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1 Introduction

1.1 Preliminary

This submission regarding Cultural Heritage Management Issues has been prepared on behalf of the Millers Point, Dawes Point and The Rocks Action Group on the NSW Ports Growth Plan. It responds to the planned closure of Sydney Harbour shipping freight facilities, with particular reference to Darling Harbour Wharves 3 to 8. It expands on the issues raised in the preliminary submission on heritage management issues of 18 January 2004 to the Standing Committee on State Development.

This report should be read in conjunction with the submission prepared by Michael Harrison, John Kass and Alan Davidson, which reviews the information in the NSW Ports Growth Plan and proposes a planning process for deciding the future of Darling Harbour Wharves 3 to 8.

This report supports that submission in its call for a full and independent public enquiry for the process. It is not appropriate, in our submission, for matters of such importance including the potential impacts on a major and recently recognised heritage precinct, to be dealt with without rigorous public scrutiny.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this report is as follows:

- To provide a submission to the Standing Committee on State Development.
- To review the likely heritage impact of the NSW Ports Growth Plan with regard to the heritage issues of Millers Point, the visual imagery of the Sydney CBD and Sydney Harbour generally, with particular reference to Darling Harbour Wharves 3 to 8.

1.3 NSW Ports Growth Plan

The New South Wales Government is currently preparing a Ports Growth Plan. This is intended to provide a framework for the future growth and development of port capacity in New South Wales. The Port Growth Plan states that Sydney Harbour will remain a working harbour through the retention of commercial shipping for:

- materials to support the construction industry
- cruise shipping
- long term oil imports
- maritime construction, maintenance and repairs, together with the proposal that car import capabilities remain in Sydney Harbour until c.2012.

Under the Ports Growth Plan containers, general cargo and car stevedoring from Darling Harbour will be progressively relocated to Port Kembla and Newcastle port facilities. The Plan identifies that the Minister of Infrastructure Planning and Natural Resources will develop a master plan to create an unbroken run of public access to the foreshore of Sydney Harbour between Woolloomooloo and Anzac Bridge including public access to the water edge on the subject site and to preserve Millers Point for a future "iconic" development.

An implied outcome of the Ports Plan is that the large open space that presently characterises Darling Harbour Wharves 3 to 8 will be heavily redeveloped with residential or commercial uses, in conjunction with some cruise shipping berths on part of the waterfrontage. The development over recent years of the King Street Wharf precinct provides a model that some would see as entirely appropriate for the future of the remaining Darling Harbour wharves.
1.4 Authorship

This submission has been prepared by Graham Brooks, Director of Graham Brooks and Associates Pty Ltd, Heritage Consultants.

Graham Brooks and Associates prepared the background research and nomination for the recent listing of the Millers and Dawes Point Village Precinct on the NSW State Heritage Register.

1.5 Location

The State heritage registered Millers Point and Dawes Point Village Precinct is bounded on the north by the existing Walsh Bay State Heritage Registered listed precinct, on the far-north by the waters of Sydney Harbour in the vicinity of Ives Steps on Dawes Point, on the north-west by the state-heritage listed Sydney Harbour Bridge, on the north-east by the Bradfield Highway bridge approaches, on the south by existing high-rise apartments, on the west by the concrete-surfaced Darling Harbour wharf aprons, and on the north-west by the cliff-edges of Old Millers Point.

The Millers Point Precinct is both defined and fringed by the shipping freight facilities, and simultaneously is bounded by and interacts with shipping activities.
2 Critical Heritage Issues

2.1 Recent Heritage Listing of Millers Point

The *NSW Heritage Act* has precedence over all other sections of the NSW Planning System, indicating the importance placed on the responsible management of the State's heritage resources by the NSW Government.

Listing on the NSW Heritage Register means that the entire precinct of Millers Point is protected under the *NSW Heritage Act*. The protection now covers the place as an integrated cultural landscape, an upgrading of the previous situation where the majority of the buildings within the precinct were individually listed and protected.

Millers Point and Dawes Point Village Precinct was listed on the NSW Heritage Register in November 2003. It was the first listing of an area on the Register, and as such it marks a new direction in the recognition, conservation and management of the State's cultural heritage.

