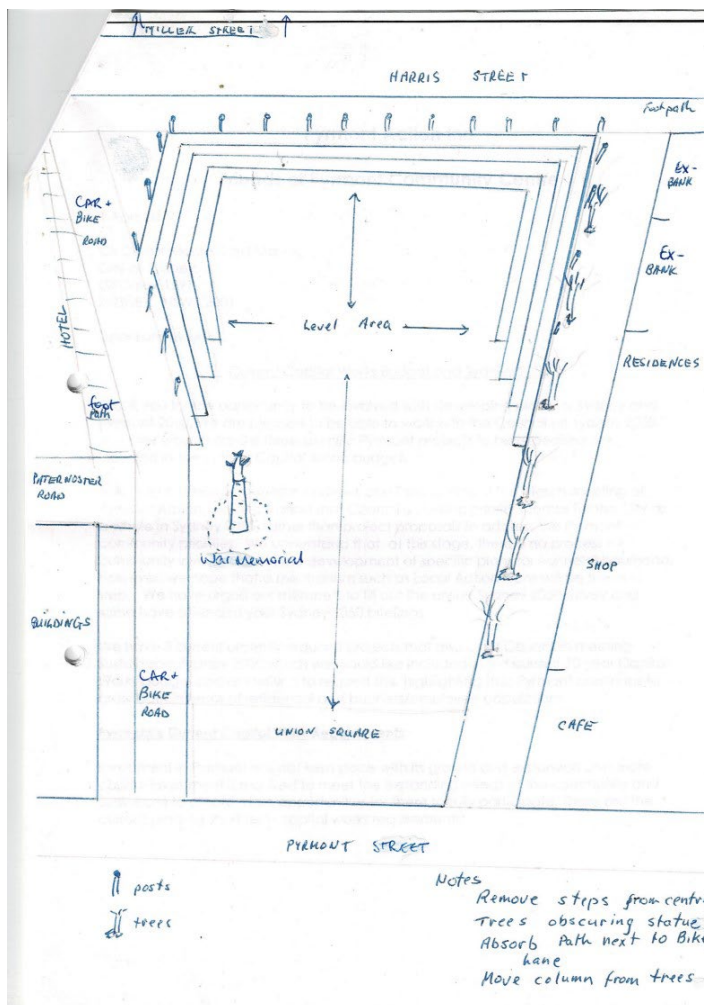
- it does not lend itself to other community or commercial occasions
- there are many steps from top to bottom, not well marked, and many people have tripped or fallen on them
- level spaces are few and narrow
- the largest level space is occupied by the war memorial.

These concerns can be addressed, so that Union Square can be used by the community for concerts and other events, and by businesses for regular markets and pop-up events.

The main obstacle is the central position of the War Memorial. It was moved here from its original site in 1998, when this part of Union Street and Pymont

Bridge were closed to vehicles. It would not be difficult to move it again, to the narrow end of Union Square, nearer to Pymont Street. The Memorial would command the view from Harris Street and Pymont Street, allowing the wider part of the square to become an amphitheatre venue for concerts, plays, pop-up markets etc. with tiered step seating down from Harris Street. The social and commercial benefits would greatly outweigh the cost of the work.

This would contribute positively to the revitalisation of Pymont Village.



This is a rough sketch just to indicate the possibilities!

The second proposal is for a regional Maybank Community Sports and Recreation Centre.

The Pymont and Ultimo communities have long sought (since 2006) the redevelopment of the site of the moribund Maybank Community Centre as a Community Sports and Recreation Centre. It would be a place where people,

including the many younger school-aged children, can come together to form teams, train, and compete with teams from other areas. It is envisaged as a regional facility serving not just Pyrmont and Ultimo residents and workers, but also those from nearby suburbs who also have no access to full-sized courts capable of enabling competitions, similar in scope to the popular Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre in Ultimo.

We have long advocated the social benefits of team sports and the community cohesion they engender. The City of Sydney and NSW Government would serve the community best by supporting a regional centre also accommodating a gym being centrally located within the Pyrmont Peninsula and well served by public transport; and attracting people to the Pyrmont Village, thus boosting trade and commerce in the Harris Street precinct. It could be funded by developer contributions, those raised by development of Key Sites.

A redeveloped Maybanke could accommodate:

- Outdoor and indoor recreational activities for children and youth
- multipurpose sports courts
- a gym for adults aged 20 to 35 and young people with focused programs, including those who cannot afford private gym membership
- exercise space and equipment for over 55s
- space and equipment for sporting teams
- café, meeting spaces, change and shower rooms

The redevelopment of the site as Maybanke Park as depicted in Fig 4.4.6 Urban Design Report (p70) and the “capacity improvements” proposed in Table A1, PPS IDP (p41) are a totally inadequate response.

**We call on the NSW Government to revitalise Pyrmont Village through the redesign of Union Square and the development of The Maybanke Sport and Recreation Centre.**

**We also reject the development of the site into the Maybanke Park.**

## **Conclusion**

We would like to thank the teams at DPIE, led by Thomas Watt, and the City of Sydney, led by Tim Wise, for their willingness to answer questions, listen to our

concerns and for attending the December, 2021 meeting with Pymont Action, of which we are a members. We are concerned about our Place on the Pymont Peninsula, and our community. We are not anti-development, but pro good development, which protects and nourishes the public domain.

We trust that ideas for the future of the Pymont Peninsular and our serious reservations about some aspects of the proposed implementation will be taken seriously, and that we will have a genuine and ongoing role in the next phase of implementation.

Regards,

Adrienne and Keith Tunncliffe