

THE NORTH BANK ENQUIRY BY DESIGN SUMMARY & CONSULTATION DOCUMENT. PERSONAL SUBMISSION BY PETER SKINNER

(The tone of this version has been edited a little, with hindsight, for decorum. 27 September 2008)

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

It would seem that after six years, there is at last an opportunity for the Government to step away from the political quagmire that has been created on the north bank of the Brisbane River.

The Government's stated intention to build something here *at no net cost to taxpayers* has always been a Quixotic ambition doomed to failure. The river itself is of very great worth to Queensland taxpayers and citizens. Whether it is assessed as a natural ecology, as a distinctive landmark, as a significant environment for both aboriginal and non-indigenous history, as the contemporary cultural emblem of the City of Brisbane, as the city's major urban open space, as a recreational and green transport facility or as the principal arrival and address point into the city, the value of the river itself has always far exceeded its proposed role as a construction site for speculative towers and the other putative benefits claimed by the peddlers of the various North Bank schemes.

How can anyone be convinced of *no net cost to taxpayers* when the full implications of dramatically narrowing the river here have never been properly assessed or costed. In the 'Enquiry by Design' it became clear that there had been no cumulative evaluation of the flood risks associated with the incursions that have been made into the river since the disastrous flood of 1974 when 12 citizens lost their lives. Since that time the river-course has been narrowed by the incursions of the South Bank Parklands, CityCat stops, Goodwill Bridge, Riverside Expressway, Riverwalks, Tank Street Bridge, Merivale Bridge and Hale Street Bridge. Also since that time, climate science has predicted a general drying of our region, but also an increased likelihood of severe weather events and rising sea levels. None of these factors have been presented as part of the flood assessments provided to the public; instead the acknowledgement of numerous previous incursions into the river has been suggested as a *precedent* for further incursion, when the prudent response would be to seek to eliminate all unnecessary obstacles.

What is the *net cost* of increased flood risk in a time of global warming, and how is it to be calculated? The claimed 3mm flood increase created by the project represents 0.9 square metres of afflux across a 300 metre wide stream. It is unclear how this is to be reconciled with the massive reduction in sectional flow capacity created by an obstacle extending 50 metres into the river resisting flood waters of more than 4 metres height in the defined flood event. Even if there exists a rational explanation for this apparent conundrum, there should be no possible argument for increasing flood risk in Brisbane when the developer's own consultants have argued that it is possible for it to be reduced. At the 'Enquiry by Design' the developer's hydraulic consultants argued that a significant reduction of flood risk was possible by removing the existing North Quay CityCat stop and redesigning it further downstream. This act really would really have provided a *net benefit* to taxpayers, saving millions of dollars in future flood costs. Unfortunately, the developer's team sought to exploit this potential benefit only in so far as it could mitigate the imposed flood risk associated with building 50 metres out into the river, in a proposal which even they acknowledge is worse than the current situation. The decision to increase, rather than decrease flood risks is itself a *net cost to the taxpayer* that no responsible government should allow.

The greater questions in this context are: Why has this government chosen not to accept responsibility for providing safe, secure and attractive facilities on this site for its citizens? Why has nothing been spent for more than ten years to improve and make safe an area that successive premiers and ministers have admitted is an eyesore and a disgrace? At a time when the government will happily invest billions of dollars on freeways, bridges, tunnels and expressways for motorists, why is it unprepared to fund a mere 600 metres of green transport facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and ferry users? And, in the 21st century, how can a Tourism Department justify funding endless fireworks displays and high octane motorsports, yet refuse to invest sustainably, for all time, in the principal tourist arrival point in the city?

There is an apparent cargo cult mentality that expects our state's urban realm to miraculously fall off the back of a passing developer's truck. There is no reason to believe that a group of private equity players in Canada would have the slightest interest in the urban design of a corner of a city on the other side of the globe, nor should they. Understandably, they probably only want to maximise their take.

It is time for the government to admit the folly of this developer-dependent 'North Bank' strategy and to get on to fixing the real problems on this site.

SUMMARY: RESPONSE TO NORTH BANK ENQUIRY BY DESIGN

The following comments are in four parts. First, a critical assessment of the inappropriate conduct of the 'independent' 'Enquiry by Design'; secondly, comments on the published 'North Bank Objectives'; thirdly, comments on the published 'Design Guidelines' and, finally, some personal suggestions of a sensible way forward from here.

Many of these comments have already been expressed in communications to the Deputy Premier and his colleagues; some have been already presented to the North Bank team in DIP; and some have already been presented at the 'Enquiry by Design' or through the press and media. Despite repeated submissions and requests for meetings at any level of government I have yet to receive any correspondence of substance regarding these issues. As this may be the last opportunity for the public to offer meaningful comment on this scheme, I intend to make a detailed submission on this occasion, and to distribute it widely, even though I may risk repeating the substance of some former correspondence and comment.

