BAYS PRECINCT COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUP

"The Future of the Bays Precinct – Sydney"

The attached is a product of the Bays Precinct Community Reference Group process instigated by, then Minister for Planning, The Hon. Kristina Keneally in June 2009.

Whilst it was not in our brief to produce something like this a number of us thought it important that something tangible come from the nine months of consultation that took place. Consultation was both within and outside of the BPCRG.

The scale of the opportunity that the Bays Precinct offers Sydney by a brave, imaginative and holistic approach is not quickly grasped. The time frame alone could be 20 or 25 years.

It is important then that the planning process begin soon and that the Bays Precinct be:

- Looked at strategically.
- Assessed in its totality.
- Quarantined from medium and long term uses until the points above are addressed.
- Given into the responsibility of a body that has the area as its sole focus.
- Allowed to have the ongoing input of stakeholders in future planning.

It will, almost certainly, be a process involving both public and private investment. Perhaps with the government setting the parameters and a lead developer co-ordinating what follows.

Our document while containing many ideas, both old and new, is not designed as something definitive, but is more intended to raise the profile of the Bays Precinct and be the precursor to a more thorough and detailed assessment.

Sydney Harbour continues as a work in progress so its best interests need to be nurtured constantly and vigilantly. This is especially true in this period of a post industrial harbour.

For the Bays Precinct change is in the wind.

Yours sincerely,

David Benson
Paul Cooper
Grahame Edwards
Jane Marceau
John Paul
Bays Context

• 80 hectares of strategically located publicly-owned waterfront land, 3km from Sydney CBD

• 97 hectares of water within the four bays - Blackwattle Bay, Johnston’s Bay, Rozelle Bay and White Bay

• 5km of Sydney Harbour waterfront

• A mix of working harbour, port, industrial and recreational waterfront activities

• Major heritage-listed buildings – White Bay Power Station and the Glebe Island Silos

• Anzac Bridge acts as the western gateway to Sydney CBD
Community Profile

- 60,000 residents live in local communities of Rozelle, Balmain, Pyrmont, Ultimo, Glebe, Annandale and Lilyfield.

- Over 100,000 residents live within a 5-10 minute drive of the Bays Precinct

- Leichhardt LGA has a housing target of 2000 additional dwellings by 2031 and 10,000 additional dwellings by 2031 (NSW Metro Strategy - Inner West Sub-Region)

- Average household size is 2.5 persons

- 14,507 workers travel to Leichhardt to get to work, 81% of the workforce

- 24,032 residents travel to work from Leichhardt, 85% of the employed residents. 50% travelled to Sydney CBD & North Sydney

(Statistics: ABS 2006 Census & Public Practice)
THE BAYS OPPORTUNITY
Urban Renewal for the 21st Century

The opportunity given to Sydney by the waters and lands of the Bays Precinct is immense. With the advent of a post-industrial Harbour, proper planning can deliver a transformation of national, even global, significance. This document suggests strategies and ideas for action to create a place worthy of this unique Harbourside site.

The Bays Precinct is a vital element of Sydney’s future as a world city. The last remaining large harbourside area available for development, the Bays Precinct comprises all the land and water fronting the Bays, from Pyrmont to White Bay and inclusive of the Rozelle Goods Yard. With 80 hectares of land, all in public ownership, 5 kilometres of harbour frontage, the heritage-listed White Bay Power Station and silos at its centre, and 3 kilometres from the CBD, the Precinct’s value speaks for itself. Potentially superbly connected to the core of the city and to Greater Sydney, these sequential and contiguous bays and lands have great physical presence and Sydney Harbour as their address. They form the western gateway to Sydney. For the nation, they are an unacknowledged treasure, presently under-utilised, vacant or even derelict.

Not since the first land grants of the late 18th Century have there been both the opportunity and the will to plan these foreshore lands and bays together. This once in two centuries opportunity must not be lost.

The Bays Precinct is naturally magnificent. But it can be so much more: linking working and living, Sydney’s past, present and future, the local and global elements of our city, the land and the water,
recreation and public transport to get there. It can ultimately provide a whole of precinct model of city living that responds effectively to climate change. For locals and visitors alike it can offer a place for recreation and cultural enrichment and a healthy environment for all. Cities of the future will be different. The next 20 years will see great changes – locally and globally. Land use and transport patterns must be rethought. Living, working and playing patterns will alter. Alternative energies will develop. The Bays Precinct must be in the forefront of these transformations.