The listing of the precinct had the strong support of the Minister Assisting the Minister for Infrastructure Planning and Natural Resources and was endorsed by the NSW Heritage Council.

One of the critical heritage characteristics of the Millers Point and Dawes Point precinct was its traditional and long standing interconnectedness with the surrounding wharves in Darling Harbour and Walsh Bay. The SHR listing for the precinct is closely aligned with the adjoining State Heritage Register listing for the wharves and shore sheds of Walsh Bay, reinforcing the close functional and social links between those two areas. The Millers Point SHR precinct is also closely aligned with the adjoining Darling Harbour wharves for the same reason.

With the NSW government having only recently recognised the heritage significance of Millers Point and Dawes Point and their integral associations with the adjacent wharves, it is essential that the Standing Committee on State Development take the likely heritage impact on the precinct into account in its consideration of a future for the Darling Harbour wharves. The future direction for the wharves will have a major impact on the significance of the adjoining precinct.

In our submission it is absolutely incongruous that the NSW Government should consider removal of shipping activities and facilities so shortly after its formal recognition of this cultural heritage. Any such removal will have a major negative impact on the cultural heritage significance of the recently SHR listed Millers Point precinct.

*We believe that the primary issue to be taken into account by the Inquiry is the fundamental importance that maritime activities and maritime facilities have to the cultural heritage significance of Millers Point.*
2.2 Heritage Significance of Millers Point

The Statement of Significance contained within the NSW State Heritage Register Listing stresses the integral nature of the historic maritime activities to the cultural heritage significance of Millers Point.

*Millers Point Precinct is a landscape of both State and National significance, comprising a range of built structures and socio-cultural elements that have shaped the development of the precinct and continue to define it in its modern context. It is simultaneously a residential and maritime precinct with an active, sustained community; this combination of elements has been ongoing throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and both residential and maritime components can still be clearly identified in the present day.*

The Millers Point environment encompasses lands held in private and public ownership, and significant public domain land. The Precinct is composed of a variety of structures and architectural styles, together with aboriginal and historic archaeological potential. It retains remnants of the earliest above-ground archaeological remains of buildings, associated with Fort Phillip (1806-7), with extant structures that date from the early part of the nineteenth century, and exemplify the key historical themes of this area. Nineteenth and twentieth century buildings are juxtaposed with wharf structures, warehouses, bond stores and merchant and gentry housing demonstrative of mercantilist economies, shifting trade interests and residential needs. The pattern of ownership is indicative of government policies from the beginning of the twentieth century, with resumption and redevelopment phases that have left most of the precinct in the hands of government control and only a small proportion in private ownership. Combined, these diverse elements comprise excellent groups of houses and quality examples of nineteenth and turn of the century ‘village’ composition, with complementary hotels, corner stores, churches, schools and houses. Equally, Millers Point Precinct holds significance in its own right as being a ‘whole’ place and landscape, not merely for containing a collection of significant items.

Overall, the precinct demonstrates the development pattern of the streetscapes and the role and evolution of the socially cohesive and self-sufficient commercial/maritime and residential community, incorporating the technologies and trends brought about by the pressures of nineteenth century city expansion and evolving shipping/maritime technologies. In summary, Millers Point has the capacity to both illuminate and provide further insight into a better understanding of the evolution of Australian culture, through an appreciation of its present composition and visual qualities.

2.3 Strategic Importance of Sydney Harbour and its Waterfront

The role of the waterfront is a fundamental element in the existence of Sydney, and its safe harbour and potential as a deep water port served as a reason for its very establishment. English foreign policy in the late eighteenth century identified the area as a geo-political benefit. Since its earliest days, day-to-day and commercial activities carried out in the city of Sydney have included maritime industrial and shipping operations. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the maritime industrial operations have evolved in conjunction with the growth of the city and have played an integral role in the prosperity and indeed cultural growth of the colony and later state. Equally, the defensive and political role of Sydney hinged on the waterfront environment, as evidenced by events of the Crimean War and World War Two.

