The Bays Precinct Task Force
Overview forums

Consultation outcomes report: 28 May 2012
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1 Overview

1.1 Introduction

The Bays Precinct Task Force, established by the Hon. Brad Hazzard, Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, has been tasked with recommending a strategic planning framework for the Bays Precinct for the next 25 years and beyond. As an initial step in that process, the Task Force is developing a discussion report about the Bays Precinct to be submitted to the Minister by 30 July.

This report provides an overview of the key issues and questions raised during consultation workshops held during May and June 2012. The aim of these workshops is to create a dialogue between the community and the government agencies operating in the precinct about the key issues to be addressed in a strategic framework for the Bays Precinct. Whilst this is a separate process to the studies and consultation previously undertaken, it is obviously being informed by the understanding and learning developed through those earlier processes.

The focus of the first round workshops was to inform participants about the current activities and plans being implemented and considered by the different agencies operating within the Precinct and provide opportunities for comments about priority issues.

This series of workshops is one of three consultation rounds that will take place until the end of June 2012. The outcomes will contribute to the Task Force’s report back to the NSW Government which is due by 30 July 2012.

The first round in the series of three rounds of workshops was completed on May 23. This Report is to be published within a week of the completion of the first round and prior to the second round of workshops. It is a compilation of the findings from the three separate workshops held in Round One and is being used to inform which issues should be the focus of Round Two where the community is being asked to feed back its data and understanding of the current status and future opportunities for the Precinct.

1.2 Process

In order to inform the Report to the Minister, the workshops are being conducted in three rounds; and participants are being invited to choose to attend one, two or all three of the rounds. A broad range of representation from the community is being sought so both general and personal invitations were sent using a variety of media:

• Letterbox drop of a flyer to 45,000 local households
• Advertisements placed in the Inner West Courier
• Email invitation to previous workshop and online forum participants
• Email invitation to identified stakeholders
• Facebook and online forum posts.

The format of this first round of forums, the ‘overview forums’, included background presentations by members of the Task Force, a question and answer session and a table discussion around key issues for future planning in the Precinct.

At the workshops, participants were also provided with a copy of the Government Architect’s needs analysis, a project timeline and the Terms of Reference for the Task Force.

Workshops were held on:

• Wednesday, 16 May, 6–9pm at Sydney Secondary College, Rozelle;
• Saturday, 19 May, 2–5pm at Sydney Secondary College, Rozelle; and
• Wednesday, 23 May, 6–9pm at St Scholastica's College, Glebe.

A total of 125 people attended the three overview forums:
• 30 attended on Wednesday 16 May.
• 23 attended on Saturday 19 May.
• 72 attended on Wednesday 23 May.

The majority of these participants have indicated that they intend to participate in Rounds 2 and 3 as well.

1.3 Presentations
Presentations were made by members of the Task Force to provide participants with a range of information to assist them in understanding the diverse needs and opportunities associated with the Bays Precinct.

Presentations were made by:
• Government Architect's Office, on the Bays Precinct needs analysis.
• Department of Premier and Cabinet, on the role and functions of the Task Force.
• City of Sydney, on Council’s planning principles and the opportunities for the area.
• Leichhardt Municipal Council, on Council’s planning principles and the opportunities for the area.
• Sydney Ports Corporation, on the current and future needs of the port industry in the Sydney area, and the role the Bays Precinct plays.
• Roads and Maritime Services, on maritime needs, proposed future developments and boat safety programs.
• Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, on the White Bay Power Station and the Rozelle Railyards.
• Community representative on the Bays Precinct Task Force, Prof Jane Marceau, on community consultation to date and the needs of the community.

All presentations can be found online at www.shfa.nsw.gov.au/baysprecinct

1.4 Questions to the Task Force
Following presentations, participants were given the opportunity to discuss their questions as a table group and pose them to the Task Force members.

Questions covered a range of issues, including:
• Community benefit
• Environment
• Finding the balance between a working harbour and local community needs
• Governance
• Heritage
• Industry in the area
• Leases
• Maritime Policy and Land uses
• Other Land Uses (community, residential)
• Planning Process
• Public Access
• Recreation
• Site specific issues
• Transport

Task Force members answered a range of questions relevant to their area of expertise or responsibility. Other questions which required more information or expertise were taken on notice. A record of the questions raised and responses to them will be posted to the Bays Forum website, www.thebaysprecinct.net.au.

