

2

Context

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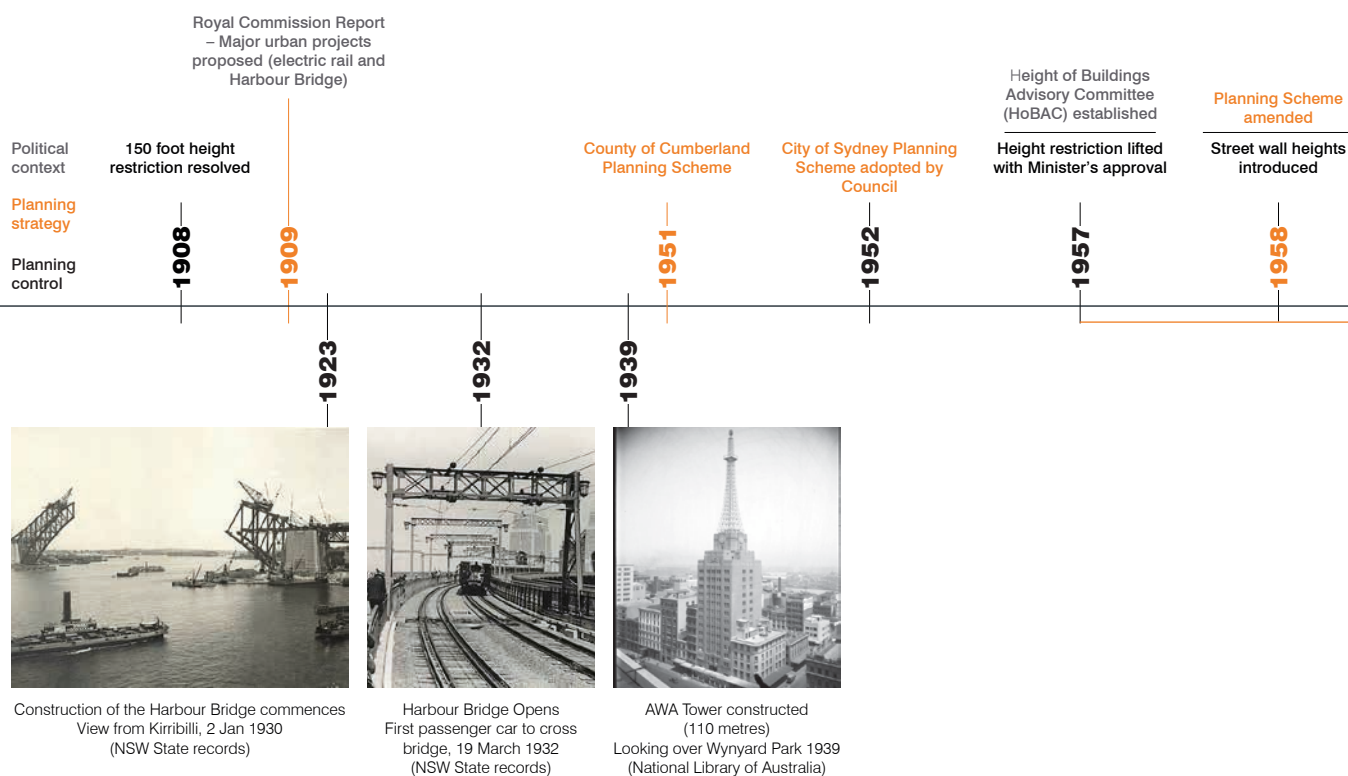
## 2.1

### Central Sydney planning: a history

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Central Sydney's urban planning, its strategies and controls, can be traced back through the abandonment of building height limits in the 1950s; the introduction of comprehensive strategic plans in 1971 and 1988; and the emergence of design excellence controls in the late 1990s. However, they have changed little in the past two decades. The local planning controls that came into effect in 1996 have not until now been subject to a major review.

This section discusses the broad phases that have influenced Central Sydney's planning controls – and how the controls in turn have influenced Central Sydney's form within a dynamic political and economic context. Understanding the history of Central Sydney planning strategies provides important context for the current Central Sydney Planning Strategy, its precedents and the evolution of key concepts found in the Strategy.



