The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) is the peak body representing professionals involved in planning Australian cities, towns and regions. The Institute has around 4,500 members nationally and around 1,300 members in New South Wales. PIA NSW plays key roles in promoting and supporting the planning profession within NSW and advocating key planning and public policy issues. This submission has been prepared on behalf of PIA NSW by members of the Institute.

The Planning Institute of Australia (NSW Division) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Bays Precinct Report on Outcomes - Stage 1 Consultation Process. Comments have been provided by members of the Institute and these are set out below.

Comment on Process

The Institute notes that the Stage 1 Consultation Process Report went on public exhibition prior to the change of Government in March 2011. While the statements of planning principles and conclusions of this report are modest, the Institute would welcome a clear understanding of the current Government position on the development of this key Sydney precinct before the planning process proceeds. In particular, as much of the land is in public ownership, it is crucial that Government endorsement of the planning principles be made public before further planning is undertaken.

The Institute has also reviewed the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority’s (SHFA) website and noted that the ‘Future of the Bays Precinct’ report, prepared by the Bays Precinct Community Reference Group, is listed alongside the Stage 1 Consultation Process report. However, it is considered by the Institute that the purpose of this Community Reference Group’s report is poorly explained on the SHFA website and that a clear statement of the role of the report in further developing a strategic plan for this precinct is necessary.
Comment on Planning Principles

General Comments

It is encouraging to note that the planning principles (pages 2 and 3 of report) reflect much of the detail contained within the Institute’s 2009 submission and other submissions made by interested groups. Whilst it is noted that these principles are very broad they could represent a firm foundation for future decision making.

The Institute notes that the planning and development of this precinct will take place over a long time frame, perhaps more than 25 years. It is therefore particularly important that these planning principles gain wide endorsement as soon as possible in the planning process as they will guide the future detailed decision making.

Specific Comments

While the Institute endorses the 10 broad planning principles, it believes that there are 3 key principles, in particular, that should form the core of any future planning of the Precinct.

1. The Foreshore. The principle of prioritising land uses that need a waterfront location and deep water berthing is key to the successful utilization of this land. The value of Sydney waterfront land is such that residential and commercial uses can dominate unless specific action is taken to protect these last remaining public sites for land uses that require waterfront proximity.

2. Traffic, Transport and Access. The proposal to create an access plan that will provide connection to the broader region through a variety of transport modes is critical. The redevelopment options for the Bays Precinct must be factored into any sub-regional transport and infrastructure planning that the current Government intends to undertake.

3. Public Interest. The principle of retaining land in public ownership and therefore long term control is important. It should be noted that the Bays Precinct, along with Barangaroo, are the last remaining significant Sydney harbour waterfront holdings in Government ownership.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the Institute would like to submit the following comments:

- The Institute would like to continue to be involved in the consultation process for the planning of the Bays Precinct.
- The waterfront land should be retained for waterfront uses only.
- The Government should retain the ownership of the Bays Precinct land to maintain opportunities for future public use. Large parcels of land should not be allocated to developers, except through long term lease arrangements. This will ensure that options for future public use of the waterfront land are retained.
- The new Government may need to review existing plans and policies for the Precinct, including decisions made regarding the location of the Overseas Passenger Terminal.