The role of the waterfront operations have both supported the city’s expansion, whilst remaining an independent entity in its own right, retaining a distinctive character and industry-specific activities that are directly associated with the wharves. The Darling Harbour wharves retain an echo of the nineteenth century mercantilist era, with warehouses and Bond Stores linked with the merchants of Sydney, and the passenger terminals continuing the historic associations with Australian immigration that has been so thoroughly identified in key periods of Australia’s history and development as a nation.
While the wharves are a distinct historic element, they have been married to the geography and amenity. Millers Point’s raison d’etre was, and is, the maritime industry. Millers Point and the waterfront was physically isolated from the city and co-existed as a unique village environment within a larger urban context. The waterfront contained activities relating purely to commercial and industrial maritime practices, and immigration policies. In Millers Point was found the residential, retail and social outlets that catered to the needs of sailors, wharf labourers and other tradesmen associated with the waterfront. The city existed at a step removed from this village. Millers Point existed in a symbiotic relationship with the waterfront, with each supporting the other, and could not have retained their isolated existence and particular character without the other. This interrelationship was established by the early nineteenth century and can be identified throughout the history of the city to the present day, with the residents of Millers Point still containing a high representative element of the maritime industries. Indeed, the notion of Millers Point as a ‘company town’, owned by the government and utilized as a key service and resource for the maritime workers and traders, endures, as does the strong sense of loyalty and socio-cultural identification with the waterfront.

As such, the continuation of shipping freight activities and facilities are a vital component to the heritage significance and identity of Sydney Harbour as a whole.

2.4 Historic Association of Public Ownership

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the wharf infrastructure, together with most of the suburb of Millers Point, has been publicly owned and administered by the Government. Individual titles were resumed during the plague epidemic, and the waterfront and adjoining neighbourhood remodelled to complement each other as well as address issues of public health and safety.

Public ownership endures. While much of the remainder of the inner city has been redeveloped for private sale – commercial warehouses upgraded and subdivided for residential inner city living and dining, and retail outlets carved from historic structures created for the older trading practices of the city – Millers Point and the northern Darling Harbour wharves have remained firmly in public ownership, providing a direct and living link with a significant period of our social and working history. The open and industrial nature of the waterfront, with its maritime-specific practices, has an integral and special relationship with this publicly held space.

By contrast other critically important waterfront areas in Sydney, including Walsh Bay, Woolloomooloo Wharf and Bay, and King Street Wharf have effectively been “privatised” by the introduction of new, non port related uses directly adjacent to the water’s edge. Such an intrusion into the publicly owned waterfront creates major disadvantages to the long term flexibility of use to which these waterfront resources can be put. New uses in close association with the wharves build potential conflicts in expectations and life style demands. In the mid 1980s, the then Maritime Services Board refused permission for the residential conversion of the Munn Street Bond Store on Millers Point as they were concerned about potential complaints from a future residents group living in such close proximity to a major port operation. Such wisdom should not be lost on the current Inquiry.

Sydney needs to retain public ownership of its water’s edge and the ability to respond to future operational requirements for these edges, if Sydney is to retain its long term vitality and capacity to develop.
View across to Darling Harbour and the CBD, showing the distinct change between the city landscape and the wharf environs.

View showing the evolution of the cityscape behind the historically significant maritime and industrial structures that have direct association with the earliest activities of European settlement.
2.5 The Physical Massing of the City

Any planning for the future of the Darling Harbour wharves and of Millers Point must take into account the overall massing of the northern end of the city. This is a massing that is critical to the clarity and identity of the City. Sadly, it is a clarity that has been seriously degraded by the recent redevelopment of the King Street Wharf precinct and by the current development of the former Gas Works site by Lend Lease.

The wharves along Darling Harbour, the visual scale and drama of Hickson Road as it cuts a swathe around the edge of Miller's Point, and the rising topography crowned by the Observatory are an important characteristic of the maritime identity of Sydney as a port city. The rich texture of wharves and warehouses, of cliffs and high walls capped by small scale terraced housing present a major contrast with the high rise edge of modern buildings along Kent Street, north of the Western Distributor.