Imaginative, coordinated and future-oriented planning have all been missing from development of the Bays Precinct in the past. It’s time to put that right. We now have the chance to inspire government, planners, residents and investors with exciting ideas for the redesign and re-use of each of the Bays.

In 2009 the NSW government asked the Bays Precinct Taskforce to consider the future of the area as a whole. The Taskforce is due to report in 2010. As part of future planning of the Precinct, a Community Reference Group (CRG) was established to provide a means for local residents and representatives of business and government to bring out ideas for the future and determine principles to be used in the overall planning process. The CRG was asked to consider the desirable future of the area over the short, medium and longer terms, up to and after 2020 when all current industrial leases expire. This document provides a longer term vision, but much of it can be achieved much sooner.

The Precinct is recognised as a public resource but must be protected for the greater good. The foreshores must remain in public ownership, natural and heritage assets must be protected and both public and private activities must preserve the flexibility essential for the area to change as needs evolve and we know more about what is needed for sustainable living in an urban environment. Both private and public investment is essential to implementing the new vision.

Our vision for the area, presented in this document, includes open space and sports ovals, new commercial centres and mixed income housing. We envisage reuse of heritage assets, notably the White Bay Power Station, for work, for cultural enrichment and recreation, with theatres and galleries, markets and restaurants and aim to maintain links with the past via continuing the mixed maritime activities consonant with the character of the area as a residential and service activity zone. The emerging transport hub in White Bay will be to the advantage of local people and visitors alike via ferries, light rail and a rapid transit system, as well as walking and cycling ways.

Our Strategic Renewal Framework and Seven Strategies for Action are the mechanisms for working towards the Vision, keeping the character of the different Bays, stimulating new employment and living opportunities, and providing a new, exciting and attractive area for the local population, all of Sydney and beyond.

This Precinct is a national asset – we must ensure that its future is the right one.
THE BAYS 2030 VISION
a place for people in the 21st century

The Bays Precinct will be a place that brings life, work and enjoyment to local residents and businesses, recognising Sydney’s global face and welcoming visitors to our shores. It must be a place to live, to work, to play and to contribute, whether locally or globally, to a better and more sustainable Sydney and NSW.

Following geographically from the CBD’s financial hub, Darling Harbour’s role as a recreational hub and the media corridor of Harris Street, Pyrmont, the Bays Precinct should focus on the knowledge, research, science and innovation essential to Australia’s prosperity and wellbeing in the twenty-first century. Sydney must retain its dynamism as the outward-facing world city of Australia. A renewed Bays Precinct will underpin that place in the nation.

The Bays Precinct must be a model of contemporary sustainable waterfront urban renewal, offering:
- Visionary built form
- Diverse and exciting public space
- Extensive foreshore access and open space
- Adaptive reuse of our heritage
- Community connections and sense of community
- A healthy environment
- Diverse and local employment
- Cultural riches
- Public transport for all – anywhere to everywhere
- A mix of maritime activities
- Active and passive water recreation
This Report on the future of the Bays Precinct is the culmination of work started by a community workshop held at the Balmain Town Hall in August 2006.

About fifty people (community members, councillors, departmental and council staff and several design and engineering experts) worked over two intensive days to prepare an inspirational but realistic vision for the future of White Bay and the Rozelle Goods Yard.

The report of this work was presented to the senior staff and heads of State Government departments who were impressed with the excellence of the analysis and the practical findings.

The work demonstrated that there were significant underutilised government assets that should be providing a greater return to the community. It was also clear that the keys to unlocking the opportunities that the Bay Precinct provided the future of Sydney lay in improving the access to its various parts and achieving a whole of government approach to its planning and management.

Following the presentation of the community workshop findings, the State Government renewed its commitment to a Bays Precinct Task Force. A Precinct Community Reference Group was established and this report is the product of members of that reference group.

Like the product of the original community workshop this report is both inspirational and practical. It is not a typical demand for ‘more open space’. Its authors recognise the potential benefits of the Precinct for the economy and wider communities of Sydney and the need for some development if funds are to be available for infrastructure, conservation and heritage protection.

The report demonstrates that, if given the opportunity, members of the community can be trusted to come up with the goods. It makes clear that there are better solutions than the kind of residential privatisation that has occurred in previous one-dimensional redevelopment of Sydney’s scarce and irreplaceable waterfront. Unlike those redevelopments, this report supports the concept of a working harbour, providing a cruise ship terminal to replace those abolished by short-sighted planning decisions.