1. THE 'ENQUIRY BY DESIGN' PROCESS.

It is my view, expressed on the third day of the EbD, that this process was a sham. In my view it was so constrained that it was not a sincere enquiry into real options, and from what I saw the opportunity to actually explore design alternatives was forbidden for most of the process. I saw the exercise as merely a crude attempt to second, and hence muzzle and compromise the designers who had committed their time and best endeavours to the process.

Participants were invited by government to offer their design ideas, and were told on the first day that they should start with a blank sheet of paper. The conduct of the EbD process however, in my view, was a bumble-handed attempt to co-opt Brisbane's leading urban designers to a predetermined outcome in Multiplex's service. The Melbourne-based facilitator distributed seven predetermined options on Wednesday and corralled the participants into 'exploring' these 'scenarios' until Friday morning. These same 'scenarios' are, amazingly, those represented in the published documents as the 'outcome' of an 'independent' 'enquiry'. On the third day, this exercise in consultancy spin then got worse.

On Friday morning, the 'facilitator' announced that the exploration of scenarios had concluded and that collective proposals and recommendations were to be developed. As outcomes from this 'EbD' were clearly going to be portrayed as 'independent' recommendations to government, it was clearly then inappropriate for the developer, its consultants and associates to remain in the room. If the 'EbD' were to recommend extensive private development options to the government, Multiplex stood to win projects worth millions of dollars. If the 'EbD' recommended urban design options with minimal private sector involvement, Multiplex could well stand to lose heavily. While the 'independent' 'EbD' was to be considering its recommendations, the room was heavily stacked with Multiplex personnel and their various consultants. This was not only an apparent conflict of interest, but in my view an actual conflict. The overweening presence in the room of the financial beneficiaries of any design recommendation, inevitably actually compromised and corrupted any subsequent outcome of the process.

The 'facilitator' refused to acknowledge the transparent conflict of interest. The Chair, to his credit, was honest enough to pronounce that there was 'probably' a conflict of interest, but was unwilling to act on it, and so compromised any independent outcome of the exercise. Any subsequent attempt to portray the 'EbD' as independent in any way, or as an enquiry of any real sort, or as an exercise in design explorations by Brisbane's design community was clearly compromised. Frankly, in my view, which was forcibly expressed to the participants, it was all ham-fisted spin.

2. THE DESIGN OBJECTIVES

The document for public comment includes the following stated objectives:

'The government's objectives for the development of North Bank are to deliver the following public benefits at no net cost to Queenslanders:

- focus on the Brisbane River with public spaces provided for events and entertainment*
- better public amenity with an enhanced recreational experience and improved public access*
- complement South Bank by creating a convenient leisure loop connecting the waterfronts of both sides of the river*
- improved public safety through the creation of a mix of uses to activate the area*

- *enhanced connections to the riverfront via pathways, ramps and street extensions*
- *improved and maintained heritage buildings and paths*
- *improved bicycle and pedestrian paths*
- *core public infrastructure.*

These are all great ambitions. I commend the government for pursuing them. Pursue them harder. For example ‘focussing on the Brisbane River’ should never mean focussing on the concrete slab on top of the Brisbane River. ‘Enhanced connection’ means providing for pedestrians, cyclists and ferry users, not filling the space with more than 1000 car-parks to service unwanted speculative towers. ‘Improved and maintained heritage buildings’ should mean- don’t shove a tower building over the Elizabeth Street ramps to block upstream views to the Treasury building and downstream views to Queens Park and the Lands Administration Building.

‘The following facilities have been specified as core public infrastructure:

- *a riverfront promenade*
- *site utilities*
- *road and bikeway enhancements*
- *pedestrian links to, from and through North Bank*
- *access to the site from the intersection of Margaret and William Streets*
- *site landscaping*
- *Riverside Expressway facilities*
- *City Cat terminals*
- *tourist vessel terminals*
- *coach and taxi set down areas*
- *a pontoon for government use.*

These are all terrific and important facilities. Again, note how many of these facilities would be severely adversely affected by the sea of car-parks and maze of service roads that would be required to service the various North Bank options.

The government pontoon is a great idea. If we had one now, perhaps government ministers would go down and see the mess that the current and past governments have made of this area, and the shameful neglect they have presided over for the past ten years.

