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Naming proposal – “Walsh Bay” proposed New Suburb.

Aim

The aim of this submission is to lend support, on historical, economic, developmental and social grounds, to the creation of a new suburb by the name “Walsh Bay”.

Interventions

Since the end of the Second World War, major infrastructural redevelopments, prompted by social and economic changes in the use of specific areas, have taken place on Sydney Harbour. For example, construction of the Cahill Expressway cut the connection of Sydney’s CBD with the harbour in order to enhance transportation needs, the Opera House was built on the site of the old tramway sheds, and Darling Harbour was constructed over previous railway yards. Even before the war, the dramatic intervention caused by the construction of the Bradfield Highway, accessing the southern end of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, cut across the suburb of Dawes Point, irretrievably changing its character and population pattern.

In recent years, similar governmental interventions have impacted on the character of suburbs like Millers Point and Dawes Point. On 31 May 1999 the *Walsh Bay Development (Special Provisions) Act 1999* effectively severed the wharves, foreshore and associated store structures from Millers Point and Dawes Point for redevelopment purposes. The residential buildings of the two suburbs were not affected. The dilapidated, historical and heritage wharf structures, for many years abandoned and in a state of disrepair since the containerisation of Sydney Harbour (construction of the White Bay Terminal began in 1967, and in 1973 the Glebe Island Container Terminal was opened) were saved by government intervention. Saved were also the physical, historical associations of the two suburbs with Walsh Bay, a place habitually

frequented in past years by Millers Point and Dawes Point residents as a place of employment.

Regrettably, in the 1960s the wharves facing the “Hungry Mile” at Hickson Road were demolished and a large concrete apron was built over the whole area, to accommodate shipping containers. The physical link of the residents of Millers Point with their past place of employment was forever lost. The use of the area was further changed when the site was re-named “Barangaroo” and on 5 October 2007 the NSW Government carved it away from the Millers Point community and gazetted it as a new suburb. The newly created Barangaroo Delivery Authority was put in charge of the massive redevelopment, which will see the end of maritime use and links with the Millers Point community.

To exacerbate the dramatic, structural and demographic changes affecting the Dawes Point and Millers Point communities by these two redevelopments, in 2006 the NSW Department of Housing began the sell-off of its 99-year building leases and public housing in the two suburbs, destined to quickly undergo a rapid process of gentrification.

Naming of suburbs

Dr Lisa Murray, City historian, in her Historical Report dated 7 March 2012, points out that the names Dawes Point and Millers Point “have been in continual use for over 212 and 187 years respectively”, and that “the name Walsh Bay has been in continual use for 93 years”. Despite the fact that their physical association with wharf operations had ceased for more than twenty years, Dawes Point and Millers Point were defined suburbs as late as 16 April 1993 (NSW Government Gazette no. 36).

In 1973-75 local residents of Dawes Point actively and successfully fought against being subsumed within The Rocks neighbourhood. New residents of Walsh Bay object to being subsumed within the adjacent neighbourhoods of Dawes Point and Millers Point due to the changed use of the Walsh Bay precinct, which is no longer “maritime”, no longer in a symbiotic relationship with the two suburbs by factors of employment.

Nowadays, the Walsh Bay precinct is a cultural, entertainment and leisure environment, looking forward to its future opportunities, rather than to its past (anchored in maritime and trade history) without, however, reneging it nor forgetting it. Before its redevelopment in the 1990s and early 2000s, Walsh Bay had no resident population, but by the 2011 Census, there were 487 residents, against the 302 of Dawes Point and the 1,491 of Millers Point. Surely a good reason for recognising their right to be considered a suburb.

Dr Murray gives a negative appraisal of the quest to create a new “Walsh Bay” suburb, on grounds that “the community’s identity and maritime heritage is entailed by the names of Dawes Point and Millers Point. These values would be metaphorically severed by creating a new suburb of Walsh Bay...would undermine the heritage values of this...precinct – diminishing the historical associations, social values and meanings of these place names”. It could be pointed out that the “community” referred to by Dr Murray is that of the inhabitants of the two existing suburbs, not those of the new “community”

represented by people who moved in Walsh Bay after 2002 and whose values are understandably different, although deferential to the long-established maritime history of the precinct. A new suburb, called “Walsh Bay”, would not entail a name change, nor an undermining of its maritime heritage, a diminution of its historical past, nor a “metaphorical severing”. “Metaphor” according to the Oxford Dictionary, means “the application of name or descriptive term to an object to which it is not literally applicable”. Surely, the term “suburb” is applicable to Walsh Bay in virtue of its new population, new use, new cultural environment and new, future possibilities.