The cultural landscape of the City depends to a large degree on its topography and historical development, concentrating the massing of buildings from particular eras into well defined precincts and creating clearly defined edges and sharply focused relationships.

It is the drama and clarity of the composition that gives Sydney its strength and character in this vital north western precinct.

The modelling of this precinct is defined by:

- The water's edge, Darling Harbour and Walsh Bay Wharves and Maritime Industry, complemented by the nearby multi storey brick and stone warehouses that define much of the character of Hickson Road.

- The sandstone plinth, that defines the change in the nature of this section of the city at the turn of the 20th century. The cut along Hickson Road from Walsh Bay to Darling Harbour, including the sandstone plinth at the base of Jenkins Street, that defines and expresses the nature of large scale waterfront industrial activity in the 19th century. The strength of the plinth is reinforced by the similar cutting at the base of Government House for the tramway depot at Fort Macquarie, now a vital backdrop to the Sydney Opera House.

- The peninsula of Millers Point and Dawes Point, rising to the Observatory and the National Trust Centre. The topography is enlivened by the added complexity of the interaction with the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Fort Street Terraces and the general scale and urban texture of the traditional housing and community buildings that provided the working community to support the maritime industrial activities below. Again this massing is complemented by the Government House gardens forming a similar backdrop to the Sydney Opera House.

- The high rise buildings that define the modern City of Sydney, with its variety of architectural expression but strong edge conditions and dramatic massing, in clear contrast to the lower scale of Millers Point and the waterfront industrial land of Darling Harbour. The high rise city is generally confined by the Western Distributor and the Cahill Expressway. The row of high rise buildings along Kent Street north are an isolated extension of this general massing that is only matched by the buildings along East Circular Quay.

Sadly, since the attached photos were taken in 2000, the King Street Wharf precinct, particularly the most northern office building, and the so called Lend Lease development on the former Gas Works site, have both been permitted to break this massing and clarity of the City composition. The major impacts of these developments provide a potent demonstration of the damage that will be done to the city if a major, bulky development is allowed to proceed on the northern Darling Harbour wharves.
1994 View of the Western Edge of the City to Darling Harbour
The Eastern Edge of the City defined by Macquarie Street
3 Historical Background

3.1 Early Settlement

The entire north western sector of the City has seen extraordinary change in the two centuries of European development, as it has played a critical role in the historical growth of the City.

With the original focus on Sydney Cove, the western side of the Millers Point ridge was viewed as almost inaccessible and development was slow. Only in isolated cases were there roads that traversed the steep topography down to the water’s edge.

Jenkins Street and Gas Lane were formed as early as the 1820s, William Jenkins being an early land holder. Jenkins had purchased his land from John Macarthur, one of those who benefited from land grants in the vicinity.

The location of Millers Point, with its relationship to the waterfront, was ideally suited for shipping purposes, and merchants tapped in to its potential by erecting private jetties, wharves and storage for goods. The village of Millers Point became a definitive one in the early 1830s, as maritime and other related enterprises began to radiate outwards from Sydney Cove, bringing with it residential and commercial facilities. Access to Millers Point was gained through a set of rough-cut steps leading through from the Rocks. Those who chose to live in the area comprised both the successful wharf-owners and employees, labourers and artisans.

3.2 Consolidation of waterfront industries

The village quickly became an integral part in coastal and international trade and shipping, shipbuilding and similar related activities. The incorporation of such commercial and mercantilist elements was both indicative of, and contributory to the public perception and nature of Millers Point, with a roll-on effect throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Growing colonial interest in whaling and maritime enterprises fostered local prosperity during the 1830s and 1840s. From this period Millers Point became irrevocably associated with maritime industries and activities, with merchants, sailors and craftsmen putting a distinctive stamp on the area. This close association with shipping and related patterns of activity and industry was derived from the labourers’ need to be at hand upon arrival of vessels. Valuable goods such as wool had to be loaded and unloaded at a rapid rate of turnover, with labourers required to be on call and, as such, in the nearby vicinity to respond to erratic shipping arrivals and departures. An important outcome of this trade activity was the generation of a community that was overwhelmingly mobile, maintaining relatively loose family networks and containing a high transient population.

