

Submission
Northbank Enquiry

Recommendation

No construction of buildings should be permitted in the Brisbane River beyond the Riverside Expressway.

Reasons for Rejection of proposal

1. A row of buildings up to 30 stories high would be detrimental to the view of the City from the Southbank, which is an important tourist destination. The buildings are likely to be too tall, plain, uniform and much too obtrusive.
2. It is unacceptable for an inner-city reach of the river to be so much narrowed. The visual narrowing will be much greater given there will be no bank visible, but a sheer wall in the water.
3. The stability of the banks has probably not been appropriately studied, and this must be done. Buildings will have to be on piles to bedrock, a good distance down. This exposes the buildings to damage in the case of a strong lateral movement in the silt, possible in a slip in the banks as occurred on Coronation Drive in the flood of 1974. There is a the risk that due to a lack of understanding of the problem, or a cost blow-out due to the magnitude of the problem, the builder will not brace the piles at the depth necessary, with potentially catastrophic consequences.
4. The flooding potential of the Brisbane River should not be underestimated. The Wivenhoe dam does not flood-proof Brisbane. The highest flood imaginable in the life of these buildings, and their replacements, could collapse the buildings. Risk is unavoidable with existing infrastructure, but to build in a zone of potentially catastrophic failure is no sense.

Alternative for Future Planning.

At Queens Wharf Rd, the overwhelming presence of concrete and bitumen gives it the feel of a dangerous locality. It is also undeniable that the North bank presents a visually unappealing view of the CBD from the Southbank. It is very much in the commercial and recreational interests of Brisbane that this bank of the CBD including to GoMA is brought up to the standards of the Southbank, and the bank from the Gardens to the Story Bridge, consistent with the space available and the existence of the Riverside Expressway.

The city planners and the politicians who supported these other sites are to be highly commended, and it is hoped that this will carry over into the review of the development of Northbank.

Specific Recommendations

1. Accept if necessary that the Northbank development be a call on public funds to compensate for the non-sale of river bank.
2. Reopen the design process to address imaginatively the need to make the area from William St to the river itself beyond the expressway, an historical and recreational precinct. One would suggest that under these circumstances a pedestrian access to the riverfront beyond the expressway would be desirable and not find opposition.

In the unfortunate event that the government has irretrievably committed itself with the successful tenderer for the project, it would be acceptable for the buildings on the Elizabeth St ramps, and the Alice St carpark, to proceed, with an agreed improvement to the historical and recreational amenity of the North bank.

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