3. DESIGN GUIDELINES

This is a grab-bag of far too many ideas, seemingly assembled with the intention of complicating, obscuring and stifling informed discussion and debate. In order to focus on the key issues it is necessary to whittle it down

The list contains a mix of many worthy initiatives that are so obvious and so unexceptional that they are tantamount to Motherhood statements, and hence substantially padding in a public comment document:

- ‘A1. Make North Bank the front door to the city centre, a hub for river-based tourism and a vibrant waterfront destination.*
- D1. Provide a vibrant and safe activity node.*
- D2. Provide a new pedestrian plaza, potentially incorporating a new visitor information centre.*
- D5. Provide active retail uses along Queens Wharf Road.*
- D6. Provide active uses on the ground floor of existing heritage buildings and the Neville Bonner building.*
- E1. Create a heritage precinct as a setting for the historic buildings.*
- G1. Ensure the public realm is characterised by coherence in design and high quality materials and finishes.*
- G2. Provide high quality public spaces that are easy to move through and attractive to use.*
- G3. Refurbish Miller Park.*
- G4. Improve pedestrian accessibility and public safety to and within the site.*
- I1. Provide riverfront promenade on the river side of the expressway. (in principle this is could be ok... but why not run the promenade on the land side or under the structure, on landscaped earth where it can be more generous and link to heritage plazas etc.?)*
- I2. Provide a pedestrian link between the new City Centre CityCat terminal & the Queen Street Mall.*
- I3. Widen Queens Wharf Road footpaths.*

I4. Widen cycle and pedestrian paths at busy nodes.

I5. Consider providing a new pedestrian laneway next to the Neville Bonner building.

K1. Observe the requirements of the Department of Main Roads for maintenance clearances around the Riverside Expressway.'

Within these fairly gratuitous blandishments is one genuinely helpful recommendation that will genuinely improve the area:

'B2. Relocate the North Quay City Cat terminal further downstream.'

Other recommendations are so conditional they could be easily be rendered redundant:

'H1. Provide safe, convenient and efficient access for all modes of transport and movement through the main vehicular access to the site.

H2. Formulate a consolidated position in relation to traffic and transport matters.

H3. Consider providing a new laneway to access the site.'

If the consolidated traffic response is to keep all vehicular transport *out* of this important river-front public space, all of these secondary provisions become meaningless.

There are also obvious contradictions in the recommendations, for example:

F4. Ensure buildings are well articulated in their massing and form and exemplify subtropical design.

F5. Ensure each building in North Bank has a distinctive appearance.

These invocations of articulation and distinctiveness run seemingly completely counter to the following call for coherence and presumably restraint:

G1. Ensure the public realm is characterised by coherence in design and high quality materials and finishes.'

What can be made of the following seemingly precise constraints:

'F2. Ensure any building located upstream of Elizabeth Street does not significantly obscure views toward the Treasury Casino building and any buildings downstream of Elizabeth Street are no greater than the height of the Treasury Casino building.'

Wouldn't this mean that buildings downstream of Elizabeth Street (including a 'signature' building in the foreground) are permitted to ruin views to the Treasury Building and buildings upstream of Elizabeth Street may blot out views of the other William Street buildings? I would hope not.

For a set of recommendations that are meant to be considered 'guidelines' there are however far too many ideas expressed in that most sinister of weasel words, '*...consider...*'. It is impossible to comment definitively on these statements.

'D4. Consider locating a signature building in an elevated form over the Elizabeth Street expressway ramps.

D7. Consider locating tourist and sporting activities under the expressway.

D8. Consider providing a CBD playground and public space next to the river.

D9. Consider locating a new aquarium in North Bank.'

F6. Consider expressing the alignment of Elizabeth Street and Margaret or Alice Streets through the site.

Would these guidelines mean, 'consider this half baked idea and then reject it'?, or could it mean 'consider this half-baked idea and then do it'? Either way it is impossible for the public to comment meaningfully on these will-o-the-wisp wimpinesses.

And what on earth could anyone make of the following words of weasel wisdom:

K2. Consider removal of expressway in the long term.

If this is seriously intended to be considered as a remote possibility, let alone a distinct 'design guideline' in the immediate future, all of the other 39 guidelines presented here are about as useful as alphabet soup. Any long-term planning for the removal and replacement of one of the city's largest and most expensive bits of transport infrastructure will need to be undertaken first and would require serious planning and resourcing as a major governmental initiative. To toss it into the mix as yet another option amongst 40 illustrates the truly cynical and cavalier nature of this whole exercise.

The most frighteningly ambiguous of all of these weaselly aphorisms must be:

'C1. Consider possible extensions of the site.'

Personally, I'd happily 'consider' allowing an extension of the site to include the Alice Street carpark, the Bowen Hills rail yards, or the Beerwah carpark, if it kept those damn tower buildings out of the river. I'm much less keen to give over toeholds either side of the Alice Street ramps, outside the site boundary, to allow construction of a monster building that will dominate all diagonal views to the historic William Street precinct. The proposed 300 metre long building platform in the river and 'signature building' already breach the prescribed site boundaries from the 'preferred developer's' tender. This particular six little words, if authorised by government, constitute an absolute blank cheque for the developer and cronies, and are about as far from being informative 'guidelines' as it is possible to be.