By the 1840s the Gas Works had begun to dominate the shoreline of Darling Harbour, to the south of Millers Point. To the north the shoreline remained relatively undeveloped, with only isolated structures around the actual Point and the larger numbers in Walsh Bay. Further south there were many wharves, with access provided from Margaret, Erskine and King Streets. By the mid-1850s the Gas Company site had been extended out into Darling Harbour and there was extensive landfill to its immediate south. The land above the Gas Company site remained as housing, which faced both Kent and Jenkins Street, with this development indicative of the wider prosperity associated with the waterfront industries.

A maritime boom coincided with the acceleration of the pace of the Millers Point community in the 1850s, which sought to accommodate the frenzy generated by the discovery of gold at Bathurst and the consequent flood of immigrants into New South Wales. This resulted with an increase in large-scale exports, particularly wool, to diverse international markets.

By the mid-1860s a number of finger wharves had been constructed on the southern face of Millers Point with a series of long shore wharves around the western and northern edges of the Point. South of the enlarged Gas Company complex, Darling Harbour was being
progressively transformed with land fill and many new wharves to service the growing city. The mercantilist face of Millers Point also changed, with the construction and extension of larger jetties and warehouses for imported goods as well as staples such as wool, coal and flour. Gradually this period of upgrading saw the small scale industries and structures superseded by the encroaching larger-scale warehouses, responding to the demand created by larger vessels.

Detail of Woolcott and Clarke’s Map of the City of Sydney, 1854

Birds-eye View, Sydney, 1879, Gibbs, Shallard and Coy, printed in the Illustrated Sydney News 2 October 1879: Detail showing the wharves and maritime precinct framing Millers Point
3.3 Redevelopment of the Waterfront

The Great Maritime Strike of 1890 and its effect on the waterfront industries left locals destitute or at best living on reduced incomes, with shipping declining in both frequency and quantity of goods. On the larger scale, international trade slumped dramatically, and the former economic prosperity that typified the wharves and surrounding district began to stagnate. This, together with the expansion of the city as a whole during the late nineteenth century, made government intervention both inevitable and imperative in relation to services and amenities ranging from roads to sewerage. Re-planning and centralisation of key areas such as the waterfront was vital for the continuing provision of essential infrastructure. Government interest in controlling the wharves and its transport network was outmanoeuvred in the nineteenth century by merchants and private companies that maintained ownership and exploited the facilities for high profits without sufficient re-investment in the jetties and wharves. As a result, portions of the local environment became degraded and began to pose a risk to public health and safety.

Detail of the Water Board's 'Map of the City of Sydney 1888', showing wharf structures linking Darling Harbour and Millers Point
The outbreak of bubonic plague in the first years of the twentieth century (1900-1909) was the generator of major change throughout both the wharves and Millers Point, with the largest and most comprehensive maritime infrastructure programme ever seen in the City. The plague crisis afforded the government ample justification for taking control of the Sydney waterfront and nearby areas. Although alerted to the presence of plague in other Australian ports, ship and wharf-owners opted to minimize the risk to the industry and their profits by disposing of dead rats found on the wharves into the harbour. Recommendations for rat-proofing of ships were ignored, and the lethargic response of both City Council and the Department of Health failed to alleviate the situation. Millers Point, due to its close association with the maritime industry, was identified as an area of high risk. Local and state agencies repeatedly came into conflict during a programme of quarantining, cleansing and disinfecting at-risk areas. Wharf activities were effectively suspended, with many labourers and shipping employees detained in quarantine zones. Wholesale resumption of large portions of the foreshore and Millers Point was heavily criticised, with detractors citing the plague as a convenient excuse to allow the government to “seiz[e] a political opportunity.” Private ownership of the foreshore areas and wharves in the nineteenth century had effectively prevented government intervention in shipping interests; resumption enabled the redevelopment and modernization of shipping facilities.

