

Sydney Morning Herald 12 December 2016

Sydney architecture's already laid Baird

Sincere thanks to Sir David Chipperfield for warning us about the danger posed by turning Sydney's CBD into a monoculture of office towers – but it is already too late. (“Architect warns: Don’t turn Sydney into a monoculture city of money-making towers”, December 10-11).

Premier Mike Baird has already established beyond challenge that money and developer interest, not the community or Clover Moore, control Sydney's future. For planning to play any part in Lend Lease's consideration of the critically important site bounded by George, Pitt, Alfred and Dalley streets, the very notion of a 248-metre-high office tower is an anathema.

The front yard of the city fronting onto Circular Quay, the crucial view corridor to Barnet's cupola on the Lands Department Building tower was expressly inviolable.

No wonder the plans are secret, and the public is to be prevented from seeing yet another heritage outrage by this government. In civilised societies, the premier

British architect Sir David Chipperfield was noteworthy and intriguing. The architect renowned for his cultural contributions such as art galleries, museums etc warns us that global cities risk becoming just “another Doha”, i.e. the province of the wealthy due to rising real estate values.

Would the recent deconstruction of The Rocks residential community followed by the fire sale of their publicly owned rental property exemplify this prediction?

While advocating for social diversity and complexity within city planning is indeed aspirational, its provision is arguably a more difficult task.

I look forward to seeing Sir David's competition entry for the 248-metre high-rise commercial office tower around Circular Quay ... including an innovative low-income residential component.

Cleveland Rose Dee Why

The diversity and complexity Sir David Chipperfield encourages for Sydney are exactly what good urban centres need but his faith in planners to regulate these outcomes may be misplaced.

The modernist approach to controlling the detailed form of cities like Brasilia or Canberra have often led to the opposite of diversity and complexity.

What is needed is a balance between the public realm that planners can help shape and the vitality that comes from the private sector who are interested in a market-like environment of retail and mixed use.

Part of the diversity must be people living in the city centre as well as working and shopping and with the Sydney city centre being on a relatively small peninsula this must be housed in tall buildings that must also define quality public spaces at ground level.

We need both good planners

and good private sector developers to make good cities.

Chris Johnson CEO Urban Taskforce Sydney

If Anne Summers did make the move to Melbourne (“Melbourne beckons”, December 10-11), it's not just gender equality that would make her heart beat faster. As well as the superior coffee and food, she'd get a buzz from a city where architecture matters. The new buildings there have style instead of the drab and uninspiring erections increasingly spoiling our CBD.

And she'd be able to visit an art gallery where new exhibitions aren't just a conventional arrangement of exhibits (*Nudes*, to take just one example) if you're a movie buff, the cinema culture is wonderfully alive and let's not even mention the great range of permanent markets. Start packing, Ms Summers – you won't regret it.

Anne Ring Coogee

Sitting, waiting in traffic hell

Garry Linnell discusses the tedium and misery of lingering “in God's waiting room” before our grand finale (“Who really wants to live for ever?” December 10-11) I, for one, am in serious training to learn how to ensure, just by sitting in Sydney traffic.

Wendy Crew Lane Cove

Avoiding reforms

With energy and climate in the news, it looks like the political focus has shifted from Jobson Grothe to Ella Trisitti-Pryces (“Turnbull's train wreck week from hell”, December 10-11). This is reminiscent of the pivotal role played by Costa Livven in previous governments. Costa and Ella are not popular figures but they can play a useful role when governments want to avoid necessary and sensible reforms.

Allan Young Roseville

Spiro will be missed

It was sad to learn that the