Here are yet another four guidelines that illustrate the incompetence of the whole process to date:

E2. Assess and protect Indigenous and post-settlement heritage.

This is unbelievable. The whole North Bank process has been running since 2002 and now we are told that the heritage significance has not been assessed. How can this possibly be? Didn't anybody notice that this was Brisbane's most historically important bit of dirt, that it housed our second oldest structure or that it was the last intact remnant of the cultural landscapes of the Turrbal and Jagera people. Earlier submissions pointed out the significance of these heritage issues. It is the Government's role to assess and protect the heritage issues relating to public assets. Why were they not fully assessed before the project was farmed out to the private sector.

After six years of public submissions pointing out the risks of building into a flood-prone river course, finally the Department admits it is possible that there may be a problem, and it may have to:

'B3. Determine the acceptable flooding impact of the project by assessing changes in real flood damage and the effect on the community.'

B4. Take into account the overall benefits and impacts of the project in determining the acceptability of any flooding impact.

Without wanting to put too blunt a point on it, it is entirely possible that there may be *NO* acceptable increase in impacts that the public can stomach. For example, twelve people died in 1974... should we accept 15 deaths or 15.5 in any future flood? Multiplex hope to make many millions of dollars out of this project, and with luck, they may get in and out of the deal in a few years without having to face up to the consequences of a 1 in 100 year or 1 in 50 year flood. Then again, if the gamble works, our current politicians and public servants may also have moved on before the next flood happens. Statistically, however, in the long run, at some future stage, Queenslanders will inevitably suffer the adverse consequences of these decisions.

B5. Apply a consistent process for assessing flood effects to all river projects.'

Why should we not be surprised that no consistent processes have yet been applied to the task of assessing flood risk. Without consistent processes, it is naturally no wonder that the effects of climate change haven't yet been considered.

My greatest outrage is reserved for the following 'recommendations' that are claimed to have arisen from the 'independent' 'enquiry by design' process. None of the following statements make any sense in terms of a coherent urban design strategy. To my knowledge, they did not arise from the assembled independent Queensland urban design specialists. Most were 'scenarios' introduced by the fly-in facilitator, and some were introduced and elaborated by the Multiplex cheer squad itself. No informed urban design rationale has since been provided in support of these propositions, and I sincerely doubt that the urban designers, planners and architects who devoted their best endeavors to the shonky 'EbD' would collectively or individually endorse the following recommendations:

B1. Prevent the location of buildings in the river upstream of the Neville Bonner building. Locate any buildings in the river downstream of the former DPI building on a platform no more than 50 metres wide and no more than 300 metres long

D3. Locate new buildings on sites between Queens Wharf Road and the Riverside Expressway, either side of the Elizabeth Street expressway ramps.

F1. Buildings located on the platform in the river should range in height from 16 to 30 storeys.

F3. Determine the height of any signature building located over the Elizabeth Street expressway ramps on the basis of a study of how to complement the nearby heritage buildings.

J1. Consider providing finger wharfs under the expressway.

J2. Locate possible water-based tourist activities next to the new City Cat terminal or on the finger wharfs.

A design guideline that would be more likely to be supported by Brisbane's urban designers would simply restate the first eight words, *'Prevent the location of buildings in the river!'*

Finally (I've saved this one for last) what would any self-respecting urban designer, landscaper, architect or artist make of the following design guideline? How could any creative soul fail to be unerringly guided in their task by the following precisely expressed design dictum:

'K3. Improve the appearance of the Riverside Expressway.'

Possibly the most consistent argument put forward by Government for the whole North Bank process has been the unsightliness, even ugliness of the Expressway. Although the forty 'design guidelines' give quite clear advice on how many, how tall and how distinctive to make the buildings which aren't even called for in the design objectives, there was no discussion of what was wrong with the appearance of the structure that started whole process. In my view, that just about perfectly encapsulates the irrelevant direction and lack of rigour in the these 'design guidelines'.

4. A SENSIBLE WAY FORWARD

It is important to frankly acknowledge that the whole project is a dog. Over the past two years, public outcry has caused Multiplex to grudgingly adjust its scheme from seven towers extending 70 metres into the river to six towers extending 60 metres into the river to four towers extending 50 metres into the river. Some may see this as an improvement of sorts, although those who look closely will have noticed that the developer compensates for a reduction in the number of buildings by an increase in the size of each one. The latest 'EbD' scheme also sneaks in a new monster tower astride the Elizabeth Street ramps, obscuring upstream views to the Treasury Building and downstream views to Queens Park and the Lands Administration Building. This is a new development, but it is clearly not an improvement.