The Sydney Harbour Trust, established in October 1900, was intended to modernise the commercial waterfront, and held responsibility for administration of wharf facilities as well as control of housing in resumed areas. In the space of only a few decades the Sydney Harbour Trust completely rebuilt the waterfront, from Walsh Bay, into Darling Harbour and around to Pyrmont. The construction of Hickson Road was an integral component of this development. For the first time the wharves along the entire precinct were linked by a continuous low level roadway, responding to new forms of transport and materials handling technologies. Many of the wharves were also linked at the upper level, with a series of bridges spanning the width of Hickson Road, providing direct access to the upper wharf sheds. With this development of Hickson Road, a series of new multi storey warehouses and pubs were erected along its length. The Grafton Bond and other stores date from this period. Radical redevelopment included work on Dalgety’s wharf, and the creation of the Walsh Bay finger wharves between Dawes and Millers Point. In essence, Millers Point became a ‘company town’ that catered to the needs of the maritime and waterfront industries.

Hickson Road therefore was one of the most important infrastructure works in Sydney’s history, providing a continuous transportation link around Darling Harbour and replacing the myriad of small narrow connecting roads that led from the sandstone ridge to the water. The sandstone plinth that now defines the edge of Millers Point is a direct result of this infrastructure project. It reinforces the nature of Sydney as a maritime city.

3.4 Depression and political activism

The close of World War One was accompanied by a rise in both imports and exports, now serviced at the redeveloped shipping facilities intended to allow Sydney to compete with other international ports. This economic recovery, however, did not reach the pre-war level of trade, and in the late 1920s the total value and volume of goods handled by the port diminished, followed in 1930 by the collapse of the wheat industry and the onset of serious economic depression. The effect of such events on the waterfront precinct of Millers Point was significant and deeply felt, in that few labourers were needed to handle the little cargo still landing: casual and unskilled labourers were redundant, and scarcity of waterfront employment endured until trade improved sufficiently in 1936.

Additional problems were caused by the increased size of more modern vessels, which necessitated deeper excavation of the waterfront to allow shipping access to facilities. Their larger size meant that fewer vessels were needed for the transportation of goods, and contributed to the irregularity of wharf employment.

Political division, strikes and union disputes periodically aggravated the tensions already present in the shipping industry. The changing economic and political environment was
reflected in the Sydney Harbour Trust’s reinvention as the Maritime Services Board (MSB) in 1936, and the completion of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932 effectively ensured the physical isolation of the maritime and wharf precincts relative to Millers Point from the central business district.

Gradual improvement in waterfront and shipping employment conditions during World War Two prompted a rise in social conditions, and regular working hours and entitlements resulted in more conventional working patterns throughout the post-war period. Improved communication and transport technology enabled labourers to live outside Millers Point and commute between work and home – such a dramatic lifestyle change also had a temporary impact on the waterfront’s cultural cohesion.

The major collection of early 20th century finger wharves and their associated shore sheds along Hickson Road, with the elevated access road bridge to High Street, was completely demolished in the 1960s to make way for the construction of the single unified wharf apron for container cargo handling.

Additional changes were made to wharf structures in 1964, including the reconstruction of Dalgety’s wharf. Demolition of rows of houses and the cutting away of the cliff face on the western side of Millers Point was carried out to benefit the maritime industry, notably on the western side of Merriman Street and the majority of housing in Munn Street. The new Merriman Street landscape, now minus the early nineteenth century merchant shipping mansions, became the site of the Harbour Control Tower in 1974, as well as container shipping wharves. Sporadic redevelopment schemes were carried out throughout Millers Point during the 1970s and 1980s, with intermittent construction of high-rise buildings and the re-use of nineteenth century buildings for commercial purposes. The nearby Walsh Bay wharves were also redeveloped, taking on a range of new functions; however, by the mid-1970s, only limited amounts of cargo was being processed at the wharves.