Past and current use

Walsh Bay’s long-standing maritime tradition and its close relationship with the nearby settlements of Millers Point and Dawes Point is well documented. For over a century people lived in the settlements and worked in Walsh Bay. Excavations below Bond Store 4 East discovered the remains of an undocumented 1820 cottage, the earliest evidence of residential settlement.

However, other layers of history, revealing the existence of a cultural precinct from the earliest times of white settlement, are present in Walsh Bay. It was near the site of the former Bond Store 4 that the first theatre in Australia, named *The Theatre, Sydney*, was built in 1796. It opened its doors on 16 January 1796 to become Australia’s first regular playhouse. On that date, a cast of convicts played to an audience of convicts the Reverend Edward Young’s *The Revenge*, followed by the short farce entitled *The Hotel*, pillaged from Goldoni’s *Servant of Two Masters*. On 30 July 1796 plays performed at *The Theatre* were *Jane Shore*, *The Wapping Landlady* and *The Miraculous Cure* (see attached leaflet at page 8, advertising the performance, courtesy the National Library of Australia). *The Theatre, Sydney*, flourished. A few years after its opening it was rebuilt and enlarged and it was still active early in 1804. Between that date and 1808 it was closed down because it was a threat to the Governor’s absolute power and the playhouse was levelled to the ground. The current *Sydney Theatre* was named to celebrate its forerunner, which was operating well before any meaningful maritime and trade activity took place in the precinct. In fact, it was only in the mid 1820s that the first wharf was built at Walsh Bay, followed by the wharves of Millers Point (<http://www.barangaroo.com/discover-barangaroo/history.aspx>).

Walsh Bay fell into disrepair in the 1960s, and the future of the precinct was salvaged thanks to an ongoing NSW Government financial investment to create in Walsh Bay a cultural hub rivalling the Opera House. In 1983, on the initiative of Premier Neville Wran, the then Maritime Services Board (MSB) carried out remedial works on Pier 4/5. The pier was partially refurbished for a cost of \$1.6 million to house the Sydney Theatre Company (STC) and the Sydney Dance Company (SDC). In December 1984 the upper level was opened as a home for the STC’s administrative offices, a set construction area, property and wardrobe departments, rehearsal rooms, two theatres accommodating 120 and 309 people and a bar and restaurant. On 8 October 1986 Premier Barrie Unsworth opened the lower level as a home for the SDC. The two companies were allowed tenancy without the security of a long-term lease, that was granted only in 1990, its terms being 20 years renewable at a peppercorn rent of \$100,000 for the STC and \$50,000 for the SDC. On 1 July 1990 the Ministry for the Arts entered into a 85-year lease for Pier 4/5 from

the MSB, thus taking over the long-term responsibility for these premises. In March 1990 the Premier agreed that Pier 4/5 would be maintained as an arts precinct and allocated \$300,000 to enable a divers' survey to provide an assessment of the structural stability of the wharf.

In February 1991 the Arts Council of NSW moved into newly refurbished premises in Pier 4/5, and was later joined by Arts on Tour, the Australian Association of Dance Education and Dance Base. During 1991, a detailed structural engineering study was carried out on the wharf. Refurbishment of the substructure and the superstructure was scheduled for the following ten years, securing maximum stability of the structure for a period of 50 years. During 1991-92, over \$3.6 million was spent on the stabilisation of the substructure, and in 1992-93 a further \$3.468 million to complete stage 2 of the refurbishment. In June 1993, the Sydney Philharmonia was offered new air conditioned accommodation at the pier, which they occupied in December, while 5,000 square metres of storage space at Bond Store 4 were secured from the MSB for the Australian Opera, the National Association of Visual Arts, the STC and SDC. During 1993-94, \$1.1 million was spent on the re-painting of Pier 4/5. Bond Store 3 was earmarked for the establishment of an Aboriginal Cultural Centre. In January 1994 the project was officially launched on site by HRH the Prince of Wales, but was later abandoned in view of the overall refurbishment of the precinct. In its stead, a new building in The Rocks was offered to key Aboriginal arts organisations, but after lengthy negotiations, the offer was turned down. The site would later become the Arts Exchange in Hickson Road, The Rocks,

During 1996-97 the Ministry for the Arts provided accommodation in Pier 4/5 to the Australian Theatre of young People (ATYP), Bangarra Dance Theatre, Niki Nali Sound, Carnivale, Accessible Arts Inc. and Ausdance. The total cost of the works was \$3.1 million. Also, the Ministry was involved in extensive negotiations with the developer of the Walsh Bay precinct to secure new cultural facilities, including a new 850 seat theatre (that was opened in January 2004 by Premier Carr) and the acquisition of Pier 2/3 for arts purposes, refurbished at a cost to government of \$18.2 million. Eventually the construction cost of the *Sydney Theatre* would total \$42 million, including an in-kind contribution by the developers of approximately \$8 million.