There is no honourable political outcome from this debacle. This is such a prominent project in the city that no amount of media spin, public consultation massaging, or bogus enquiries, by design or otherwise, will be able to disguise the reality of the project. Once the vast raft of piers starts being driven in the Brisbane River, it will no longer be possible to shrug it off as the folly of a former administration, a good idea at the time, or as Brisbane's answer to Darling Harbour.

I enclose again some sensible suggestions for the appropriate development of this area that have been previously presented before the beginning of the 'Enquiry by Design'.

1. Sack Multiplex as preferred developer. They submitted a 'binding tender' proposal that proved unacceptable to 57% of respondents in public consultation. They were allowed to revise their binding tender and were given the 'green light' without the promised proper public consultation. Their design and the claim that the scheme would 'allow the Brisbane river to flow unimpeded as it does now' has always been preposterous, impossible and wrong. The Enquiry by Design process should not be seen to allow Multiplex an opportunity to further amend their 'binding tender' - a third bite of the tender cherry.

2. Eliminate car parking from the site. Rather than introduce 1700 cars to service private buildings plus additional car parking for the public as Multiplex proposed, we should aim to eliminate all but the most essential vehicular intrusion onto the site. Low-value use of the site for government workers' car parking over the past decade has been a patent misuse of state resources. We should encourage public servants to serve the public greenhouse good by using green public transport. Offer salary sacrifice for Go-cards not cars.

3. Tear down the chainmesh and barbed wire. One of the greatest impediments to public access to the river is the 'security' fencing around government car park sites. The Government's Guantanamo Bay landscape strategy is an offence against good taste, but more importantly a highly dangerous environment for users of this area. It violates basic CPTED principles. Every day that it stands unchanged, tragically, the Government must be seen to bear responsibility for not diminishing the likelihood of assault and muggings. I would like to see a working bee of our parliamentary mums and dads personally tear these dreadful fences down. Like the ripping down of the Berlin Wall or the toppling of Saddam's statue, the liberation of safe public open space here would be effective, symbolic and cathartic.

4. A generous boardwalk under the Riverside Expressway. A wide boardwalk zone should be created close to the current river walk level under the Riverside Expressway. This area is about forty metres wide, and should enable ample width for safe conduct of cyclists (including faster commuters) and pedestrians. Being under the freeway

structure it is protected from summer sun and rain and thus would be a genuine complement to the more open and exposed South Bank. The deck should be shaped to accommodate mangroves. It should be left largely open so flood-waters can flow over it, but could accommodate small or temporary recreational elements or structures designed to accept and accommodate flood inundation. The only permanent constructions beyond the outer edge of the expressway would be the CityCat pontoons and moorings for tour boats and floating recreational structures.

5. Keep structure to the line of the existing expressway. Columns and water level bond-beams here already create a substantial series of impediments to water flow. It may be the case that a smooth fairing along the outer edge of the boardwalk may actually smooth laminar flow and marginally improve fluid dynamics. If the boardwalk plan follows that of the expressway over, no additional piles need be driven to support it. Lightweight structure maybe hung from the tops of the Expressway columns, with vertical droppers supporting boardwalk decking with resulting spans a fraction of those of the expressway over, allowing particularly economical boardwalk construction. *(note: These were recommendations proposed prior to the EbD, following genuinely helpful flood modelling advice given in this process, it may be necessary to further set-back walkways at the upstream end of the site, and driven piles may be structurally and economically more efficient than the hung structure described here)*

6. Spectacular floating recreational facilities. To help to fulfil the River City slogan, major restaurants, bars and music venues should be provided in floating structures moored along the boardwalk. These should be conceived not as boat forms, but as an opportunity to explore spectacularly new design materials, ideas and forms. Being part of the river, rather than the land of the historic precinct, they may be conceived as spectacular ornaments, baubles or jewels dressing the river. Consider the possible forms of mud crab or oyster restaurants or music shells moored in the mangroves. Floating structures, of course, will rise and fall with the tides and floods, and need minimal piles for mooring.

7. A possible music venue? It is important to note there are no nearby residential buildings at the downstream end of the site. The low spaces immediately beneath the freeway as it drops at its south-eastern end are remarkably quiet spaces, while the spaces that parallel the Neville Bonner Building are loud with reflected noise. In these most voluminous spaces it may be possible to site a substantial music venue that could partially compensate for the loss to the CBD of Festival Hall. Massive and absorbent walls would be needed to serve as sound baffles in both directions and the location of such a building may dramatically attenuate boardwalk acoustic levels. This is a very speculative proposition and the complexities of designing to accommodate intermittent flooding and expressway maintenance may render it unviable. There is something poetic about the thought of the buzz of lively boardwalk music at night mixing with the city traffic hum like Gershwin's *Rhapsody*. The contrast of the northern bank as a loud and lively night venue with South Bank as a day-time, family focussed venue again demonstrates a completely complementary relationship.

