

City beach proposed for wharves

Sartor hints at light rail system for Millers Point development

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Urban Affairs Reporter

Sydney Harbour's last container wharf may be replaced by a beach under plans for the CBD's biggest development site.

In his first outing as Planning Minister, Frank Sartor yesterday unveiled the five designs contending to turn the wharves from 22 hectares of off-limits concrete into offices and a multimillion-dollar park.

An international competition attracted 137 entries, whittled down to five finalists by an independent jury.

One proposes a series of translucent buildings, which appear to creep from the water towards the city, but are meant to resemble finger wharves.

Another pays tribute to the national capital, suggesting a park sloping down from Observatory Hill, resulting in what looks very much like a half serve of Parliament House in Canberra.

Mr Sartor declined to back a winner. "I think it's better if I don't buy in to choosing a winner because we've got an independent panel," he said.

For an avid swimmer, however, he was sceptical about the beach, which is suggested by two of the five finalists.

"Well, Sydney Harbour's waters are so clean these days

you could almost have that, but I'm not sure whether that's the most practical aspect, but it's an interesting idea."

It is likely developers will be offered 99-year leases over the half of the site that is reserved for buildings to raise money to pay for the rest. Mr Sartor would not say how much the Government expected to raise, only that it would not be "a major money-spinner".

The finalists are on display from today at the Museum of Contemporary Art. A decision on the winner is expected early next year. It will be made by a panel headed by the former government architect, Chris Johnson.

Whichever plan is chosen, most of the buildings will be offices, and they all come with a hint of an expanded light rail service.

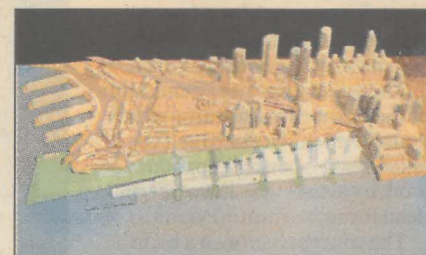
Mr Sartor said the project, which promised to add as many as 25,000 workers to the area, would need transport that did not depend on cars.

"With this development, we'll start to get some sort of critical mass to look at some sort of public transport system into Wynyard," he said, suggesting whatever system was chosen should go along Hickson Road, under the Harbour Bridge and into The Rocks.

Asked if he would rule out light rail, he said: "No, no, no, but it may be a localised spur



Life's a beach and maybe more ... the five finalists for the East Darling Harbour urban design competition.



line, it may not be part of Sydney's greater system."

The Government wants to set aside space for an "iconic development" at the tip of Millers Point that may be built many

years into the future. Mr Sartor denied this was because the Government had no "iconic" ideas of its own.

"It's a question of we will build the infrastructure and heal the

harbour's edge. I think there are other priorities, but in the future there may be a need for either a further cultural building, or some other kind of building, and it's just a question of being prudent and

sensible and far-sighted. We don't have to do it now."

When complete in about 10 years, the edge of the development will plug a large gap in the proposed 14-kilometre foreshore

walkway from Glebe Point to Woolloomooloo.

"Any city that tries to only live in the past is doomed, and any city that pays reckless disregard to the past is also doomed."