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**BIKESydney's Objection to the A-Maze Installation on Pyrmont Bridge  
City of Sydney Development Application: D/2014/1083**

**Introduction**

BIKESydney is an incorporated not-for-profit community organisation.

We want to live in a city:

- Where riding a bicycle is part of everyday life
- That is vibrant, healthy, productive, creative and robust
- That values community, mobility, health, wellbeing social equity and sustainability
- Where people of all ages can make easy choices to ride a bicycle, walk and take public transport.

We advocate on behalf of our members and people who ride bicycles who live and work in inner Sydney.

## BIKESydney opposes the proposed A-maze installation

BIKESydney opposes the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority's (SHFA) proposal to install a vertical garden ("A-maze") on the Pyrmont Bridge.

The proposal will unacceptably constrain the mobility of bridge users, will increase conflict between the bridge's riders and walkers and critically, will diminish their safety.

With Bicycle NSW, BIKESydney has repeatedly sought to negotiate safe cycling outcomes for this proposal with SHFA, but hasn't been granted a two-way discussion.

The proposal represents another step in SHFA's neglect of developing Pyrmont Bridge role as one of the City's primary mobility corridors - the western gateway to the city - and suggests itself as another step in an active strategy to disfavour cycling. There have been long-standing calls to improve the corridor's management of pedestrians and cyclists including:

- upgrading of the Murray St/Union St intersection to properly detect and safely accommodate cyclists and pedestrians (an RMS function, but one that could be championed by SHFA given the impact on safety to users of Pyrmont Bridge);
- providing segregated paths for walkers and riders;
- clarifying the flagpole obstructions at the western end of the bridge;
- clarification of the Bridge's deck furniture (bins, lights, flagpoles), and,
- a response to the unacceptable corralling of pedestrians and cyclists onto the narrow King St shared path which presents conflict and hazards for walkers and riders, and particularly so on rainy days when hoisted umbrellas present dangerous conditions for cyclists and pedestrians alike.

As evidenced by the ramifications of this proposal, there remains a very strong need to provide an segregated east-west cycling route through Darling Harbour. As evidenced by the proposal to link Rhodes and Wentowrrth Point by a shared path bridge <http://ow.ly/AVDZE>, this appears to be an outcome easily managed by others, including having the bridge paid for by the private sector.

Ironically, had these matters been attended to previously, the A-maze proposal would now present as a highly attractive and valuable engagement of the public. Riders would be using an alternative (likely, devoted) path and the bridge would be left to walkers to engage purposefully with the A-maze installation.

The proposal is the right idea in the wrong place. It should not be permitted to proceed.

Pymont Bridge serves approximately 70,000 walking and cycling trips per day. This A-maze proposal defies its responsibility to ensure the safe passage of those people and indeed, presents SHFA potential misfeasance and malfeasance legal risks.

The number of cycling trips taken each day on Pymont Bridge is growing every year. The number of riders will soon increase significantly with the impending completion of the Liverpool St, Castlereagh St and Park St cycleways and installation of large bike parking facilities within the precinct as are planned for Barangaroo and the IMAX Theatre (600 bike parking spaces). All of which will port a significantly greater number of cyclists into Darling Harbour and onto the Pymont Bridge.

The Traffic Management Plan (TMP) supporting the application is inadequate in its analysis of impacts on cycling traffic and should be updated accordingly.

We note the following shortcomings of the proposal's TMP:

At Section 5.2, the TMP asserts the following points:

*"The A-maze structure will reduce the available trafficable space on Pymont Bridge. 5.8m of the total 16m width of the bridge will be occupied by the maze structures".*

The TMP fails to prosecute the fact that this remaining space is interrupted by the presence of bins and poles which present significant cycling hazards. The TMP should be revised to explicitly represent what the viable riding space is once the buffer distances for these hazards, and the space required to preserve the safety of pedestrians who so "...stand on either [Bridge] edge" and walk through the now-constrained corridor two abreast has been factored. Figure 5.1 of the TMP fantastically shows pedestrians and cyclists sharing the disrupted space in idealised conditions, rather than under peak hour conditions and volumes. A high proportion of walking trips across the bridge in peak hours involve pedestrians walking two abreast.

*"...cyclists will need to travel slightly slower than they do currently in order to safely negotiate the bridge. Site observations suggest that existing cyclists generally travel slightly above the speed limit of 10km/hour. Less trafficable space will lead to slower speeds which will provide a safe environment for all bridge users."*

Reducing speeds to nearer walking speeds will encourage less-predictable and less-stable riding, thus reducing safety for riders. As enunciated below, this statement transfers the responsibility of the A-maze installation to preserve the safety of bridge users to those users. This is unacceptable.

*"Many pedestrians are drawn to both the northern and southern edges of the bridge, particularly tourists wishing to take photos."*

We agree. Those same pedestrians/tourists will continue to seek the edges of the bridge for photo opportunities, but will now emerge - sometimes in groups - suddenly into riding lines from behind the view-obscuring maze structures. The TMP ignores this phenomenon and should be updated to address this risk.