8. Connection to the city. The elimination of the cars and parking structures will dramatically open pedestrian access to the riverfront from Alice Street to Elizabeth Street. At the upstream end of the site we need to consider the major access way to this most historic of Brisbane's sites, the design should reflect and respect the history of the area. Queen's Wharf Road is the historic connection from Queen Street to the river, and its history, including its historic stone walls, should be celebrated in any new works. On the southern side of Queens Wharf Road, perhaps in front of the William Street Library, a building should be built that descends in levels to the rivers edge. Such a building would provide the safe, secure and non-discriminatory access that the Government has neglected to provide for the last decade. This should be an undercover access with covered links to the sheltered boardwalk.

9. Queensland Showcase. The connecting building on Queens Wharf Road could lead visitors down by escalators, ramps, stairs and lifts past several levels of gallery space to the Boardwalk level. These gallery spaces would be the visitors' prime arrival point in the city, linking Queen Street to the immensely popular CityCats. The galleries could provide general, historic, or environmental information. They could celebrate and inform about Indigenous Queensland. They could be the showcase for the mooted Centre for Design. In any event they should be seen as a vital piece of tourism infrastructure, an arrival in central Brisbane.

10. Endemic Subtropical Landscape. North of the boardwalk zone, and on the exposed banks and retaining walls there is significant opportunity for rich planting. This should focus on species endemic to the Brisbane rivers edge and hopefully exclude exotic species. I do not believe there is a garden or park in the central city area that accurately records the indigenous flora of this river.

The following description is from J.G. Steele's, *Brisbane Town in Convict Days*, p.28.:

A CONVICT DESCRIBES HIS ARRIVAL IN BRISBANE.

...It looked as though some race of men had been here before us and planted this garden of Eden...

The water for miles on each side of the river was dense vine-clad jungle, festooned with the blue and purple convolvulus, while on the tidal brink grew the beautiful salt-water lily - its flowers white as alabaster, its glorious perfume filling the air with fragrance. One of the most enchanting spots within the Brisbane area was an immense jungle in the western portion of South Brisbane. It began at almost the spot where the Victoria Bridge now stands, and it followed the course of the river right away to Hill End, along the length of what is now the Montague-road. This jungle was a tangled mass of trees, vines, flowering creepers, staghorns, elkhorns, towering scrub palms, giant ferns, and hundreds of other varieties of the fern family, beautiful and rare orchids and the wild passion-flower.

Let us plant this beautiful garden again for current and future generations.

11. A competition for a two kilometre long work of urban art. I believe that an opportunity has arisen to conduct a competition to design the State's longest public artwork. This may be the best opportunity to have come out of the whole North Bank debacle. To celebrate one hundred and fifty years of Queensland independence the Government should run a competition for Queensland artists to create a two-kilometre long artwork. Think of our greatest Queensland artists, and their most amazing achievements. What could our most brilliant contemporary multicultural and indigenous painters, sculptors, installation and multimedia artists propose as signature artwork for the city. A quick competition would be great and could be run to fit the Q150 timetable. The long southern edge of the expressway could be turned from a problem to our greatest opportunity. Here are a few very basic design ideas:

a. Colour Theory 101. This is grade nine level art stuff but nobody's ever thought to explain it to our civil engineers. The substructure to the expressway is pretty messy so it should be painted to visually recede with dark, cool, river blues and greens. The crash rails above the expressway edges should also be dark to recede and compete less with the panoramic views out to the river valley and mountains. The sinuous lines of the concrete edge-beam structure of the expressway are actually pretty interesting when viewed from South Bank or the river and serve as a cohesive visual underpinning to the cityscape. This line should be picked out and celebrated with brighter colours like the gold on the Government logo or by more sophisticated visual strategies. If necessary, this could be a proposal that doesn't cost a cent- we could just wait till the next time the freeway needs painting and swap the paint cans. At another extreme the whole expressway structure could be coated in gold leaf, for a fraction of the Multiplex budget.

b. Linear form and light. We have the Great Dividing Range, the Great Barrier Reef and the Creation Serpent and the Milky Way, so we shouldn't shy away from long, complex and interesting things, maybe long colourful and perhaps long sparkly things. This longest element of our city parallels and accompanies linear promenades along the river by cyclists, strollers and cruisers. Ebbing and flowing water, rising and falling tides, waxing and waning moons could activate a changing display of small lights and sparkles or even (keeping it cheap) simple transport reflectors that borrow sparkle from the passing traffic.

