



2011 Residents' Association Inc.

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PO Box 1513
Potts Point NSW 1335

29 May 2014

Master Plan Feedback
Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust
Mrs Macquarie's Road
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam

The residents of the 2011 post code have reviewed the Master Plan and would like to submit our feedback.

In summary we object to many of the proposed changes due to the fact that they are profound and risk destroying the very essence of the Domain and the Royal Botanic Gardens. They are public spaces for rest and relaxation; not entertainment precincts. We already have football fields, fun parks, and museums. There is a need to provide and preserve the heritage value of these parks and gardens for individual and group enjoyment without commercialisation and over-development of these sites.

Due to the multiplicity of interventions proposed, I would like to break this submission into two parts:

- Proposed changes to the Domain
- Proposed changes to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Mrs Macquarie's Chair, and environs.

Propose Changes to the Domain

The Sound Shell

The biggest concern and strongest objections from our group of residents is with regard to the proposed Domain Shell; a permanent structure placed in the middle of the Domain – forever marring this open space of green; a park that is used by many people through the week and at weekends. This will deprive people of the full use of this park.

If a permanent Shell is built it will require ongoing maintenance, cleaning, access for service vehicles and increased usage to justify the expenditure.

Increased usage of the Domain will create a massive issue for neighbouring suburbs with regard to noise. It will not only be used for Christmas carols as stated in the master plan, but for any number of concerts. Many residents have lived through New Year's recovery parties held in the Domain where the sound during the day and night carries across to Potts Point and neighbouring suburbs. On a regular basis this would detract from residential amenity of our suburbs. Controlled at a State level, there are no avenues available for residents to have noise levels monitored and reduced if unacceptable.

The Hotel

Does the Domain really need a hotel? We have seen many hotels close down in Kings Cross and Potts Point to become apartment blocks. The positioning of the hotel and access to it will add to the chaos and traffic congestion in the worst designed system of roads that run between the City and Woolloomooloo and which forms part of the Cahill expressway linking southern to northern suburbs.

Given the proposed design of this hotel, it is unclear how it would help Sydney to be viewed in a more positive light by tourists.

Road System

Instead of investing money to upgrade Shakespeare Place near the Library, use the money to tidy up the mess of roads that link North Shore and Woolloomooloo, the entrance to the eastern distributor at Bourke Street, the closed off streets at the back of the Domain. These look unfinished and unsightly. Fixing this would help make Sydney look world class, not third world.

Proposed Changes to the Royal Botanic Gardens and Mrs Macquarie's Chair

There are just so many plans presented for significant changes to these gardens are parkland most of which the residents oppose on the grounds that they threaten the very essence of the gardens and the surrounds. The widening of pathways will substantively reduce what is garden and relegate it to concrete. The reasons for making the change on the grounds of climate change are spurious.

A Ferry Terminal

This risks bringing huge numbers of people into the area, numbers that are unsustainable, and potentially destructive to the gardens and parkland. The Botanic Gardens Trust has allowed the gardens to seriously erode over the years, and high use will only demand more resources to ensure that grasses, shrubs, trees, and buildings are maintained.

More people also mean more garbage, more service vehicles, and more noise.

There are more than 18,000 residents in the 2011 post code. Why not locate the Ferry at Rushcutters Bay – the ferry could also service residents from Paddington and Darling Point.

QE11 Garden Gate

Residents are opposed to design and scale of this building. It absolutely detracts from its surroundings and particularly the Opera House. The reason for positioning it in this area is unclear. Surely there is available space in the buildings that line up along Macquarie Street, at Circular Quay, within the Opera House itself, or some of the buildings that are situated in the gardens. Please reconsider.

The tidal walk viewing platform

This is opposed to on the grounds that it will detract from the natural environment. What is wrong with people walking on the footpath and looking at the rocks?

Residents are also opposed to any platform at the end of Mrs Macquarie's chair. This is a park and it needs to be preserved as such. What happens on New Year's Eve? Do party goers break it due to sheer numbers? Or do they fall off it and injure themselves?

Wider Pathways

Opposed on the grounds that wider paths mean that green space is being reduced to make way for concrete. Sydney City Council did this in Rushcutters Bay Park – it detracts from rather than adds to the park's appeal. The idea is to preserve parkland, not reduce it.

Restore the Ponds

Residents support in principle the restoration of the ponds. They have eroded over the years and are in poor condition. The Café/restaurant, toilets, and area around the shop need to be repaired and given a makeover.

Gateway to the Botanic Gardens

The Botanic Gardens already has multiple gateways. It seems completely unnecessary to create yet another one specifically for cars to pass through. The gateways that exist have been allowed to decline and money would be well spent to repair and improve them. The proposed changes appear to value concrete and manmade structures over trees and grass.

New Science and Education Centre and other buildings

Residents are opposed to adding more buildings within the Royal Botanic Gardens. It is acceptable to renew or upgrade a building that exists for a new purpose, but not to create more structures.

Recommendations:

Residents recommend reducing the number of planned interventions, and focusing on increasing or preserving parks and gardens rather than doing things that reduce their scale or place them at risk. Take action to preserve the very essence of the Domain and the Royal Botanic Gardens, rather than making them entertainment areas. People need to be given an opportunity to use their imagination to enjoy these spaces.

Most world class cities value and preserve their history; Sydney has a history of eradicating its heritage.

Helen Crossing

Convenor

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