There is an opportunity to get it right, to combine a wide range of activities that take advantage of the position of the Bays Precinct and overcome the planning errors and silo decisions of past decades. Inspirational planning and management can create places in the future that respect and honour the past.

As the only thing that could stand in the way of achieving a great long-term result for Sydney and its people would be a failure of government will, I commend this report to the governments of Sydney and its communities.
The Bays Precinct in the Past

The Bays Precinct has always been ‘modern’ according to the times. Originally settled and developed by people mostly associated with shipping, it has always faced the sea and linked Australia to the outside world. In the 1800s, still in the age of sail, the areas around the Bays developed as trading and small manufacturing centres, characterised by a village feel through small houses and streets and residents servicing essentially maritime needs from finger wharves and jetties. By the mid-1800s, these new suburbs were flourishing and local authorities already recognised the need for planning the area’s growth.

A century later, in the 1960s, when the hard surfaces around the water were installed, the Bays’ shores were largely industrial, the port providing a major export and import facility for both raw materials and finished goods. The waterfront was lined with factories and workshops. This was the heyday of Australia’s industrial expansion and the Bays’ activities included power generation, petroleum storage and soap manufacture. These were often highly polluting and offensive, a continuing memory to many locals. The Precinct’s businesses and port offered largely unskilled and insecure employment typical, of the times, to its local residents.
The Bays in the Present

Recent years have seen this profile change almost completely. Following the evolution of Sydney and Australia’s economy, the Precinct as a whole shifted from local manufacturing to providing professional and commercial services to Sydney and beyond as the basis of a much greater prosperity. Technological change, especially containerisation, revolutionised the nature of seaborne trade but the area was unsuitable for large-scale port mechanisation. The White Bay Power Station is now a heritage building but moulders away for lack of new uses. The area gradually became much more an adjunct of the CBD, losing its original focus but not yet acquiring a new one.

Over recent decades, the resident population changed. The area gentrified, existing housing was upgraded, the industrial buildings were vacated, to be replaced with medium to high density apartments and townhouses on the Balmain Peninsula, Glebe, Lilyfield and Pyrmont. In the area immediately adjacent to the White Bay wharves, for example, there are now more than 2000 new residents. Some port-related uses remain, notably the gypsum, sugar and cement businesses, but other uses have relocated. Recreational boating is a favourite with many, with more active locals taking to their rowing or dragon boats. The Glebe waterfront has been transformed, with new parks along the water and the construction of new apartment complexes.
Local employment
The Bays’ local community is large and diverse, with 100,000 people living within a ten minute drive.

Most residents are highly educated and their occupations are typical of the services economy which characterises twenty-first century Australia. The Precinct services both local knowledge industries and ‘Global Sydney’. It is characterized by high and fast growing numbers of small businesses.

A renewed Bays Precinct can offer much more employment that suits the local profile, reducing the need to travel to work. Many service industries need small and flexible workspaces, with collaborators nearby. Knowledge industries need knowledge development, relying on education and research for innovative products and connections to global markets.

Major structures such as the Power Station and adjacent new centres can provide for these needs. Locating public sector galleries, theatres or museums in the Precinct can act as magnet infrastructure, attracting small and new businesses into a thriving hub in spaces open to the public and especially suitable for the talents of residents in an ideal live-work mix. Adding educational, training and research facilities, suited perhaps to the maritime nature of the area, can grow the knowledge base, bring life to commercial and retail outlets and create a new generation of young people with the skills needed for tomorrow’s world.

Tackling sustainability and environmental issues will also drive much employment growth in services. Research into new energy sources or designing new materials for retrofitting buildings for the twenty-first century, for example, can provide continuity with older power station functions and maintain the heritage values of the Bays Precinct. Students of all ages could find resources, ideas and involvement galore in such a mix.

Recreation and light maritime activities which attract both businesses and visitors can add value to what is already on offer and provide new activities for tourists coming to the Bays Precinct by water or land transport.

A new population, new needs
The educational and occupational profiles of residents have also changed since the heyday of the 1970s industrial Bays, gradually attracting the service professionals with a light footprint on the ground and few special needs buildings. As the population has changed, new and growing families need more space to play and exercise and demands for cultural and recreational facilities are rising. Everyone, old and young, residents and visitors, needs space for taking the air and enjoying the waterfront environment. We need bike and pedestrian links, working out from the Precinct to...
take people where they need to go, around the Precinct and beyond and to bring others in.