1.5 Summary of key issues
Participants had the opportunity to again raise questions and discuss their comments over the final hour of the forum. Key issues that emerged from the discussion included:
• Traffic and public transport
• Open space and access
• Port and Maritime needs
• Other land uses (such as residential and industrial)
• Heritage and reuse
• Economic issues
• Planning and decision making process
• Community benefit
• Site specific issues.

Site specific issues arose about parts of the Precinct such as:
• Glebe Island Bridge
• Blackwattle Bay
• Glebe Island and White Bay
• The White Bay Power Station
• Rozelle Railyards
• The Sydney Fish Market.

More discussion about the key issues can be found in Section 2 of this document.

2 Key issues
This section summarises the key issues raised during the workshops. The weighting of the issues is based around the number of times an issue was raised across all three workshops and the level of discussion the issue engendered.

The Bays Precinct encompasses a diverse range of stakeholders with a diverse range of needs and aspirations – some complementary and some competing. Overall, finding the balance between NSW, Sydney-wide and local community needs is seen as significant to the success of a framework strategy.
2.1  Traffic and public transport

Addressing issues and needs in relation to cycling and public transport, roads and traffic, and integrated transport planning are very important to participants.

Participants expressed a high level of interest in a range of public transport including more ferries, wharves and services, introducing additional light rail throughout the area and providing corridors for cyclists. Suggestions relating to ferries included locating a wharf at the Robert Street end of development and initiating ferry services into Blackwattle Bay to service Glebe. The provision of light rail to service the overseas passenger terminal and consideration of the White Bay Green Link to service Barangaroo were also suggested. Cycling suggestions included providing an improved cycle link through the Rozelle railyards.

There is a strong desire for integrated transport planning to be central to any future plans for the area. A coordinated approach to transport provision, through the development of a traffic and transport plan for the Precinct and the consideration of transport corridors within the Precinct were considered important ways to improve connectivity and access to and within the area. There was a suggestion that the precinct could become a maritime transport hub; and that an opportunity exists to capitalize on tourism from the overseas passenger terminal by providing links to the transport network.

It appears that road proposals within the Precinct need further clarification and consideration of broader stakeholder needs and impacts including how changes could affect the community. There is concern that any additional industry or development might adversely affect already congested surrounding roads including local roads and arterial roads such as Victoria Road and the citywest link. Additional traffic generated from future uses within the Precinct is of significant concern along with the cumulative impact of other developments in the area e.g the Harold Park redevelopment.

There is concern that this consultation process is not integrated with current NSW Transport master planning process and more information is needed about how the plans for the Precinct will link with broader regional Sydney transport activities including plans for the M4. It is important to participants that space is preserved/guaranteed to ensure future infrastructure including roads, public transport and pedestrians and cycle access.

2.2  Open space and access

The provision of open space and pedestrian access to the foreshore are of high priority to participants.

Development of the Bays Precinct waterfront is seen as an opportunity to provide a mix of open space uses such as sports grounds, recreation areas and cycle ways that allow for active and passive recreation to meet community needs.

Providing additional, improved and continuous pedestrian access along and around the foreshore including access for people with a disability and pram users as well as cyclists is of significant importance. The creation of an access corridor for cyclists and pedestrians through the edge of rail yards was suggested as a way to improve access along with public transport improvements. Improving pedestrian links with other areas is also of importance.

2.3  Port and Maritime needs

It is clear that achieving a balance between strategic needs and local needs is of critical importance to participants.
There are mixed feelings about the use of the Bays Precinct area for port and maritime uses that is perhaps a result of the community needing to consider both the strategic/Sydney-wide needs of the project as well as their local needs.

Improving facilities for port and maritime uses and remaining a working/operational harbour is important to some participants, but always within a balanced approach that includes consideration of community amenity. Suggested improvements/needs include:

- Ensuring public maritime facilities are retained for future needs (including the retention of key deep water ports) and investigating Cockatoo Island and surrounding areas for future deepwater uses.
- Ensuring a balance between larger and smaller maritime needs.
- Ensuring there is coordination of future maritime planning including the needs of ferries, marinas and cruise ships.

