

Sunday, 31 August 2008

**Subject:** Proposed North Bank development

I have reviewed the recently published guidelines in relation to the proposed North Bank development and have the following comments.

There is one fundamental problem with the whole approach. It is that the government wants to improve the Riverside Expressway area at no cost to itself. This will produce bad design and bad outcomes for the city, since it will result in the need for a developer to build large commercial structures to justify the development and make a profit.

The government is setting a dangerous precedent in allowing huge developments on public areas such as the river. This is totally unacceptable.

The underside of the Riverside Expressway has been deliberately neglected by former governments so that it has got to the stage of being unacceptable. It needs improvement. This will cost money. The government needs to allocate that money and do the job.

No use of river 'public space' should be allowed for private commercial purposes under any circumstances, except to a minor extent to allow for areas under the Expressway to be upgraded.

Specific comments on the Design Guidelines are as follows:

"River based development - creation of a development platform of up to 50 metres wide and no more than 300 metres long in the river to support the development of three or four commercial buildings with heights ranging from 16 to 30 storeys and a public plaza and parkland, will reduce the isolating effect of the Riverside Expressway and re-connect the CBD to the river."

This is quite unacceptable – any building out in to the river will destroy the view of the Riverside Expressway, remove essential mangroves, interfere with the flow of the river (however small), obscure some of the heritage buildings and turn part of the Riverside Expressway into a deep 'cutting'. Such buildings will provide the 'elite' of Brisbane with expensive office and residential facilities to the detriment of the general population. It will further concentrate the working and living population in the CBD when decentralization is sorely needed and transport facilities are under stress.

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

It is essential that these buildings be no higher than ground level at the Treasury building so that the latter is visible from all sections of South Bank.

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

This building would hide the Treasury building from parts of South Bank, would produce an unacceptable 'tunnel' effect in Elizabeth Street and would tend to obscure the river from the city side. It is not going to be consistent with the heritage areas surrounding it.

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

"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."

These do not seem consistent with one another. How can a downstream building be 30 storeys if it is "no greater than the height of the Treasury Casino building"? I would expect that this would limit it to about 10 storeys.

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

This is likely to result in an architectural 'mess' of buildings along the site, similar to the jumble of QUT buildings at present, which is ugly. Architectural design should be consistent across any large site.

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

A further interference with a public transport system that desperately needs improvement. Moving the terminal places it further from the CBD centre, disadvantages the people who use public transport and sites it away from the proposed visitor centre and pedestrian plaza and the existing river crossing.

Roger Sawkins