c. Design for a moving viewer. Currently there are some absolutely brilliant Queensland architects who are doing truly creative work with the visual perception of structures from a moving vantage. Consider m3architecture with their absolutely unique design for the visually pulsating Girls Grammar School wall; DBI with the undulating Wave apartment building at Broadbeach or Donovan Hill with the more subtle State Library elevation treatments that vary visually with light conditions and vantage. Even Cox Rayner with Christina Waterson have successfully explored serial sculptural effects.

d. Vertical Landscapes. I have a childhood memory of the awning roof to the interstate platform at South Brisbane Station absolutely bedecked with hanging baskets of fishbone ferns, staghorns, elkhorns and orchids as a verdant subtropical welcome to the Sunshine State for visitors from Sydney. From the Musée du Quai Branley in Paris to the Ferry Road Markets at Southport, architects and landscape architects are developing and refining lightweight vertical gardens. Imagine ultra-lightweight sections of blue and purple convolvulus gardens hanging in removable and replaceable panels from the side of the expressway. A two kilometre long floating, flowering, hanging garden.

e. Ephemeral and Intermittent Celebrations. At Christmas, at Easter, at Eids, at Buddha's birthday, and especially on Queensland Day, the long subtropical artwork could be bedecked with appropriate baubles lanterns or banners to complement the South Bank events banners across the river.

12. Throw out the 'North Bank' title. Just as Toowong Village is the absurd antithesis to any known village - so has the 'North Bank' moniker been absolutely debauched by Multiplex's mangled misappropriation of the term. The use of these words to describe proposed structures that are far out from the river's actual bank and likely to

cause the river to more frequently 'break its banks', is linguistic and semiotic torture. The title of this stretch of riverbank ought to be reconsidered to distance it from the odium that clings to the Multiplex debacle. Queen's Wharf, Queensland Wharf, or even Queen's Landing, may bring with it some of the history of this important place, and link it etymologically with the origins of our statehood. The 'pun' in the third title could be quite apt if the monarch is invited to step ashore here amidst our sesqui-centenary celebrations.

13. Respect the William Street Library. Built shortly before the fiftieth anniversary of Queensland's separation, the library had a major annexe built to celebrate the state's one hundredth anniversary. In the last public Multiplex scheme, it was vaguely depicted with a jackboot of hotel rooms about to descend on it; the EbD 'consideration' to straddle Elizabeth Street is likely to cause substantial impacts to this building.

14. Respect the history of the area. Include Turrbal and Jagera engagement in the Enquiry by design process. Respect the fact that over 184 years the area between William Street and the River has grown as the state's administrative, executive and symbolic precinct, proudly visible to all on approach to the city. The relatively recent decision to allow gambling interests to infest the Treasury and Lands Administration buildings was very unfortunate, but thankfully is not irreversible in time. The Precinct as a whole needs protective legislation to protect it from this sort of mercenary assault in the future. From the extant buildings in this area it is still possible to reconstruct, sense and celebrate key elements of our state's history.

15. No net cost to taxpayers. What a malign and mean mantra this has turned out to be. No other street or footpath in the CBD is expected to run at a profit, let alone generate three million dollars per lineal metre. The 'no-cost' motto, as applied is a shirking of responsibility for civic planning and a gross insult to past generations who have poured their resources, noble ambitions, and hard work into the magnificent buildings of the city. If the Government is not investing any resources into the project, it has no incentive or mechanism to rein back the private partner from excess and folly. As for the developer, the bigger and more expensive the project, the more they stand to gain. This is a sure-fire recipe for disaster.

It would appear that \$65 million can be found for a seemingly redundant and frivolous pedestrian bridge at Tank Street, yet it is claimed there isn't sixpence of taxpayers money to be spent on the most fundamental provision of safety and amenity for the users of Brisbane's City Cats and visitors to our city. Taxpayers' money currently flows in billions to benefit motorists, cars, tunnels, bypasses and expressways. It is exactly this unbalanced car-focus that caused the Riverside Expressway problem in the first instance. Where is the funding to provide public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians with a safe and accessible use in the meagre space that is left-over. What should we make of the Government's green credentials, if it can support a scheme that reduces the riverfront to a huge private car-park but offers nothing to improve a pedestrian zone it has callously neglected for more than a decade.

The net cost to taxpayers of the North Bank schemes must surely be measured as equal to the expenditure involved minus the benefit. Calculated properly, the Multiplex scheme has a huge and ongoing cost to Queenslanders, starting with the loss of their river and ending with an increased risk of loss of property and life. By contrast, the fourteen proposals that I have proposed here as 'simple suggestions' involves relatively miniscule expenditure and should return handsome benefits, starting with improved safety and accessibility, extending through a more attractive welcome to the tourism market and ending with a redemption of pride in the achievements of Queenslanders over our ancient and recent history.