Some participants question whether port and maritime uses/working harbour is really still the best use for the future of this area. For example, whether it is suitable to bring 'inbound tourism' to a 'suburban area' by relocating the cruise ship terminal to the Bays Precinct; and whether there is a potential ‘opportunity cost’ of continuing with port uses in this area.

Providing certainty around planning is needed for all stakeholders including port users and businesses to allow them to make well informed business decisions, now and into the future.

2.4 Other land uses

The consideration of resident amenity in any land use planning undertaken is a priority for participants.

Discussion at the forums also focused on other land uses including residential and industrial. Providing a mix of land uses and achieving the right balance between NSW, Sydney-wide and local needs is important to participants. The preparation of a land use planning study that considers maritime and other land uses is of importance.

Participants have mixed feelings in relation to residential development. Some think that developing land for residential purposes will privatise space that could otherwise be used for public purposes and that further transport connectivity opportunities could be explored as an alternative. Some think that providing more employment opportunities is more important than developing land for residential purposes. Others suggest that opportunities exist to unify uses into similar ‘use based’ precincts around the larger Bays Precinct area to provide more community benefit. The provision of residential development, particularly around Glebe Island is seen as a way of injecting vibrancy into the area for everyone to enjoy.

Participants also have mixed views about how industrial land uses could be incorporated into any future plans for the area. Providing a positive interaction between industrial uses and the local community, specifically at Glebe Island, is of importance to participants.

Some comments were made in relation to existing salt and sugar practices and participants questioned the economic impact of moving some of the current industrial uses eg cement depot to other parts of Sydney or moving bulk handling import facilities to Victoria or Queensland as alternative locations. Consideration of using industrial land for other purposes such as to enable improved public transport and to provide more open space was also raised particularly in reference to Glebe Island.

Taking into consideration the visual amenity of the infrastructure industry, specifically whether there are opportunities to provide ‘better looking’ infrastructure, is also of importance to participants.
2.5 Heritage and reuse

Discussion about heritage and reuse issues focused on specific opportunities for retaining and reusing heritage buildings

These specifically included, retaining the Glebe Island Bridge for use as a pedestrian and/or cycle link (in particular the importance of being able to link Pyrmont Bridge with the Glebe Island Bridge) and opportunities for adaptive reuse of White Bay power station.

Participants had a number of questions in relation to how a decision will be made on the future of Glebe Island Bridge, who will be affected by any changes and the cost of these changes. The location of the Sydney Heritage Vessels Fleet was also the subject of a number of questions – White Bay and Pyrmont Point were identified as suitable locations in the forum.

2.6 Economic issues

Achieving balance between wider economic needs and community needs is important to participants.

There is concern that economic benefit is being prioritized at the expense of community opportunity and enjoyment of the local area.

Participants recognize the importance of providing local employment opportunities including maritime related jobs that are generated in the area as a means of enabling the long term viability of the import industry. Some question however, the ‘opportunity cost’ of retaining existing industry compared to enabling new industry/jobs to emerge.

Participants request more information and clarity about the lease agreements with current users including the terms and length of the leases being issued. Some participants believe that uncertainty around leasing in relation to future planning will create a poor economic climate for existing and future business. Consultation with the community about new or extended leases was also a suggestion.

2.7 Planning and Decision Making Process

Participants had a range of comments and questions in relation to the planning and decision-making process for the Bays Precinct.

There is support for the preparation of a master plan that guides current and future development and decision making in a cohesive way. A planning process that includes developing a vision for the area, setting medium and long term goals/principles and identifying broader opportunities is considered to be an important tool for setting the planning framework for the area. Integrating the master planning process with transport planning is of significant importance to participants. There is concern that changes of government may continue to delay the planning process.

Providing an adequate amount of time to enable the community to be involved in the planning process is also important to participants. Participants seek further information about the key aspects of the project (eg leases), project timing and outcomes of the process including how previous consultation processes have fed into this process. More interactive opportunities for input into the project are also sought. Participants request that future consultation activities include Pyrmont and Ultimo residents.

Participants also seek a better understanding of how the decision making process will work between the Task Force, Minister and government agencies and the level of collaboration between these stakeholders.
Clarity is sought around the long term management and governance of the Bays Precinct area once the Master Plan is in place.