### 1908–1956: Restrictions on building heights

In 1908, a height restriction was first placed on buildings in Central Sydney through a City of Sydney resolution to limit buildings to 150 feet (45.72 metres). In 1912, the Height of Buildings Act was passed which allowed the City to approve development up to 100 feet (30.48 metres) but gave the State Government the power to approve up to 150 feet. Buildings taller than 150 feet required advice from the Superintendent of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

This set the template for a complex relationship in Central Sydney between state and local government, where decision-making responsibilities were shared. This relationship exists to this day via the City of Sydney, the Central Sydney Planning Committee (CSPC) and the State Government, who each have responsibilities for development decisions in Central Sydney.

### 1957–1971: Construction boom and the removal of building height restrictions

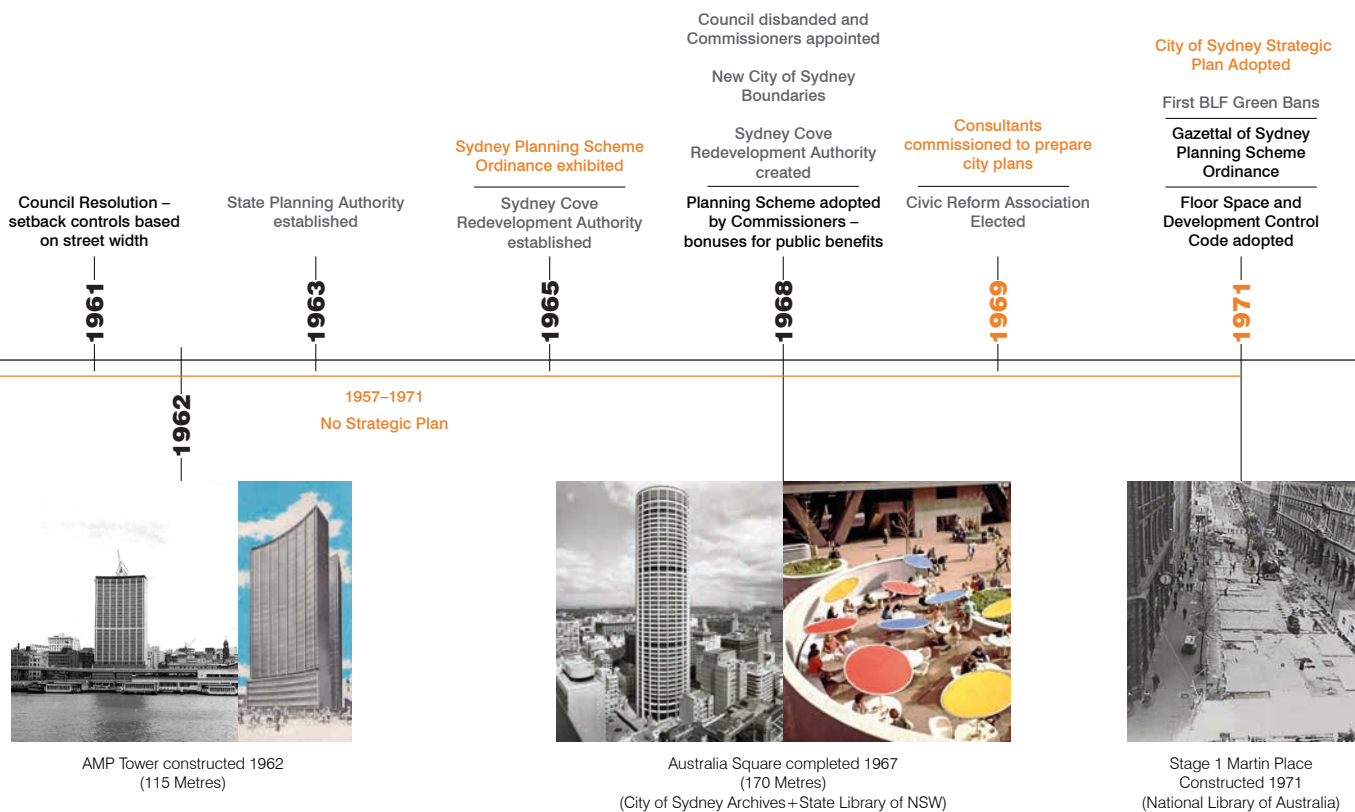
Building heights remained uniformly between 10–15 storeys throughout Central Sydney until a 1957 amendment to the Height of Buildings Act that removed height restrictions. Once lifted, high-rise buildings started to transform Central Sydney's skyline, coinciding with the beginning of Australia's most frenzied construction boom, lasting through the 1960s and into the early 1970s, with Central Sydney as its epicentre.