Implementing the fourteen ideas above would fulfil all of the objectives of the North Bank Strategic Plan in a way that the Multiplex scheme patently doesn't and can't. There is nothing outrageously expensive in these proposals and by obviating the need to drive major piles into the river and erect high-rise towers over the water and park thousands of unneeded cars, it will of course cost only a tiny fraction of Multiplex's bloated budget. The core public infrastructure should rightly be funded from normal recurrent funding sources and accrued savings from years of neglect. Additional project-specific components can be funded from the following appropriate sources.

a. The two-kilometre artwork is the right project, in the right place, at the right time to be funded from Sesqui-Centenary budgets. We've got ~~eleven and a half months~~, whoops, now only nine months --lets go!

b. Just as the Regatta Hotel contributed to the construction of the Toowong City Cat terminal, the obvious beneficiaries of upgrading of the CityCat stops should also contribute. The Treasury Casino will benefit substantially from the upgrade of the North Quay stop, it should obviously be a key contributor, it already gets free place name advertising from CityCat announcements. Queensland Parliament House and QUT will also benefit greatly from a safe and attractive river entry at Gardens Point and should contribute to the funding of the second

stop in the style that will advance their corporate identities. The Queensland University of Technology, and Parliament House, its politicians and their distinguished guests surely deserve better than the current Guantanamo stylings.

c. Upgrading of the premier tourist experience in Brisbane should be a priority for funding from the tourism infrastructure budget. Post-Kyoto, the explosion of rare fossil fuel in Indy Cars and fire-works over South Bank need phasing out, and the Government should redirect resources into carbon-friendly visitor transport systems and subtropical land-scaping. We need to look forward and invest into long-term dignified infrastructure for the Brisbane visitor experience.

d. No attempt at buck-passing and blame shifting can absolve the two levels of Government from their fundamental obligation to provide safe, secure and non-discriminatory access to and through the site and from City Cat stops to the pedestrian paths and malls of the city. The State and City have undertaken no apparent maintenance or improvement since the City Cats began operations a decade ago. Accrued savings over this time offers a clear budgetary nest egg. Potential significant further savings to government arise through the avoidance of liability for serious falls on the ramshackle and non-compliant North Quay stairs or the prevention of one more mugging through application of CPTED. This overdue expenditure may also help to mitigate ministerial culpability should injuries arise that may have been avoided by timely investment from recurrent government funds.

e. The major ramped gallery building connecting William Street to the River could be a very centrally located showcase and information building. It would be ideal for a Queensland Centre for Design gallery and I believe that a substantial budget may already be earmarked for just such a project. In any event, this is the principal welcoming point for visitors between Queen Street and the river and can be easily linked to tours and cruises. It is important that such a critical orientation point should be run to promote all Queensland enterprises, through public sector or NGO management, rather than a sole commercial operator.

f. Serious entrepreneurs will be keen to find a way to participate in the construction of the floating facilities, market opportunities beside the walkways or flood-aware structures under and behind the expressway. In my view public benefit will be maximised if these components are released as separate tender opportunities, rather than by bundling them into a single development project that may stifle the benefits of market competition.

g. If it were up to me, I would like to see the developers, consultants, politicians and bureaucrats who have threatened the people of Brisbane with this preposterous and dangerous scheme over the past two years run out of town on a rail. I am however realistic enough to appreciate that sorting out legal obligations and expectations from years of procedural, administrative and design bungling may hamper such a simple and direct outcome. If for some bizarre legal reason there is a binding obligation on the Government to provide public assets for private development as a result of the 'preferred tender' decision, I would recommend that the only available publically-owned and appropriate land is the Alice, Mary and William site where there are fewer limits on development.

The whole notion of appointing a 'preferred developer' appears flawed to me. If we don't know what it is we want to build, we shouldn't ask a developer, and we definitely shouldn't bestow 'preferred' status on them. It is the government's responsibility to determine what needs to be done, and to arrange to have it properly designed as well as possible to benefit all citizens. The Government needs to take responsibility for the appropriate significance, potentials and long-term opportunities of the site. These are responsibilities that should not be passed on to a potentially transient commercial entity however 'preferred' whose first corporate priority must be profitability, not the public good.

We should never forget that Queensland has a very poor history of improperly close relationships between governments, public servants and developers. The role of our government and its departments should always be to vigorously protect, preserve and improve a public estate that is held in trust for our future generations, and to apply a rigorous degree of scrutiny and oversight to any private development, particularly one that seeks to render public assets into private property. An ideal process would be one where the interests of developers and property lobbyists are kept at arms length from those charged with planning and managing the public realm; where the government genuinely seeks the views of independent heritage and urban design specialists and where it really consults in good faith with the traditional owners and current users of the space and with the general public.

Had it done this, the ridiculous proposal to build high-rise towers in the Brisbane River would have been binned many years ago, and the needed public improvements could have been properly designed, funded and built by now.