2.8 Community Benefit

Participants suggested a range of ways in which the future development of the Bays Precinct could benefit the local community.

These include providing high quality buildings, improving the visual amenity of the area, providing a more ‘human’ interface with the waterfront, enhancing views and sight lines and providing community land uses such as community facilities, health, recreation and education. Managing the environmental impacts of land uses in the Precinct such as noise, dust, emissions and traffic is also of importance to participants.

2.9 Site specific issues

A number of specific areas within the Bays Precinct were the focus of comment and discussion.

2.9.1 Glebe Island Bridge

Participants had a high level of interest in the future of the Glebe Island Bridge.

Although participants saw the benefit of removing the bridge (in particular as a way to improve water quality through better flow), their main interest was to see it remain as a low level pedestrian and cycle link. This is part of the broader interest in providing more connectivity within the Bays Precinct and through the Bays Precinct to surrounding suburbs.

The possibility of raising the bridge (like the Tower Bridge in London) to maintain pedestrian, cyclist and maritime uses was identified as a way to adaptively re-use the bridge and meet a broader range of users. Further information is sought as to whether the Glebe Island bridge could accommodate the light rail.

Participants had questions about the decision making process for the future of the bridge including the information that would be needed in order to make a decision and who would be making the decision.

2.9.2 Blackwattle Bay

Participant’s main interest in relation to Blackwattle Bay is in connecting Pyrmont and the Fish Markets to the Blackwattle Bay Foreshore.

They see opportunities to move industry elsewhere and improve community uses in Blackwattle Bay.

2.9.3 Glebe Island and White Bay

A range of opportunities were identified by participants for the future of Glebe Island and White Bay including developing land for commercial and residential purposes.

Participants had questions around the amount of land needed for port activities with the perception that port activity doesn’t need to occupy all of the land given it is such a large area. Ideas were put forward to centralize industry onto Glebe Island and remove it from Blackwattle Bay.

As an alternative, maintaining deep water berthing for industry and marine uses for large water vessels contrasted with some participant’s desire to remove industry and embrace the area as a
residential/recreational area. Moving Australian Navy operations from Garden Island to White Bay or Glebe Island was also suggested.

2.9.4 The White Bay Power Station

*Adaptive reuse of the White Bay Power Station is a popular idea supported by participants*

They are ready to see more concrete plans move forward on the site (there is a perceived inaction on the site currently). Participants seek some clarification about the heritage listing of the Power Station, in particular whether the whole Power Station or just parts of it are listed.

2.9.5 Rozelle Railyards

*The Rozelle Railyards is considered to have a large amount of potential in relation to meeting community needs for improved pedestrian and cycle links, potential extension of light rail services and provision of open space.*

The community understands that the site has been designated by the Department of Transport for transport uses however there is some concern that this could mean future road provision rather than public transport.

2.9.6 The Sydney Fish Market

*The Sydney Fish Market is seen as an important tourist destination that is highly valued by participants who see it as central to Sydney Harbour’s identity.*

Participants feel that the Sydney Fish Market is in need of significant modernisation and improvement and are generally supportive of the City of Sydney’s suggestion to transplant the former exhibition hall infrastructure at Darling Harbour to the Fish Market site to improve its infrastructure.

Any suggestion of relocating the Sydney Fish Market is considered to be a potential threat to its viability. Participants want it to remain in its current location due to good accessibility, proximity to city roads and its waterfront location.

3 Next Steps

This set of consultation forums concludes Round One of consultation on the Bays Precinct strategic framework. Rounds Two and Three are scheduled to take place throughout June 2012.

Whilst the focus of Round One was to provide information to the participants, feedback received during the workshops highlighted the need for more time to discuss issues and provide structured input to the process.

Round 2 will focus on obtaining more detailed information from participants through interactive activities designed to seek input and feedback on key issues and themes that emerged from Round One.

These are scheduled for:

- Saturday, 2 June 2–5pm in Balmain (Sydney Secondary College, Terry Street)
- Monday, 4 June, 6–9pm in Glebe (St Scholastica’s College, Avenue Road)
- Wednesday, 6 June, 6–9pm in Balmain (Sydney Secondary College, Terry Street)
A Round Two Workshop Report will also be prepared and published within a week of the final Round Two Workshop. These Workshop Reports will help inform the Report to the Minister due on July 30.