To governmental funding must also be added the ongoing contributions made to the Walsh Bay infrastructure by resident arts companies, rather difficult to quantify. Suffice to mention the \$1.5 million raised by the STS to fit-out the interior of the theatre and \$2 million raised by Cate Blanchett, STC's Artistic Director, to install solar panels over Pier 4/5, thus making the venue completely energy self-sufficient.

One eminent example of the enthusiasm generated by the availability of Walsh Bay was the use of its wharves and bond stores by the Biennale of Sydney. The Biennale staged seven of its events in Pier 2/3 (in 1986, 1988, 1998, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012) and two in Bond Stores 3 and 4 (in 1990 and 1993, after Transfield refurbished the Stores at its considerable cost). The jetty at Pier 2, Walsh Bay was also the departure point for ferries bringing patrons to Biennale exhibits at Goat Island (in 1998) and Cockatoo Island (in 2008, 2010 and 2012).

The considerable, multi-million dollar investment by the NSW Government in bringing about the Walsh Bay cultural hub was embraced with enthusiasm by the arts community of NSW. The government initiative was seen as not only providing accommodation to needy flagship arts organisations, but as creating new performance and exhibition venues, new opportunities for revitalising these magnificent industrial archaeology sites.

Other cultural activities held in the precinct over the years included the Italian Film Festival, held in August 1999 on Goat Island, several Festival of Sydney events held each January, the annual (since 1998) large presence of the Sydney's Writers' Week at Piers 2/3 and 4/5, attracting tens of thousands visitors, the VIVID Festival of Light, held in May-June 2013 and the inaugural Walsh Bay Jazz Festival, staged in February 2010.

These events, spanning over the last thirty years, have created a unique, novel environment in Walsh Bay, attracting people who wander about the magnificent industrial archaeology of the early twentieth century timber structures, salvaged just in time by appropriate government intervention, as well as enjoying the new cultural and artistic environment and the budding café and restaurant life. An increasing number of visitors are also attracted by the several sculptures of the Walsh Bay Sculpture Walk, funded by Transfield and made by avant-garde Australian artists, studding the foreshore, the piers and the roads of the precinct.

Opportunities

Although past working links with Dawes Point and Millers Point have been severed over the years by changed stevedoring conditions, disused maritime practices, population shifts and by the gentrification of the Walsh Bay precinct, new opportunities have arisen.

In January 2012 ARUP prepared a report, commissioned by Arts NSW, entitled *Walsh Bay Arts Precinct Vision*, which recommended an enhanced development of the arts in the precinct (see <http://www.arts.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Walsh-Bay-Vision-Report-Final-23-Jan-2012-reduced-size1.pdf>).

Other opportunities under consideration by Arts NSW are the long-term arts use of Pier 2/3 (see <http://www.arts.nsw.gov.au/index.php/creative-spaces/arts-properties/pier-23/>); the use of the water aprons, especially the one between Piers 3 and 4, ideal places for water installations and performances on a barge, like in Venice; and the use of Piers 2, 3 and 4 for the mooring of historical vessels (years ago an attempt was made to have vessels of Sydney's Maritime Museum berthed there).

The redevelopment of Barangaroo will offer another opportunity to link Walsh Bay's arts activities with the new development. In January 2012 the Barangaroo Delivery Authority issued a cultural study, *Arts and Cultural Development at Barangaroo*, with guidelines for the area of 10,000 square metres earmarked for community uses, including galleries, childcare centres, recreation and performance spaces and information and education facilities

(<http://www.barangaroo.com/media/65748/barangaroo%20cultural%20study%20final.pdf>).

In future it will be possible to create, as envisaged in the 1990s by French consulting architect Philippe Robert, a seaside walk from the Opera House at Circular Quay, through Walsh Bay and Barangaroo, to Darling Harbour, as well as a ferry connection between the four localities. This was already attempted during the 1990s but failed, owing to an alleged difficulty in rescheduling ferry timetables.