### 3.5 Protection and public support of the waterfront

The last two decades of the twentieth century was noted as a period of determination by groups such as the Millers Point Resident Action Group. Various community and interest groups banded together to protect the historic areas of the inner city such as The Rocks, Millers Point and the waterfront. Political fluctuations hampered the process of protecting the Millers Point precinct, but in 1988 the New South Wales Heritage Council acknowledged the Millers Point Conservation Area as of state and national significance. In mid-1989 the Central Sydney Heritage Inventory identified Millers Point as a heritage precinct. In 1999, the Millers Point Conservation Area, was placed on the State Heritage Register. Other listings included the Observatory and the Garrison Church Group, and a separate SHR listing protecting Walsh Bay wharves and its related structures. Both individual and group listings of buildings and structures relating to Millers Point have also been identified by the Register of the National Estate, including the Walsh Bay Wharves and the Rocks Conservation Area. Most recently, the Millers Point and Dawes Point Village Precinct was placed on the State Heritage Register as an urban townscape of historical and cultural significance with demonstrated associations some of the earliest maritime and industrial activities of the city of Sydney.

Recent trends in the Sydney inner city has increasingly come to be viewed as artificial and as deleterious to the overall cultural values of the community. Support for the listing and protection of the Millers Point Village is one point of focus where the government and community alike have succeeded in preserving important heritage elements for the future. The tendency to whitewash and glamorize warehouses, and convert industrial buildings into residential apartments has been pervasive throughout the inner city and has effectively scrubbed out much of the gritty historical reality of the working life of Sydney.
The community impetus to preserve significant components can be readily identified as a real force of opinion,

We regard the sanitising push in Sydney with some doubt. On land it has already meant cleaning up the Cross, cleansing every speck of industrial grunge, filling every grubby warehouse and mossy cleft with polished floorboards, lifestyle canapés and Miele fridges.

And we are wary, quite properly, of the same happening to the harbour. Cleaning up is one thing but a concerted napalming of history and culture is another.

….Quite as much cultural artifact as natural one, our harbour was made by nature, made-over by culture. Working culture, at that…. [Sydneysiders] reshaped shorelines, carved cliffs, concreted mangroves and erected finger wharves, all the while with daily offerings of offal, raw sewage, noxious chemicals and animal carcasses…. That was the real working harbour…. This puts it onto us all to resist the sanitized, plasticized version and keep it real. Real working reality. (Sydney Morning Herald, Feb-Mar 2004)
4 Risks associated with the NSW Ports Growth Plan

An implied outcome of the Ports Plan is that the large open space that presently characterises Darling Harbour Wharves 3 to 8 will be heavily redeveloped with residential or commercial uses, in conjunction with some cruise shipping berths on part of the waterfrontage.

There are a number of significant risks that must be taken into account by the Inquiry in its determination of the future for the Darling Harbour precinct and its relationship with both the adjacent Millers Point precinct and the physical identity of the city as a whole.

4.1 Loss of Historic Maritime Linkages

- Potential conflicts between maritime and residential uses along the wharves will have the long term potential to severely restrict maritime uses in Darling Harbour. A similar situation has already emerged for the navy in Woolloomooloo Bay.

- The legibility of Darling Harbour Wharves will be diminished if redevelopment is permitted, with the remaining genuine elements of the maritime precinct will be lost.

- Introduction of commercial and/or residential buildings or structures within the wharf environs or along wharf aprons will impose inappropriate uses and activities on an historically significant and industry-specific context.

4.2 Unacceptable on the SHR Listed Precinct

- Cessation of freight shipping activities and operations severs a long historical association of the Millers Point community with the maritime industrial traditions that date from the early period of Australian settlement.

- The open skyline that is currently such an evocative reminder of the historic interrelationship with the maritime activities of Darling Harbour will be degraded.

- Views from the Harbour will be degraded by the intrusion of possible new commercial and residential structures. This will significantly alter the sense of enclosure to the SHR Listed Millers Point Village Precinct, degrading the current clarity of the juxtaposition of new and old buildings with the wharf environs.

- Construction of large scale buildings along the waterfront and on wharf aprons will congest an already heavily populated and geographically limited urban area. This will heavily impact on the social cohesion of Millers Point, one of the values for which it was listed on the NSW State Heritage Register.

4.3 Loss of Public Ownership

- Introduction of leased or privately owned commercial and/or residential buildings or structures within the wharf environs or along wharf aprons will erode the historic policy of public ownership, in place since 1901.
4.4 Breakdown of the Massing and Identity of the CBD

- The strongly defined high rise western edge of the City will be fractured, reducing its important clarity and degrading the whole relationship between the low rise early maritime industrial structures and wharves with the dramatic high rise buildings that form their backdrop.

