BAYS PRECINCT, SYDNEY
Consultation on Long-Term Land Uses.

Submission from Planning Institute of Australia

About PIA
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.

1. Introduction

The Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA) is consulting with the community to seek views on long term land uses for the Bays Precinct, especially Glebe Island, White Bay and White Bay Power Station. The Planning Institute of Australia, NSW Division (PIA NSW) is pleased to provide comments in response to an invitation to comment from SHFA by letter dated 7 July 2009; and in response to the detailed presentation on plans for the future of the Bays Precinct provided by SHFA representatives to members from PIA NSW, the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) and the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) at “Tusculum” on 22 October 2009.

Scope of Comments
This submission refers to the whole of the Bays Precinct as defined in the Background Paper; including Glebe Island, White Bay, Rozelle and Blackwattle Bays. The submission has been prepared based on comments provided by members of PIA NSW.
2. The Planning Process.

PIA NSW is concerned to ensure that decisions on future land use and development for the Bays Precinct are based on sound and comprehensive planning processes, which should include at least the following:

- Development of options and analysis of those options against appropriate criteria. The full analysis of options should be presented to the community at a future consultation stage; rather than presenting a single preferred strategy and proceeding with that to “Project Application” stage; as has recently been the practice for major Government projects such as CBD Metro and West Metro.

- A values assessment process to determine, based on community agreement, what existing land use and development should be retained and what could be redeveloped or replaced. Work should not proceed to design stage without this assessment.

- A range of background studies, such as:
  - Physical site analysis of opportunities and constraints;
  - Study of interaction between neighbouring areas / precincts and the Bays Precinct;
  - Transport and traffic studies to identify capacity and most suitable transport and access options.
  - Assessment of market demand for specific land uses and developments, given the proximity of the Bays Precinct to Sydney CBD. For example, the potential need and potential locations for additional office space as Sydney grows as a global city and how this supply and demand relates in a sub regional context; the optimum residential density and housing type to maximise the value of the area.
  - Social impact analysis and assessment of the impact of potentially significant land use changes on surrounding neighbourhoods / communities.

3. The Consultation Process.

From the presentation made by SHFA to PIA NSW, AIA and AILA, and documentation released to facilitate consultation, it is understood that SHFA is at a preliminary stage in planning for the Bays Precinct. It is understood that the current stage of consultation is designed to gather ideas and information from the community and industry to assist in establishing draft planning principles for the Precinct; and that the draft planning principles will be exhibited for public comment. The draft planning principles will then be finalised and used to guide all future planning including masterplanning for the Precinct. PIA NSW supports this approach for preliminary community and industry engagement. The suggested Key Principles for Future Land Use and Development provided in section 4 may assist in developing the draft planning principles.
PIA NSW notes the various mediums that SHFA is using for community consultation including web based tools, establishment of a Community Reference Group, public meetings and availability of hard copy brochures. This demonstrates a very comprehensive approach to community consultation. However, while internet consultation is a useful tool, the emphasis on using this as the main method of interaction with the community has the potential to exclude many who do not have access to the internet or prefer face to face dialogue. It is important that web based communication and consultation consistently runs parallel with traditional forms of public communications so that all interested parties have an equal opportunity to participate in the consultation and planning processes.

PIA NSW notes that while the consultation process is proceeding and masterplanning for the Bays Precinct is yet to be undertaken, substantial planning and discussions on the future of government owned sites in the Precinct are progressing, decisions are being made on individual projects and developments and construction of new projects is proceeding. Incrementally, those developments have the potential to have a significant impact on future land use and development in the Precinct and could affect opportunities for redevelopment of the Precinct generally. Recent examples include:

- Approval for redevelopment of the Superyacht Facility in Rozelle Bay; and
- Proposals for redevelopment of the southern side of Blackwattle Bay as a major maritime precinct.