Development activity was concentrated in the vicinity of Circular Quay with a number of buildings achieving floor space ratios of around 15:1. The most intense development in Central Sydney took place in the "golden square mile", which extended from Circular Quay to Martin Place, and from Macquarie Street to George Street.

The Height of Buildings Advisory Committee (HoBAC) was created by the State Government in the late 1950s with the responsibility for making decisions on proposals for buildings above 80 feet in height (24.38 metres);

The heights of tall buildings were determined on a site-by-site basis, and assessed individually by HoBAC. HoBAC considered the floor space ratio (FSR) available on the site, and local considerations, including the overshadowing of public space, wind, heritage buildings, scale and other amenity concerns. HoBAC had significant discretion and there was little consistency in their decisions and floor space ratios could vary significantly from site to site. HoBAC continued to make decisions about tall buildings in Central Sydney until the mid-1980s.

As is the case today, authorisation from the Civil Aviation Authority was also required for the approval of very tall buildings. The AMP building at Circular Quay, completed in 1962, was the first genuine tower building to be assessed by HoBAC, achieving an FSR of 18.7:1 and a height of 383 feet (116.7 metres). This height was not exceeded until Australia Square on George Street was completed in 1966 with a height of 170 metres.



### 1971: City of Sydney Strategic Plan

The City’s first truly comprehensive planning strategy was the 1971 City of Sydney Strategic Plan, which sought to overcome the ad hoc planning of the previous decade, setting out guiding principles to coherently integrate objectives, policies and priorities for planning in Central Sydney.

In the late 1960s, an increasing number of government agencies and “special purpose” authorities had authority for development in the City of Sydney. The City of Sydney, HoBAC, the State Minister for Planning and the Land Tribunal all had responsibility for decisions. The Electricity Commission, Board of Fire Commissioners, Maritime Services Board, Department of Main Roads, Railways Department and Department of Road Transport each had control over parts of Central Sydney but none were accountable to the City of Sydney. The Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority (established in 1968) had significant land control responsibilities within the City of Sydney area.

But until the early 1970s, there was no overarching plan for the governance, shaping and forming of Central Sydney – neither a framework nor guidance for how multiple agencies could coordinate their responsibilities. So, the 1971 plan heralded an ideological shift in the way the City of Sydney and the State Government planned for the growth of Central Sydney: towards collaborative and shared decision-making, and away from the fragmented approach – including the discretionary development decisions made by HoBAC – that dominated the previous decade.

The 1971 plan considered the economic, social and physical environment of Central Sydney, proposing 16 key policies. It divided the then larger Central Sydney into 33 precincts, each with some unity in terms of their intended form and function. It

