

# bays community coalition

## Strategic planning principles for the Bays Precinct

This is a joint submission from a coalition of Bays Precinct community groups. Coalition members represent nine community groups in Leichhardt and City of Sydney LGAs, including:

**Annandale Residents Precinct Committee**

**Balmain Residents Precinct Committee**

**Birchgrove Residents Precinct Committee**

**Leichhardt Residents Precinct Committee**

**Pymont Action Inc.**

**Pymont Community Group**

**Rozelle/Iron Cove Residents Precinct Committee**

**Rozelle/Lilyfield Residents Precinct Committee**

**Rozelle/White Bay Residents Precinct Committee**

### **Contributors**

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## Executive summary

The Bays Community Coalition (BCC) comprises community representatives from the residential areas surrounding the Bays Precinct. Our members have extensive experience, knowledge and expertise in good decision-making for our communities. The Bays Precinct Summit constitutes an excellent basis for innovative and clear thinking about the future of the public harbour foreshores, urban spaces and waterways that comprise the Bays Precinct.

The BCC represents a diverse range of communities which have undergone significant change over the past 20 years. We experience among the highest density living in Sydney and have faced constant 'urban renewal' over this time. Urban renewal, to date, has been unbalanced, delivering major gains for developers but little new community infrastructure. The Bays Precinct does not exist in a vacuum. It lies within a fast-growing, high-density residential area already lacking much-needed public amenity.

Our precinct contains a considerable length of highly valued foreshore on Sydney Harbour, yet much of this is inaccessible. Activating our foreshores for the wider community's recreation and enjoyment should be a key principle for planning in this precinct.

Our heritage is amongst the most important to New South Wales. Restoring and creatively adapting the heritage sites of White Bay Power Station and the Glebe Island Bridge for a multiplicity of uses for the public benefit, and especially community amenity, should be a priority over commercial development.

The Bays Precinct is of unique significance to Sydney, with considerable intrinsic value as public space next to our harbour, which is renowned for its natural beauty, attraction and amenity. While development will occur, it should not define the area.

Summit discussion made it clear that best practice urban renewal requires full collaboration between Government and community at every stage of the planning process. Planning should focus on the provision of public access and amenity, to achieve maximum social and economic benefit from the site. One example in which communities shaped successful outcomes, the High-line in New York, was presented at the Summit.

Well-designed public access to and within the Precinct is mandatory in order to maximise its potential as a major 'drawcard' for the city of Sydney. Public transport options, such as light rail, walkways and cycleways must be central to any development.

The continuation of public ownership is a key priority.

Full transparency and meaningful collaboration is an essential element of the planning process. This will rebuild communities' trust in government, which has been lost in recent years.

Design innovation, sustainability and liveability must be tangible outcomes of the planning process.

The Bays Community Coalition is pleased to be invited to openly collaborate in the planning of the Bays Precinct.

Christina Ritchie and Dr Teena Clerke

**Bays Community Coalition**

The Bays Precinct planning process must engage the following 8 principles.

**1. Public ownership of and access to the waterways and foreshore lands of Sydney Harbour, a unique natural and cultural asset.**

- The 80 hectares of publicly owned foreshore, land and waterways in the Bays Precinct is a unique and outstanding asset with immense natural and cultural value for Sydney, a global city renowned for its natural beauty.
- The site has considerable intrinsic value. Substantial economic benefit can be achieved from enhancement of our public harbour foreshores.
- The Bays Precinct must remain in public ownership for the benefit of the local and wider community of Sydney and New South Wales.
- Precedence is given to the public benefit as a driving overarching principle for the renewal of these publicly owned foreshores and bays on and adjacent to the inner-city suburbs of Sydney Harbour. The Sydney Harbour water and foreshores are a precious natural resource valued by all Australians.
- The highest priority use for the entire Bays Precinct must be for public amenity and enjoyment.
- Continuous and extensive public access to the foreshores of the Bays Precinct is a key priority.
- All planning decisions must recognise and reflect that the Bays Precinct is the interface between the CBD and Sydney's high-density inner-city communities.
- Increased value can be achieved by providing community amenity such as promenades, parks, schools and other social infrastructure.
- A significant proportion of the 80 plus hectares of the Bays Precinct is retained for community use including open and recreational space.

**Summit messages:** invest in access, 'no access, no value' (Joe Berridge); 'parks/space near the water; development further back'.

**2. Provision of amenity for inner-city communities.**

Provision of improved amenity for all current and future residents in and around the Bays Precinct is essential. Amenity includes public transport, sporting fields and open space, access to foreshores and public spaces, local and regional views, schools, childcare, aged care facilities, medical services and libraries.

