

the late 1980s to be a major commercial, entertainment, recreational and residential area that would enhance the economic state of the city and place it more firmly on the world map, as the Opera House had done at mid-century.

The decision to go ahead with the project was based on consultants' feasibility studies that were presented to the State Government, the Sydney City Council, statutory bodies and municipal utility authorities for review. A joint government/private enterprise team oversaw the process of development. The first step involved the resolution of the financial and administrative basis for the project. The second step involved getting the government-owned land released for the development and purchasing land parcels from private owners. It also required the land to be cleared so that it could be a construction site. The third step was to seek expressions of interest from developers and the selection of worthwhile projects. Individual developers making proposals were required to present architectural and engineering drawings and impact analyses of their schemes. Negotiations then took place between the Authority and the developers over their applications. Approvals for road closures, the use of air rights, as well as for the construction of buildings had to be obtained and agreements had to be made with utility providers. Once these steps had been completed, tendering for construction work took place. By 1985, most of the site had been cleared. No specific master plan was adopted but an early one (see Figure 8.73) has guided the development and formed the basis of successive plans of the Darling Harbour Development Authority. In 1985, construction began on the Sydney Convention Centre (designed by

John Andrews) and Exhibition Centre (publicly funded and designed by Philip Cox with Arup Associates as engineers). The process was carried out in haste in a piecemeal manner in order for the scheme to be sufficiently advanced by 1988 to be seen as a functioning entity.

When it became clear what was occurring in Darling Harbour, there was considerable political and public opposition to the development. It was perceived that the money could be better spent on hospitals and other public facilities rather than something frivolous. There was particular strong opposition to the building of an elevated monorail circuit that cuts across the façades of buildings in the central area of the city before looping around Darling Harbour. With the award of the landscape design contract to Regal Landscape, public opinion, however, started to be supportive as the full nature of what Darling Harbour would be became apparent.

The design charge for the site was to create spaces with flat surfaces avoiding slopes. Elongated spaces were to be avoided unless they were terminated by a visible and desired destination. Imposing significant buildings should be contrasted with smaller buildings and accreted around open spaces to give them a sense of enclosure. By 1987 a master plan had evolved.

The site today extends seamlessly under two major highways with a mixture of hard surfaces in its heavily trafficked pedestrian core areas and grassed areas to the south (see Figure 8.74). The buildings are arranged in a horseshoe manner around the harbour which is now partially a marina and partially a site for water entertainment events. The design is anchored at its ends by the National Maritime Museum (with a submarine and