PIA NSW recognises that all projects and development cannot be frozen within the Bays Precinct pending the outcome of the consultation phases and preparation of a masterplan for the Precinct. However, the consultation and planning processes must be transparent and co-ordinated so that the community is participating with current information. For example, the Bays Precinct website could include advice on current projects and development approvals in the Precinct with links to relevant websites such as the Maritime NSW website and the Sydney Metro website to allow interested community members to monitor and track projects. Also, as sites within the Precinct are either –
  - committed to a specific land use or development through project or development approval; or
  - become redundant, for example at the end of leases, adjustments to land use and development opportunities within the Precinct must be communicated to the community so that participation, such as suggestions for future land uses for specific sites, is based on current information. Again, the Bays Precinct website could include public notices of project decisions and development approvals for land within the Precinct.

4. Suggested Key Principles for Future Land Use and Development

PIA suggests that the following key principles be applied to guide the future land use and development of the Bays Precinct:
1. Priority should be given to land uses and developments that are:
   a. dependant on water frontage or proximity to water frontage and for which alternatives / options for location are limited; and
   b. uses that require proximity to the CBD to contribute to and sustain Sydney’s role as a global city.

2. Decisions on
   a. the final design for the CBD Metro; and
   b. the future location of the cruise ship terminal

need to be made before detailed planning for the Bays Precinct can begin. The scale of both developments will have a major influence on the Precinct and will affect opportunities and constraints for future development of the Precinct as a whole.

3. The maritime and industrial history and heritage of the area should be preserved where appropriate and suitably interpreted as the area represents one of the last working harbour areas close to the CBD and areas of early settlement in Sydney. For example, the fate of the White Bay Power Station – its retention and adaptive reuse need to be identified early in the process as this will also provide a significant set of opportunities and possible constraints to development.

4. It is important to ensure that the scale and form of future development respects the maritime amenity. Waterfront environments are rare and in high demand so existing water views and access must be protected; as well as maximising opportunities for water views and access in new development.

5. It is important to understand the unique qualities and character of the Bays Precinct area and to preserve that character. The height and scale of the White Bay Power Station (a “fixed” and “given” feature in the Precinct as a heritage item of State significance); and the form of new development in Ultimo and Pyrmont will influence and guide the parameters for future design.

6. Decisions on future development should focus on use and development that minimises impact on private transport and traffic networks in the area. Land uses that reduce vehicular dependence, have the capacity to support public transport, do not generate major road traffic and / or have the capacity to access and use the water (e.g. commuter ferries, ships) for the movement of goods and people should be preferred.

7. Although it is recognised that many existing and anticipated likely future land uses will require exclusive and / or secure water frontage for operational needs (e.g. superyacht marina, fuel terminal), opportunities to provide quality open space and public access to and along the foreshore must be maximised.

8. Increased residential densities must be accompanied by the early or concurrent delivery of all necessary infrastructure to support that community including public open space and recreational facilities and community facilities.
5. General Planning Issues and Comments.

5.1 State Owned Waterfront Land

Analysis of waterfront sites on Sydney Harbour over the past decade highlights the steady loss of working harbour sites to residential and other uses. Much of this is to be expected as industrial land becomes redundant and private land owners seek to profit from a waterfront location. However, it is the role of Government to plan for the future and ensure that some valuable sites are retained for long term community benefit and not sacrificed for short term financial gain.

The Bays Precinct and Barangaroo are the last remaining substantial State Government land holdings on Sydney Harbour. Barangaroo is committed to commercial, residential and open space uses with minimal active use of the waterfront. This leaves the Bays Precinct as the only area on Sydney Harbour available for those land uses for which water access is essential. Furthermore, the road access along with the rail and port interface of Glebe Island and White Bay makes these sites strategically important.

As a general principle, land uses proposed for these sites should fulfil one of the following categories:

- those that currently require direct water access e.g. refuelling, cruise ship / ferry passenger terminal(s)
- those that may emerge in the future and the State Government will want to encourage their location in Sydney Harbour e.g. marine sales, boat building, marinas, ferry and passenger use and activities, tourism activities.
- those uses that can co-exist with maritime/waterfront land uses and conform to long term Metropolitan planning principles; e.g. related commercial tourism and possibly limited residential.

Long term use of the waterfront of the Bays Precinct should favour land uses that will actively utilise the waterfront and meet wider community needs.