But the Bays Precinct is not all waterfront. Like all large modern cities, Sydney needs places for staff servicing the many needs of local areas to live near their work – firemen, teachers, nurses, for example – who find difficulty finding affordable housing in the inner suburbs. Worldwide, most city plans include provision for these and the Bays Precinct must do so too. Our Vision thus includes mixed income housing, all high quality and ecologically sustainable, replacing the old railyards in Lilyfield, giving that area vibrant new life and reconnecting communities now separated by major roads. The twenty-first century and its technologies can make new housing of all kinds a showcase for what can and must be done.

New economic and cultural centres and public spaces should link the Bays’ foreshores, the Power Station and Glebe Island, each Bay developing its own characteristics, interspersed with open spaces, parkland, children’s playgrounds or pre-schools, cafes and community sporting facilities.

Reconciling diverse needs and wants
In all of this area the local meets the global, working life is linked to living and playing. The aim of a renewed Bays area is to provide a high quality, model local environment, linking the Precinct to the wider world of Sydney and beyond at the same time as it ensures that future generations share a sense of the area’s history.

Environmental sustainability is now at the forefront of our concerns as a nation and should be central to planning the Bays Precinct. Live-work arrangements will change as people travel less or differently to reduce their carbon footprint. Providing geographical proximity between where people live and where they work, effectively taking the work to the workers, is one part of this equation while efficient and attractive public transport and transit-oriented development will bring visitors in and out to our reconnected area.

Sustainability in the built environment usually means individual sustainable buildings. We envisage a Precinct that is new to Sydney, a whole Harbour foreshores area that operates sustainably while offering both employment and a satisfying lifestyle to residents and visitors alike.

We are now at a tipping point where the mechanisms of daily activities must be radically rethought. By 2030 we will be in the throes of major change. The new Bays Precinct must not just be ‘modern’; it must be leading edge. Planning now must give high priority to environmental concerns and shifts, seeing these issues as critical, and provide flexibility for coping with the unexpected.
Integrated planning, design and development are essential to the exciting and sustainable future for the Bays Precinct envisaged here. Ensuring this must be a top priority.

Designing the many elements of the vision for the Bays Precinct demands informed and integrated thinking that assesses, plans and designs the future of the bays as one, in relation to each other and within the local / city context. It also demands ongoing consultation with local residents and other stakeholders, such as businesses, whether operating locally or in Sydney’s Global Arc, with universities and research agencies, with the creators and managers of cultural facilities and with the agencies responsible for the different municipalities with broader local responsibilities.

An urban renewal framework that includes a common set of overarching planning and design principles must guide proper and orderly long-term redevelopment of the Bays Precinct.

New infrastructure is critical. As this early infrastructure analysis plan shows, the Bays Precinct is already the focus for existing infrastructure, with the potential for much more. The Bays have great potential for connections. It can soon become a transport hub, with better roads and new, faster and more effective forms of public transport. Connecting ferries and light rail and rapid transit systems are already being planned or discussed. Public transport will be the future of city journeys to work and play and must be planned right from the start.

Maintaining and implementing the vision over the long term require special governance structures. Sydney has much to learn from other world cities in this domain.

A Bays Precinct Planning and Redevelopment Authority

The planning, design and operation of the Bays Precinct is now the responsibility of up to 16 local and state government agencies (including 10 transport related agencies), operating with poor levels of integration and coordination and silo-based thinking.

If the vision of a renewed Bays area is to be realised, the creation of a Planning and Redevelopment Authority is critical.

The Authority must have overall planning powers and have sufficient financial clout to fund the adaptive reuse of the White Bay Power Station and other areas where the risk for non-government capital makes private investment unlikely.

The powers of the Authority must be extensive, including all aspects needed to drive integrated development across the whole Precinct and to ensure that private investors meet necessary timelines and standards.

The Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority recently established as part of the Metropolitan Transport Plan 2010, may provide a suitable model to deliver integrated planning, design and development for the Bays Precinct.
The Bays Precinct Community Reference Group (CRG) was established in June 2009 by the then Minister for Planning Kristina Keneally as part of the first stage of the NSW Government’s community consultation process for the future of the Bays Precinct.