Section 5.3 of the TMP de-legitimises riders by presenting them as a hazard to be managed in order to facilitate the A-maze installation. This de-legitimisation of those who ride on Pyrmont Bridge underlines the inappropriateness of the proposal. It is unacceptable that the proposal seeks to transfer its responsibilities for the safety impacts it creates onto legitimate users of Pyrmont Bridge.

*"Increased signage as well as continued use of Rangers in the AM and PM peak periods will be required to ensure that cyclists keep to the speed limit and give way to pedestrians on the bridge. Existing shared path signage is consistent with regulatory requirements, however, signage may be too scarce as well as too small to be easily identified. The large number of vertical lamp poles and flag poles means that small signs mounted on poles are easily lost in the background. It is recommended that small 'Shared Path' signs as shown below in Figure 5.3 be replaced with larger signs to clearly identify the bridge as a shared path with a 10km/h speed limit."*

*Similarly, the white stencil markings indicating cyclists give way to pedestrians would be more effective if they were enlarged. The need for cyclists to give way to pedestrians will be critical to the safety of all bridge users when the maze structures are in place.*

*Rangers are currently stationed at both ends of the bridge during peak periods as seen below. It is recommended that this arrangement be maintained during the A-maze period."*

We advocate that riders ride sensibly and to the conditions in shared spaces, but object to the proposal's inadequate analysis of its impacts on cyclists and pedestrians and the proponent's lack of consultation with end-user groups to devise suitable outcomes for those who ride on Pyrmont Bridge.

The conclusion to the application's Statement of Environmental Effects (SEE) fails to address the impact of the proposal on riders. It's not reasonable that this application can be permitted to evade addressing these issues.

*"The proposed A-maze event and associated structures on Pyrmont Bridge Darling is designed to introduce an active temporary use to the bridge, complement the pedestrian use of the bridge with a sculptural and wellbeing event and activity, whilst retaining, maintaining and protecting the heritage significance of the bridge structure. The proposed works will not introduce any addition, alteration or intrusion upon the heritage fabric of the bridge, will provide a reversible and temporary use and activity, and will not negatively impact upon the physical fabric, aesthetic, historic, and scientific cultural values of this heritage significant site."*

*The proposed A-maze temporary event and associated structures is therefore concluded to satisfy the use and heritage significance of the Pyrmont Bridge, and no negative impacts are concluded to arise from this proposal."*

We concur with and support Bicycle NSW's position (as expressed in its media release 31 July 14):

*"The concept seems contradictory to the Government's commendable work with the City of Sydney as they continue to complete the Sydney City Cycleways network. Imposing a structure on such a critical access point to the network will increase congestion and potentially generate dangerous riding and walking conditions. It is well known that people are more likely to walk or ride their bikes if they feel safe to do so, and appropriate safety and traffic management audits are essential before this project goes any further. The concept requires significant consideration and broader consultation with authorities including Transport for NSW and the City of Sydney who it seems have not been consulted."*

*Bicycle NSW supports improvements to the Pyrmont Bridge shared space including infrastructure improvements and communications to enhance mutual respect. This is a busy thoroughfare and an important access point to pedestrian and cycling pathways to and within the city. Designing ways for the cyclists and pedestrians to share the space is definitely a priority. Unfortunately the design Bicycle NSW has seen for "AMAZE" doesn't contribute to that and we feel it would be better placed in another part of the Darling Harbour precinct. Had there been adequate and proper consultation between the key stakeholders including Transport for NSW, City of Sydney and Bicycle NSW, the legitimate safety and traffic management issues would have been addressed."*

The State Government's *Sydney's Cycling Future* and the City of Sydney's *Sustainable Sydney 2030* vision very clearly seek to support and enhance cycling as a travel option in central Sydney. It is unclear how the A-maze proposal can be supported given its direct obstruction of these goals. It's not as though the proposal can't be placed elsewhere. Would the State Government place such an installation in the middle of one of the CBD's streets? If not, why is it appropriate that the mobility and safety needs of walkers and riders be so compromised?

Finally, we have come to understand that the A-maze installation is a \$150,000 strategy by SHFA to create economic activity for the retailers of Darling Harbour who are expecting reduced patronage during construction of the Sydney International Convention Exhibition and Entertainment Precinct (SICEEP). It's unacceptable that the safety of people is secondary to this economic imperative. In any case, it rather seems that SHFA's economic objective would be better served by placing the A-maze installation nearer the commercial traders to be supported (eg, on the foreshores) where patrons would spill into those premises rather than on the bridge which would rather encourage patrons to pass through Darling Harbour altogether.

All this spend, and *again* no improvement of the shared space for those who regularly use the bridge - its walkers and riders.

A-maze: right idea; wrong location.

Ironically, the A-maze installation on the bridge would have been a terrific idea had we now achieved - as has long been requested - an east-west segregated path for cyclists through Darling Harbour.

We have reached out many times - including this time - to SHFA to no end. There are serious issues remaining around the State government's lack of consultation with the end-users on such matters.

Here we are, still confronted by sub-standard and now diminished commuting infrastructure in the face of all government gestures to improve active transport options.

Please feel free to contact us should you require any clarification or wish to discuss other matters.

Yours sincerely

David Borella

**BIKESydney**

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