

**Speaking notes for Council meeting, March 23 2009**  
**By Peter McNair, President**  
**Northbridge Progress Association**

Northbridge Progress Association does not oppose the recommendation to shelve the Masterplan process.

We thank Council for the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the unique Masterplan committee structure and processes over the past 15 months. NPA has spent more than \$20,000 for a planning consultant and expenses to support the process.

We have never opposed a redevelopment of the site under a number of conditions and we look forward to the Masterplan process being resumed at some future date.

We would like to comment on three aspects of the report to Council and its recommendations.

**First**, in our view, the report understates the widespread opposition of the community to many aspects of the Stage 1 outcomes. At the big NPA meetings in 2007 and 2009 and the Council's Information Session in 2008, hardly one person showed any support for the project. In 18 months, NPA has received only one letter or email from a resident who supports an expansion of the Plaza.

At least four other Willoughby Progress Associations support NPA's general position.

Northbridge residents feel so strongly about the issue that they donated a total of \$15,000 to support NPA's participation in the process.

We're concerned that this strong opposition is not being recorded for future reference. The many substantial written submissions by NPA and other Progress Associations objecting to aspects of the project are not included in the documentation provided to Council tonight nor in the documentation that is intended to be "shelved" for future reference. We ask that they be included.

**Second**, the report is written as though there has been widespread consultation with the community. In fact, consultation with the broader community has been minimal.

In 18 months, Council has distributed one newsletter and held one public meeting, which was not particularly successful - virtually every attendee at the meeting opposed a redevelopment. Recently, some small focus group discussions were held, one with as few as four participants.

Our perception is that the wider community simply does not understand the project.

In particular, there has been no effort made to inform the community about the car park land's complex legal situation nor about the existence of a Statutory Trust in favour of the public over the land. Without this and other information, the community cannot sensibly make judgments about the project.

For this reason, we would not support the suggested plebiscite in conjunction with the by-election on May 2.

**Third**, the report is worded as if the 10% retail expansion limit imposed by Council was a key factor in the decision to shelve the project.

We believe this is misleading and unfair to Council. In fact, in the current economic climate for retail developments and the huge overhang of residential units in Sydney, it's likely that the project would not have been feasible under ANY expansion scenario.

I would like to request that Mr Woodhams confirms to Council his statement in the Reference Committee minutes:

*That even if the concept involved a substantially increased retail area then the feasibility of the concept would not be achieved.*

We would like this or a similar statement to be included in the minutes of this meeting.