

INQUIRY INTO BARANGAROO SIGHT LINES

Organisation: Heritage Council of NSW

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The Hon Mark Latham MLC
Chair, Select Committee on Barangaroo sight lines
NSW Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Latham

Submission to the NSW Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry on Barangaroo sight lines

Please accept this submission to the inquiry into the 'Barangaroo sight lines' on behalf of the Heritage Council of NSW.

The Heritage Council of NSW is established under the *Heritage Act 1977* (the Act). It is an independent statutory body that includes members of the community, the public sector, the conservation profession, and a nominee of the National Trust of Australia (NSW). The Heritage Council advises the Minister responsible for administering the Act on heritage matters in NSW. The role of the Heritage Council is to make decisions about the care and protection of heritage places and items that have been identified as being of State significance.

Key recommendation

The Heritage Council supports this inquiry as an important opportunity to highlight the impacts that larger developments may have on historically significant views and sightlines in Sydney.

The Heritage Council strongly recommends that the Barangaroo redevelopment project protects and enhances the key sight lines, view corridors and the landmark qualities of the Sydney Observatory and the Millers Point and Dawes Point Village Precinct.

The Heritage Council further recommends that consideration of the need to protect and enhance heritage sight lines be mandatory for future redevelopment projects in the vicinity of State listed sites of exceptional value.

Discussion

Cities have long sought to preserve historic views as they help shape a place's unique identity. Many heritage items are deliberately designed and strategically located to be seen and appreciated from important public places. This makes sight lines integral to the understanding and appreciation of those heritage items. Other heritage items are significant for their visual relationship with the city's natural features, events, or other heritage items. Any major project that intrudes on these sight lines presents challenges for sustaining the historic significance of the city.

State heritage sites adjoining Barangaroo are intrinsically linked to harbour sight lines

The Barangaroo precinct contains the State heritage listed Warehouses (Dalgety Bond Stores). There are several State listed items of exceptional significance in the vicinity, including Millers Point and Dawes Point Village Precinct and Sydney Observatory, as well as other State and locally listed items.

Observatory Hill was important to Aboriginal people pre-settlement, to the early colonists of Sydney for its key role in time setting and astronomy, and to modern Sydney, which recognises and promotes Observatory Hill and Millers Point as one of the most significant heritage precincts in the City of Sydney.

Sydney Observatory is a fine and rare example of a purpose-built observatory structure and is of exceptional significance for its dominant location in the City of Sydney. The Observatory's siting, with its harbour and city views and vistas framed by mature Moreton Bay fig trees of the surrounding park, make it one of the most pleasant and spectacular locations in Sydney. The views and vistas to Millers Point, sky views from the Observatory telescopes, and views to the Time Ball tower (which has continued to drop its time ball every day for the last 160 years) are equally important.

The State heritage listed Millers Point and Dawes Point Precinct is a rare maritime harbourside precinct with vistas and glimpses of the harbour along its streets and over rooftops. An important aspect of its State significance is the historic and ongoing maritime connections between Millers Point and the waterfront. Its rows of terrace houses, specifically constructed for its dockside workers, laneways, and streets, have retained the ability to demonstrate that way of life through both its physical and visual connection to the harbour.

Concept Plan modifications will detrimentally impact State significant heritage sight lines

The Concept Plan for the whole of Barangaroo, comprising the Headland Park, Central Barangaroo and Barangaroo South, was first approved in 2007 by the then Minister for Planning. Since then, the Concept Plan has been modified several times. The Heritage Council has commented on a number of these modifications and raised concerns about the impacts of the proposed modifications on the important views and sight lines associated with the Millers Point and Dawes Point Village Precinct, Sydney Observatory, and other significant heritage sites and public spaces located in the immediate vicinity.

Most recently, in a letter dated 19 August 2022 (Attachment 1), the Heritage Council commented on the proposed modification (Mod 9) to the approved Central Barangaroo development. The Heritage Council advised the Department of Planning of its strong objections to the proposed increase in building volumes and heights, due to their impact on the heritage values of Millers Point and Observatory Hill, and in particular the sight lines and panoramas to and from these State significant precincts.

The Heritage Council is concerned that the modifications to the approved developments within the Barangaroo precinct propose incremental intrusion into the established vistas of the significant heritage items. The developments such as the Crown Sydney Hotel Resort, have already substantially altered the character and skyline profile of Millers Point and its surrounding area, including long views of Sydney Harbour foreshore from various vantage points. In addition, recently sought modifications to the approved developments in Central Barangaroo will have an unacceptable impact on heritage views from and to the Observatory and its setting from the west and south-west. The proposed modifications may also negatively

impact the panoramic views to the harbour and the Observatory and its setting from key viewing points to the east and north-east.

Heritage Council 'Sight lines and View Corridor' initiative

In an effort to respond to this and other intrusive developments that may negatively impact State significant heritage sight lines and view corridors, the Heritage Council is considering the need to document and provide guidance to help safeguard strategic views in Sydney. The project may involve the identification of significant views and sight lines and the development of high-level guidance containing key principles to help protect and strengthen those views.

Such guidance will draw on the principles adopted in London, where important views are strengthened and protected by the *London Plan* – a spatial development strategy. The London Plan is supported by a supplementary guidance document, the *London View Management Framework* (Attachment 2). This framework provides detailed advice on specific views with the intention of helping preserve London's character and built heritage. It sets out a policy for managing the impact of developments on key panoramas, river prospects, and townscape views.

Yours sincerely

Frank Howarth AM PSM
Chair, Heritage Council of NSW

23 September 2022