To inform government, the CRG evolved and presented a framework of strategic planning principles to guide the future of the Bays Precinct. The headline strategic planning principles are set out below and are supported by more detail. The planning and design strategies set out in this strategy document are largely consistent with the CRG’s strategic planning principles.
Integrated Future Planning
1. All future planning and development decisions relating to the Bays Precinct is to be on the basis of an integrated strategic plan and principles for the whole Precinct.

Priority and Precedence for the Public Good
2. The Bays Precinct, as part of Sydney Harbour, is a public resource, owned by the public, to be protected for the public good. Bays Precinct foreshore lands are to remain in public ownership for the benefit of the local and wider community.

Access, Open space and recreation
3. Public access to the foreshore, including open space corridors for pedestrians and cyclists, is to be maintained and significantly extended as a vital part of the planning process.
4. Foreshore land available for recreational use is to be maintained and significantly expanded.
5. Traditional maritime recreational uses (rowing, dragon boating, kayaking, sailing) are to be preserved and safe navigation and speed parameters retained.

Heritage
6. Ensure future planning recognises the significance of the area in Sydney’s maritime and industrial history. This will include conservation of all heritage items and, where feasible, adaptive reuse of the significant structures of the Precinct.

Land Uses
7. Allow for a range of land uses within the Precinct to provide for local distinctiveness and character. Ensure all uses have the minimum possible adverse impact on existing residents and businesses.

Transport
8. All activities and development to be integrated with the timely provision of integrated transport infrastructure including an integrated public transport strategy. Long-term uses must not result in increased traffic congestion within the surrounding suburbs.

Housing
9. Housing is considered a lower order priority within the Precinct. Any new housing is to be diverse and responsive to the range of community needs. Private housing is excluded from direct foreshore frontage.

Built Form and Design
10. All built form is to be of an excellent design, on a compatible scale with the adjacent neighbourhoods and to contribute to a high quality public domain.
11. Views, including views to landmarks, are to be conserved and where possible, expanded.

Community and Culture
12. Ensure cultural uses, including the celebration of indigenous and contemporary culture and publicly accessible art, are an integral part of the Precinct.

Economic Life
13. Maintain the ‘working harbour’ character of the Precinct in conjunction with support for other employment opportunities including green R&D and creative industries (eg incubators, artist studio space).

Sustainability and Environment
14. Incorporate best practice sustainability principles in all development and ensure that all uses enhance the sustainability of human and physical ecology in waterways and foreshores. This will include a whole of catchment approach to water management.
3.0 SEVEN STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

A Strategic Renewal Framework for the Bays Precinct

The Bays Precinct is an extraordinary opportunity to create vibrant and sustainable waterfront communities.

It is the next area for Sydney’s growth to the west - the next peninsula after Pyrmont, two peninsulas from the CBD. It can provide both employment lands for the city’s future growth and added amenities for the area’s growing residential and local business population.

It can deliver better connections within and between local communities, vastly improved public transport, via water (ferries), light rail and future mass transit systems, as well as walking routes and bike paths, new areas of open space and recreation, green corridors and reclaim waterfront space for public enjoyment.

It has capacity to provide new centres of activity, linking the old to the new and the existing to the future. The question is how to seize the opportunity to the benefit of all.

Strategic Renewal Framework

Integrated planning, design and development needs a clear vision of the future structure and connectivity of the Bays and its future role as a place within the city. The Strategic Renewal Framework for the Bays Precinct defines and integrates the key structural elements of urban renewal that are necessary to deliver the vision:

• an integrated transport infrastructure network;
• new and improved centres and activity hubs;
• improved community connectivity and foreshore access; and
• urban renewal corridors and areas that provide further opportunity for regeneration.

The Strategic Renewal Framework builds upon the excellent foundation of Sustainable Sydney 2030, developed and adopted in 2008 by the City of Sydney.
The Seven Strategies for Action build upon the structural elements in the Strategic Renewal Framework and establish overarching planning and design principles, initiatives and ideas that can guide and influence the processes of urban change and renewal.

1. Infrastructure + Integration
Creating an integrated transport network and new waterfront transport hub.

2. New Centres + Diversity of Use
Creating and integrating new centres and activity hubs that respond to the diverse needs of the community.

3. Local Connections
Creating new streets and links that connect the community.

4. Places + Spaces
Creating a diversity of new foreshore spaces and places for the community.

5. Waterfront Activity
Connecting the past, present and a catalyst for the future.

6. Future Form + Character
Responsive design for a changing world

7. Precinct Sustainability
Creating a model for more sustainable urban communities.