Past governmental financial and cultural investments, the presence in Walsh Bay of flagship Australian arts organisations, of a cutting-edge drama theatre as well as of other performing venues, the potential to create a cultural tourism destination, attracting overseas interest and visitation, demands the creation of a new Sydney icon, demands the creation of a new suburb, "Walsh Bay". Allowing the Walsh Bay name to remain subsumed in the suburbs of Dawes Point and Millers Point would negate its potential and attraction as a powerful, innovative and charismatic place. It would be as if we would incongruously continue to refer to the Sydney Opera House site as the Bennelong Point Tram Sheds.

The naming of the cultural precinct "Walsh Bay" will not cause any adverse effects on Millers Point and Dawes Point residents. Walsh Bay will continue to share the same postcode as Millers Point and Dawes Point.

Benefits

As recognised by Sydney City Council's Corporate, Finance, Properties and Tenders Committee, in its report dated 22 July 2013 (File no. S078264), "the City recognises that important service provision drivers exist, such as delivery of essential emergency, utility and postal services to residents and the business community, which support the need for Walsh Bay to be established as a distinct suburb. Further, it is also noted that Dawes Point and Millers Point were designated as suburbs as recently as 1993."

Beside the above benefits, the following benefits can also be listed.

- 1) From 1983 to 2013, the NSW Government outlaid over \$76.4 million for infrastructure and capital works in order to create a cultural hub in Walsh Bay. On top of this sum must be added the Commonwealth, State and Local Governments' yearly operating grants given to arts organisations, amounting to tens of millions of dollars over the same period. To them must be added private sector donations to arts organisations and the hefty patronage of arts events by the public. No doubt, in future public, corporate and private support will continue to grow exponentially, adding to past commitments made to bolster Walsh Bay's cultural specificity, especially if the site is given the identifiable appellative of 'suburb'.
- 2) In view of the ongoing public attraction and cultural growth of Walsh Bay and of the adjacent Barangaroo development, properties in the area, including Dawes Point and Millers Point, will be substantially appreciated, affording financial advantage to current residents.

- 3) Cultural growth in Walsh Bay will attract business, finance and visitation, transforming the precinct into a lively place where to be entertained, amused, stimulated, and well fed, transforming the adjacent suburbs of Dawes Point and Millers Point from quiet dormitories relegated at the edge of the central business district into places worth a visit, like The Rocks has become over the years. As the above mentioned Council Report states, “the economic growth and development of the Walsh Bay precinct is intrinsically tied to the naming of the area as a suburb”.
- 4) The already established links with the Opera House will be strengthened. For years, arts companies resident and performing in Walsh Bay have also been performing at the Opera House. Opportunities will be created to extend this collaboration to future arts venues at Barangaroo and to the Darling Harbour complex of venues (Entertainment Centre, Convention Centre, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney Aquarium, Maritime Museum, etc.).
- 5) Walsh Bay could become the springboard to reach Sydney Harbour’s islands (Cockatoo Island, Goat Island, Spectacle Island, Snapper Island), where cultural events could be held on a regular basis and become an important focus for cultural tourism, like the Venetian islands of Murano, Burano and Torcello.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- 1) Sydney City Council adopt the name “Walsh Bay” as a suburb for the area which is outlined in attachment A to the aforesaid Corporate, Finance, Properties and Tenders Committee Report, dated 22 July 2013.
- 2) Authority be delegated to Sydney City Council’s Chief Executive Officer to apply to the Geographical Names Board to create the new suburb of “Walsh Bay”.

24 September 2013

By Permission of His Excellency
FOR THE BENEFIT OF J. BUTLER
AND W. BRYANT.

At the THEATRE, SYDNEY,

On Saturday, July 30, 1796. will be Performed

JANE SHORE.

Hastings	I. Sparrow.
Belmour	R. Evans
Catesby	H. Lavell,
Ratcliffe	L. Jones.
Gloster	W. Chapman
And Shore	H. Green.
Alicia	Mrs. Davis.
And Jane Shore	Mrs. Greville.

After the Play

The Wapping Landlady.

Sailors	Hughes and Evans.
And Mother Doublechalk	W. Fokes.

To which will be added

THE MIRACULOUS CURE.

Front Boxes 3s. 6d. Pit 2s. 6d. Gallery 1s.

Doors to be opened at Half past Five, begin at Six.

Tickets to be had of Mrs Greville, of W. Bryant
and on Saturday at the House adjoining the Theatre.