5.2 Metropolitan Land Use and Transport

5.2.1 Sydney as a “Global City”.

The Sydney CBD will continue to grow and planning must aim to maintain its status and reputation as a global city. One of the planning challenges will be determining the spatial direction of future CBD growth and assessing any potential influence of future CBD growth on linked and nearby areas such as the Bays Precinct. The proximity of Bays Precinct to the CBD presents opportunities to contribute to the growth of “global Sydney”. In this context, future land use and development at the Bays Precinct could include large scale land uses that benefit from close links with a “global CBD”. Such uses could include a new larger scale convention centre with capacity to handle regular international events. A waterfront site, such as Glebe Island, would contribute to the international quality and attractiveness of the venue and
broaden access options. High quality tourist accommodation could be developed in conjunction with such a centre to create a “convention hub”.

5.2.2 Employment.
Employment opportunities in the inner west are declining: from 1987 to 2006 over 250 hectares of employment land in this area was rezoned to another use and only 33 hectares was added. This in turn means workers potentially travel greater distances to work; and also potentially impact on the Government’s ability to achieve its “Action for Air” target to contain per capita growth in vehicle kilometres travelled by 2011 and halt it by 2021.

The Metropolitan Strategy 1 and the Inner West Subregion – Draft Subregional Strategy 2 (Table 6) identifies White Bay and Glebe Island as Category 2 land, i.e. “Land with potential to allow for a wider range of employment”. This category allows for a wider range of employment uses or a more intensive scale of employment activity than currently permitted under an existing industrial zone. The Subregional Strategy states “Due to the extent of rezoning and continued demand for Employment Lands in the Inner West, all Employment Land precincts are currently considered to be of strategic importance and should be retained for employment uses” 3.

5.2.3 Transport, access and connectivity.
The majority of the sites which make up the Bays Precinct create a barrier to the Harbour from surrounding areas. Major roads, bridges and underpasses further contribute to the creation of poorly connected, low amenity precincts with limited safe access to public transport. Local streets appear highly constrained and are unlikely to have spare capacity to accommodate higher intensity redevelopment. Long term future development will need to provide an integrated transport strategy with a network of pedestrian and cycling connections and linkages, high quality access to public transport and sufficient vehicular access which does not aggravate existing constrained capacity. From an urban design perspective, feeding the historic Balmain street grid down to the shoreline needs to be carefully considered as a means of improving permeability.

PIA NSW supports the future development of a metro network to serve high density areas of Sydney in principle. However, PIA is concerned that the CBD and West Metros have been developed in isolation from proper strategic and integrated transport and land use planning that should have preceded any work on a route or station identification. It is also noted that neither the CBD nor West Metro lines were planned as part of the Metropolitan Strategy. PIA NSW has recommended that all planning and construction work on the CBD and West Metros should be postponed until an “Integrated Land Use and Transport Plan” for Sydney is approved 4. In the context of the Bays Precinct, any plans / decision to proceed with the CBD Metro must be made

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1 “City of Cities: A Plan for Sydney’s Future – Metropolitan Strategy” Department of Planning 2005
2 “Inner West Sub Region – Draft Sub Regional Strategy” Department of Planning 2008
3 “Inner West Sub-Region – Draft Sub Regional Strategy - Employment and Economy” (p.31) Department of Planning 2008
4 “PIA NSW Submission Sydney Metro Network Stage 1 (CBD Metro) Environmental Assessment” October 2009
in the context of an integrated land use and transport strategy for the Inner West subregion that can serve as the broader framework for detailed masterplanning for the Precinct.

The operation of the Glebe Island / White Bay Port has faced regular opposition from Balmain residents. Unfortunately, earlier decisions to permit residential development in close proximity to White Bay have aggravated that opposition. The two major land uses currently proposed for White Bay, the approved refuelling facility and possibly the permanent location for the cruise ship passenger terminal, will need to be designed to be visually and aurally separated from residential areas. Future land use decisions will require close attention to the need for separation of potentially incompatible uses.

5.3 Heritage and Culture.

The Bays Precinct includes some of the oldest areas in Sydney and past uses and remaining built fabric have social and cultural significance. Long term future development will need to respond sensitively to the local social, built and landscape character of the sites and the surrounding areas.