- Substantial areas of the Sydney Harbour Bays Precinct should support the necessary future amenity and enjoyment of the rapidly expanding inner-city population.
- Government requirement for urban consolidation and increased inner-city population densities must be balanced through use of substantial areas of the Bays Precinct for public amenity.
- The critical lack of sporting fields, playing courts (e.g. tennis and basketball), tracks and fitness should be addressed. There are significant public health benefits in doing so.
- Opportunities for waterfront and water-based recreational activities are to be maximised.
- Current problems, exacerbated by intense development with no accompanying infrastructure and amenity, must be acknowledged and resolved before any further development is considered.

**Summit message:** 'develop parks and public open space first – it is cheap and adds overall value, does not subtract' (Peter Walker).

### 3. Full disclosure, governance, community participation and equity.

- A community-focused integrated planning and governance system and collaboration between government and communities adjacent to the Bays Precinct that will enable full participation at every stage of the development.
- An integrated plan for the Bays Precinct must make available the majority of the area for public access, public recreation and open space, and public amenity. The plan will serve all the people of NSW and attract visitors and business to our city.
- All development proposals should be scrutinised by independent auditors, and full details must be publicly available at all stages of the assessment process. Transparency in the process is essential to rebuild trust lost through recent corrupt and secret practices.
- There should be no commercial benefit at the expense of public and community outcomes.
- Strict development controls should apply to the Sydney Harbour Bays Precinct.
- At all times Urban Growth will ensure there is coordination between the Parramatta Road Revitalisation project and the Bays Precinct to ensure that communities affected by both are able to assess the cumulative effects.

**Summit messages:** ‘involve the community throughout the life of the program’; ‘one third ordinary people’; ‘ordinary people make good plans’; ‘good governance structure is essential to navigate political changes’.

### 4. Transit plan.

- Prioritise and integrate public transport, including extending light rail, ferry services, walking paths and cycleways.
- West Connex should never have been conceived as a link to the CBD, it is wrong for this area and is a drain on public funds.
- Retention and adaptive re-use of tracks at White Bay and Rozelle for light rail.
- The focus of the Bays Precinct Summit should be on public, rather than private, transport options.
- Bicycle exchanges across the precinct and no helmets required on designated paths.

**Summit message:** ‘an integrated public transport strategy for the Bays Precinct is essential for accessibility within and around the area and connectivity to the CBD’.

### 5. Green plan.

Planning must be creative, productive, innovative, knowledge-based, and **it must be green.**

Thus the project should include:

- A White Bay Renewable Energy Precinct that exports renewable power to the grid and renewable heating and cooling to the whole development.
- Activities which increase the risk of pollution and contamination must be avoided. Public health risks to the local community such as those arising from the Cruise Ship Terminal and other ‘dirty’ uses, must be addressed and strictly avoided in any new development.
- Restoration of existing structures or any new structures should manifest design excellence and innovation.
- Significant public views must be preserved and extended where possible.
- Guidelines to redress the results of previous land use which favoured a ‘scorched earth policy’ i.e. removal of green areas, habitats, reshaping of landforms.

## 6. Heritage.

- The Glebe Island Bridge and White Bay Power Station (WBPS) must be sensitively adapted for public use. They must be integrated into a Heritage trail connecting the CBD, Pyrmont Bridge and the historic Balmain peninsula.
- Creative interpretation and depiction of the history of the Bays Precinct should be included in plans for the White Bay Power station site.
- The White Bay Power station should be totally self-sustaining, energy efficient and provide power with the use of renewable energy sources such as solar capture.

**Summit message:** 'experiment with pilot projects that can fail without political damage' (John Campbell); 'meanwhile projects' (Donald Hyslop).

## 7. Urban design and housing.

- Direct connection between the White Bay Power Station and the waterfront must be part of any planned adaptation.
- Housing must be considered a lower order priority within the Bays Precinct. Extensive urban growth is already occurring adjacent to the Bays Precinct.
- Priority is given to the inclusion of social and affordable housing as a significant element of any residential use.
- Creative industries, arts and entertainment should be included in urban renewal.

## 8. Best use, not past use.

Prior use of the land should not define future use. The principle of 'best use' rather than 'past use' should apply.

- The creation of public parks at White Bay Wharf 6 and at the tip of Glebe Island must be included in any future plan.
- Use of these lands for ongoing employment opportunities must be carefully managed in the context of the wider NSW labour market needs. The demographic centre of Sydney lies in the Parramatta area. Employment needs and the greater pool of human resources lie in the western part of the metropolitan area.