



Sydney Business Chamber

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Sydney Business Chamber's submission to the Greater Sydney Commission Review of the Planning Framework for the Western Harbour Precinct including the Pyrmont Peninsula

The Greater Sydney Region Plan identifies the Western Harbour Precinct and Pyrmont Peninsula as an emerging innovation corridor - a gateway to global Sydney CBD. How appropriate and effective is the current planning framework in achieving this vision?

The current planning framework for the Western Harbour and Pyrmont Peninsula precinct was originally developed under the 1980's Better Cities Programme and while it has been successful in stimulating growth and revitalisation over the past three decades, there is a definite need to update the planning framework to allow this area to realise its potential as the new face of modern, global Sydney.

To bring the current planning framework up to date and into alignment with the enormous growth and transformation of the seven kilometres of waterfront from Barangaroo to Darling Harbour and the Pyrmont Peninsula, requires a new set of planning controls. These controls need to address the strategic context of the Western Harbour precinct to enable the necessary flexibility and adaptability over the long term to meet the changing community and business needs.

Creating an innovation corridor requires taking a place-based approach that integrates community needs including suitable transport connectivity, appropriate commercial and residential development, quality public spaces along with entertainment and cultural opportunities – all in keeping with modern expectations and the environment.

Sydney is a rapidly growing knowledge economy and Pyrmont's transformation from a semi-industrial, medium density residential suburb nestled on a working harbour front, into the next frontier of the contiguous harbourside ribbon of innovation from Barangaroo, requires a well-researched and comprehensive strategic plan.

Fostering innovation is key to achieving sustainable knowledge based jobs and the success of innovation corridors across the world depend on planning frameworks that enable a clustering of industry and allied employment and a diversity of residential opportunities. To create an ecosystem of collaboration, continuous learning and employment requires accessible quality, active amenity, a high level of integrated multi-modal mobility and connectivity.

For Pyrmont to join the innovation corridor it will require facilities including a metro rail stop on the peninsular. In order to attract the significant private sector investment necessary to build such facilities to deliver the public benefit opportunities to airspace is required to make major projects like this commercially viable. The planning framework needs to enable this investment and public contribution through consideration of offsets for height and floor space.

The Pyrmont planning framework also needs to recognise the need for co-location and enhanced access and mobility measures including the Pyrmont metro station, electronic and automated vehicles, ride share and growing demand for micro-transit.

How appropriate and effective is the current planning framework for the Western Harbour Precinct and Pyrmont Peninsula in delivering quality places for people to live, work and visit?

The Pyrmont Peninsula is geographically the logical extension of the CBD, Barangaroo and Darling Harbour development. However the same issues with the out of date planning framework in restricting the creation of an innovation corridor, apply to delivering appropriate places for living, working and visiting the Pyrmont Peninsula.

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To secure the necessary investment from the private sector to build the residential, commercial and tourist-attracting dining and entertainment facilities, requires certainty in planning guidelines that will allow for an appropriate return on investment.

Just as Barangaroo was once the missing piece in the tourism, cultural and employment ribbon running from the Opera House to Darling Harbour, so now is Pyrmont the missing link in continuing this ribbon right around to the Fish Market development at Blackwattle Bay.

The success of Barangaroo is already evident, alone it has created over 25,000 jobs. The new International Convention Centre, the Sofitel development and other projects around Darling Harbour and Cockle Bay have seen this area now attracting more than 25 million visitors a year.

This has helped make the Western Harbour Precinct NSW's second largest economy, accommodating nearly a third of all overnight stays in Sydney. Currently Darling Harbour supports the overnight stays equivalent to that of a small NSW town every night. Combined with the estimated growth in Sydney's population of another 1.3 million people by 2030, means hotel and residential accommodation needs to grow rapidly and accordingly. An increase in Pyrmont's density through updating planning guidelines would align with the GSC's stated need for 725,000 new homes over the next 20 years.

Updating the planning framework will attract local and international investment that will facilitate much needed growth on the Peninsula which will inevitably provide substantial public benefits. Land values have soared around the whole Western Harbour precinct in recent decades, but planning guidelines haven't kept pace. Much of the Pyrmont Peninsula is still strata titled residential and in order to raise population density to meet the growing needs of Sydney, height restrictions will need to change accordingly.

The Sydney Business Chamber believes the current planning principles have been effective in delivering strong economic and beneficial social outcomes around Darling Harbour, even with the Star a virtual stand-alone feature on the Pyrmont Peninsula. The strategic intent and objectives of current planning controls are sound to continue fostering the precinct as a quality residential, tourist and entertainment destination, but it is certainly in need of a planning update to allow Darling Harbour's success story to continue right around the waterfront to Blackwattle Bay.

The principles behind the controls need not be changed but much more needs to be done to current controls over building heights that have seen their use-by dates, to achieve the next phase of growth and development on the Peninsula. What's needed is a set of bold but achievable goals and outcomes for this exciting addition to the city of opportunity we live in.

The SBC believes that what's required is not a prescriptive approach, rather a spatial plan developed through a holistic look at the area and the opportunity sites that abound. This will enable the creation of conditions to allow the public benefits to flow from private and government investment. The area is currently dominated by smaller sites like the Star – a lone example of what can be achieved - what's needed now is a broader and more comprehensive plan for the whole Pyrmont precinct.

We recommend that a site by site economic feasibility study of the Pyrmont Peninsula be conducted to clearly identify and assess the opportunities for these sites and what planning control changes are required to facilitate such development. The new framework needs to have consideration of the private sector investment needs to ensure delivery of these opportunities.

It is also essential to support the rapid growth of the city that the planning framework needs to address residential density and affordable housing for key workers. The development of residential opportunities is an important consideration in providing affordable housing opportunities for those key workers who support the tourism and entertainment precinct, and other community service roles.

These housing options need to be close to the new employment opportunities that will mushroom around the waterfront. This will be in keeping with the GSC's goal of creating 30 minute cities through improved intermodal transport including by water, rail, pedestrian and cycling facilities. It will also allow for a more environmentally conscious plan for the area, reducing its carbon footprint through facilitating walkability, rideability and proximity to public transport or directly to the workplace.

Is there anything else you would like to highlight?

This submission is in support of growing our city of opportunity in line with the Sydney Business Chamber's mission of working to enhance Sydney as a competitive, global city.

A division of the NSW Business Chamber, Sydney Business Chamber together with our counterpart in Western Sydney, represents over 145 leading corporations. We identify, develop and promote public policy issues that drive the economic growth and sustainability of our great city.

Our members are multinationals, 'iconic' brands, and government agencies representing a broad cross-section of the Sydney economy. From retail, infrastructure, property, aviation, and education to tourism, banking, sport, and the arts. Our members are based within the CBD and the Greater Sydney Basin, they are often the first to feel the impacts of local changes.

Sydney Business Chamber is a leading advocate for our members and looks forward to working with the Greater Sydney Commission to progress the much needed review of planning frameworks in both the Western Harbour Precinct and Pyrmont Peninsula and improve the long term outcomes for both of these critically important continued growth areas of the city.

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Executive Director

Sydney Business Chamber