Much of the Harbour foreshore in the vicinity of the Bays Precinct has been redeveloped over recent years which has significantly changed the character of nearby precincts. Barangaroo is set to be changed entirely from a dockyard to a large scale CBD environment with some residential uses at the northern interface with the proposed parkland. PIA NSW acknowledges that Sydney Harbour’s role as a “working harbour” has changed and that many activities have been relocated to Port Botany. In spite of this, the remaining heritage fabric and scale of the Bays Precinct presents an opportunity for redevelopment that maintains the character, history and heritage of the area as an inner city working harbour environment.

White Bay Power Station is a prominent landmark within the Precinct and listed in the State Heritage Register. It needs to remain as a major feature in the Precinct. It is understood that the Power Station is suitable for adaptive reuse. Given its significance and public interest it should be used for a purpose that allows public access rather than exclusive access to a private interest. Examples include a cultural facility (similar to the Tate Modern in London or The Tate’s Bankside Power Station in Newcastle on Tyne) or a convention centre.

The Grain Silos are listed in Sydney Ports Section 170 Heritage Register and Glebe Island Bridge is listed in the RTA’s Section 170 Heritage Register. Opportunities to retain the grain silos for adaptive reuse when the existing leases expire should be explored. The feasibility of regular operation of the Glebe Island Bridge as an element in the access plans should be investigated to enhance this unique engineering feature.
5.4 Character.

Much of the development in the Bays Precinct is single use activities on large parcels of land in single ownerships. To be successful for the long term, future development will need to introduce a finer grain of precincts and character areas linked by public domain areas of streets and open space. A plan which establishes small blocks with different ownerships would be more adaptable. A strong mix of land uses that included maritime, commercial, civic and community and residential uses would create an animated but well balanced place.

Redevelopment of the Bays Precinct has the potential to have a significant impact on views from Sydney’s greatest natural asset, Sydney Harbour. The potential impacts on views from the water and from sites across the water will need to be considered and responded to with great care and attention to detail.

The transition from large scale industrial development to a subdivision with a finer grain will need to retain the character and heritage of the precinct and maximise views to and from the water.

5.5 Safety and surveillance.

Much of the existing development in The Bays Precinct, including Glebe Island, White Bay port activities and the Fish Markets, creates a poor interface with surrounding streets with limited surveillance and a poor quality built environment. Any future development needs to contribute to the creation of safe streets in surrounding areas and a high quality public domain. It will also need to provide a network of safe, easy access routes for pedestrians and cyclists to and around the Harbour edge.

5.6 Foreshore access.

Generous pedestrian and cycle paths should be a feature of any redevelopment of the Bays Precinct. While it is acknowledged that this may not always be possible for operational and safety reasons (i.e. boats or goods being transferred), there is an opportunity to ensure that the publicly owned foreshore land is used to highlight design excellence in foreshore public space.

6. Specific Comments

6.1 Glebe Island and White Bay

Glebe Island presents a big opportunity for future maritime land use as it is adjacent to deep water. However, transport and access issues will need to be resolved to maximise the opportunities available.
6.1.1 “Baileys Marine” Refuelling Facility, White Bay.
PIA NSW supports the refuelling facility proposed by “Baileys Marine” that has recently been approved. This operation will provide best practice essential services and replace the current ad hoc and potentially dangerous procedures currently used. An extensive search by Government agencies for suitable sites highlighted the fact that Glebe Island/White Bay is critical for these essential services.

6.1.2 Overseas Passenger Terminal.
PIA NSW understands that the NSW Government intends that a cruise ship terminal will be located in the Bays Precinct but that a decision has not yet been made to establish a permanent cruise ship terminal at White Bay. It is understood that two berths are required.

Prior to a decision on the permanent relocation of the cruise ship terminal from Barangaroo to the Bays Precinct, PIA NSW considers there are significant issues that need to be resolved; in particular, transport and access. Further, it is understood that the cruise ship industry has raised concerns regarding passenger amenities, transport access and options, providing facilities (particularly vehicle access) and distance from the city. The justification for relocation of the facilities from Barangaroo, based on security and other issues, appears slight given that many of the cruise centres in other countries (e.g. Vancouver) are located downtown. A passenger terminal gives life and a connection to the water; characteristics that are lacking in much of the design for Barangaroo. The concerns of the cruise ship industry and of the local Balmain residents will need to be adequately addressed if it is decided to permanently locate the cruise ship passenger terminal at White Bay.