- Construction of buildings along the waterfront and on wharf aprons will greatly diminish the open skyline view along Darling Harbour that is of historic and aesthetic significance.

- The scale and rich maritime urban texture of the buildings, particularly the Grafton Bond, that line Hickson Road will be degraded.

- The heritage significance of the listed Grafton Bond Store, which depends greatly on its prominence on Hickson Road, will be overwhelmed by the scale and style of the proposed commercial and residential structures.
5 Conclusions

The Inquiry into the NSW Government Ports Plan must take account of the intent and objectives as well as the processes of the NSW Heritage Act, with regard to Millers Point.

Any detrimental impact arising from development on the Darling Harbour wharves upon the state-listed and protected precinct will result in a denial of the State Government’s stated position on the protection and management of its valuable heritage resources. The recently State Heritage Register listed Millers Point and Dawes Point Village Precinct generated resounding support from government and the community, as well as widespread media coverage. It ensures the protection of a unique urban context that has present-day associations and operations dating back to early Australian industrial and domestic activities.

The historical significance of the Wharf environs is directly related to the two key elements of an active long-term maritime resource and public ownership of the land since 1901.

In summary, cultural heritage management issues of importance for the Inquiry are:

- It is contradictory to cease maritime activity in Darling Harbour in the face of acknowledgment that the maritime history and industry is a fundamental component of the Millers Point SHR listing. To do so would break historical, industrial, visual and social linkage with the Millers Point Precinct that has been evolving since 1788.

- The abolition of shipping freight activities and operations in favour of cruise liners destroys an integral part of the broader relationship with the harbour heritage of Sydney.

- The planned additional removal of commercial and freight shipping from Sydney Harbour continues to erode the essential character of Sydney as an internationally strategic port. The further loss of the colour and industrial working character that has been an integral part of the nature of Sydney and its waterways is something that any major public policy making process must take deeply into account.

- The Ports Growth Plan has potential adverse impacts on the significance of the heritage listed historic buildings and historic streetscapes within the wharf environment as well as the adjacent Millers Point Conservation Area and the Millers Point and Dawes Point Village Precinct.

- The Ports Growth Plan may have adverse impacts on the physical massing of the city, an aspect that is fundamental to the identity and legibility of the City.
6 Recommendations

In order to preserve the heritage significance and cultural values of the Millers Point and Darling Harbour Wharf environs, it is imperative that the Inquiry take heed of the following recommendations:

6.1 Protect Historic Maritime Linkages

- Shipping freight facilities and activities may be scaled down to allow growth in areas such as cruise shipping, but must continue as an active remnant of the site’s use and significance, in related maritime and shipping activities.

- Any proposed development does not erode the elements comprising the State Heritage/Sydney Harbour listings and associations, or its historic and operational character.

6.2 Protect the SHR Listed Precinct

- Development should not be permitted on the majority of the wharf apron, but rather set back along the Hickson Road frontage. This will retain a sufficient buffer zone between the active wharves and other uses, to minimize future conflict.

- Any future development along the Hickson Road frontage should be modest in height and should not interfere with the historic view lines.

- No buildings along the entire Hickson Road frontage of the wharf area should be higher than the Grafton Bond Store.

- Public open space and shipping freight facilities and wharf aprons be retained, with open parkland to be established.

6.3 Retain Public Ownership

- Existing open space should be retained in public ownership, as per the historic association with the Sydney Harbour Trust.

6.4 Protect the Massing and Identity of the CBD

- Wharf aprons, wharf frontage and high visual spaces should maintain historic uses, while areas of lesser heritage significance may be adapted for some commercial or residential use providing the relevance to the site’s heritage significance is retained.

- Any proposed development of the site continues to protect the visual and physical composition of the cultural landscape that defines this part of the Central Sydney area.

- The strong contrast relative to the high rise edge of the CBD, formed by the line of buildings that line Kent Street, Circular Quay and Macquarie Street, be maintained rather than eroded, as may eventuate should development along the King Street wharf continue further north.