6.1.3 Existing leases.
Non-containerised bulk goods (grain, cement and sugar) currently off-loaded at the silos at Glebe Island, are committed to leases until 2020. The areas reserved for bulk storage uses may then be available for long term land use change. The alternative land uses may be any compatible use such as commercial development or alternatively an emerging maritime use may be suitable.

6.1.4 Navigation.
The waters of White Bay and Glebe Island are narrow and offer only minimal manoeuvrability. Technical advice to PIA NSW is that these waters are only safely navigated by professional crew. Therefore, any consideration of land uses should also review any associated on-water traffic to avoid conflict.

6.1.5 Land base for Harbour Islands.
The Government has undertaken several studies to identify a land base for the storage and transport of goods, building materials, trucks, staff etc to the Harbour Islands. The NPWS has recently announced a study of the Sydney Harbour National Park and the Sydney Harbour Trust is proceeding with significant developments at its sites, particularly Cockatoo Island. A launch
ramp with roll-on and roll-off capacity is an essential Government service and Glebe Island / White Bay is a logical place for such a facility.

### 6.2 Rozelle Bay

#### 6.2.1 Marine Related Land Uses.

It is understood that Rozelle is heavily committed to maritime and commercial uses including waterfront contractors and Maritime NSW Head Office; and that current plans are to maintain this role. In July 2009 a proposal to redevelop the existing Superyacht marina in Rozelle Bay was accepted.

The low rise building that serves as the NSW Maritime Head Office appears to be an underutilization of the site. Most importantly, the newly opened boat repair facility, Sydney Slipways, is an example of new marine related business that needed a waterfront location. This state of the art facility will replace several operators who conduct practices that are environmentally unsound at various locations on Sydney Harbour. Sydney Slipways represent the type of facility that should be encouraged to invest in Sydney.

### 6.3 Blackwattle Bay

#### 6.3.1 Blackwattle Bay Master Plan.

The recent announcement of the long term lease of this site for charter boats and a commercial/entertainment building adjacent to the Fish Market has generated significant public interest and serves to highlight how Sydney residents want an active say in the future of these prominent waterfront sites. It is understood a proposal to redevelop the southern side of Blackwattle Bay immediately west of the Sydney Fish Markets into a major maritime precinct was recently accepted. It is understood that the precinct will include maritime related office and retail space and berths for charter vessels.

PIA NSW supports the continuing long term use of this area for working harbour uses such as charter vessels.

#### 6.3.2 Relocation of Concrete Batching Plants.

Proposals to relocate concrete batching plants from 2 locations at Blackwattle Bay should be facilitated by Government. White Bay provides an ideal alternative location with ready access to the inner city markets for concrete and the opportunity to continue the supply of aggregate by ship. Hymix state that each delivery by ship (up to 3 times per week) is the equivalent of 100 trucks.
6.3.3 Sydney Fish Markets.
It is understood that various plans for rejuvenation of the Sydney Fish Markets have proven expensive and unworkable. The Markets are not dependant on a Harbour based fishing fleet and as such the need for the Markets to be located at the subject waterfront site could be reviewed as part of the redevelopment of the Bays Precinct. If the Markets are to be retained at the current location a realistic rejuvenation of this major facility and tourist attraction should be a priority for Government.

6.3.4 Bank Street Master Plan.
The approved Plan allows for a mix of commercial development on privately owned sites and open space and passive boating facility on publicly owned land. The land zoned public recreation is a key site owned by Government and potentially available as a launch site for passive boating i.e. dragon boats, kayaks and rowers. PIA NSW urges the Government to develop plans for this prime site.

6.3.5 Foreshore Promenade.
Gradual redevelopment of Blackwattle Bay will add to the foreshore walk, ultimately enabling the public to walk along the southern shore all the way from Bi-centennial Park at Glebe to the Opera House. Adequate cycleways need to be incorporated to allow for bicycling transport for CBD commuters into the future.

7. Conclusion
The redevelopment of the Bays Precinct represents an exciting opportunity for the continued revitalization, change and upgrading of areas surrounding Sydney CBD and the Harbour. PIA NSW appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to assist SHFA in developing planning principles to guide masterplanning for the Precinct.

PIA NSW
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