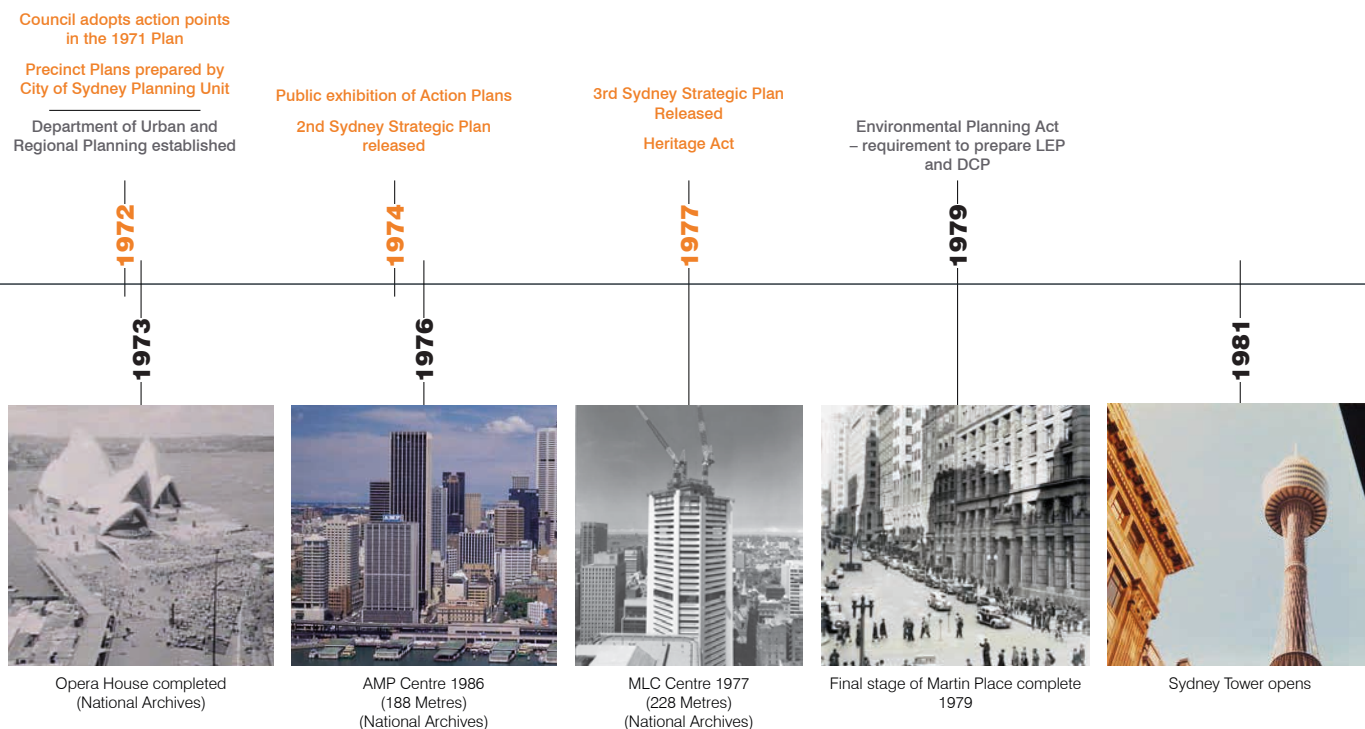
proposed precinct-based development controls, floor space incentives, and incentives to retain heritage buildings. It also included an ambitious plan to connect pedestrians, public transport and car parking. It became the blueprint for Central Sydney’s future growth and development:

*“...a landmark plan in Australian planning in terms of its analytical depth, comprehensiveness, detail and policy sophistication. It was politically astute in its clear statement of objectives, supporting policies and implementation devices, though it was never approved by the State.”*  
(Punter, 2004)

The plan was adopted by the City of Sydney Council in August 1971 and reviewed every three years until 1983. The initial 1971 plan was largely concerned with the form and function of Central Sydney, whereas later iterations became increasingly focused on the Central Sydney’s economic role as an emerging global city in the 1980s.

However, the 1971 plan faced challenges. It was compromised by the prevailing development control process. This was unpredictable and susceptible to political lobbying from developers seeking approval from agencies most likely to give them the most beneficial outcome.

Another challenge was that its release coincided with the State Government’s gazettal of the revised City of Sydney Planning Scheme Ordinance, which was initially exhibited several years earlier. The 1971 Ordinance comprised a limited range of planning controls devised in the early 1960s and the controls were effectively obsolete by 1971. However, unlike the 1971 plan, the Planning Scheme Ordinance had legal status, and continued to influence development decisions, undermining many of the goals of the 1971 plan throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s.



Despite this, the 1971 plan had positive results. For its time, it included detailed and progressive planning initiatives and concepts. These were influential in shaping Central Sydney in the decades that followed, and many of the City's existing planning controls have evolved from the vision of the 1971 plan. For example, when the 1996 Local Environment Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP) came into effect, the new planning controls were influenced by the overall form of the city and skyline as envisaged by the 1971 plan.

### 1971: Development Control and Floor Space Ratio Code

Floor space ratio controls appeared shortly following the publication of the 1971 plan, and the Development Control and Floor Space Ratio Code (the Code) was adopted by the City of Sydney. Base level floor space ratios for a wide range of Central Sydney precincts were set out in the Code, along with maximum floor space ratios – which could only be achieved after applying bonus provisions. Maximums could not be exceeded in any circumstance.

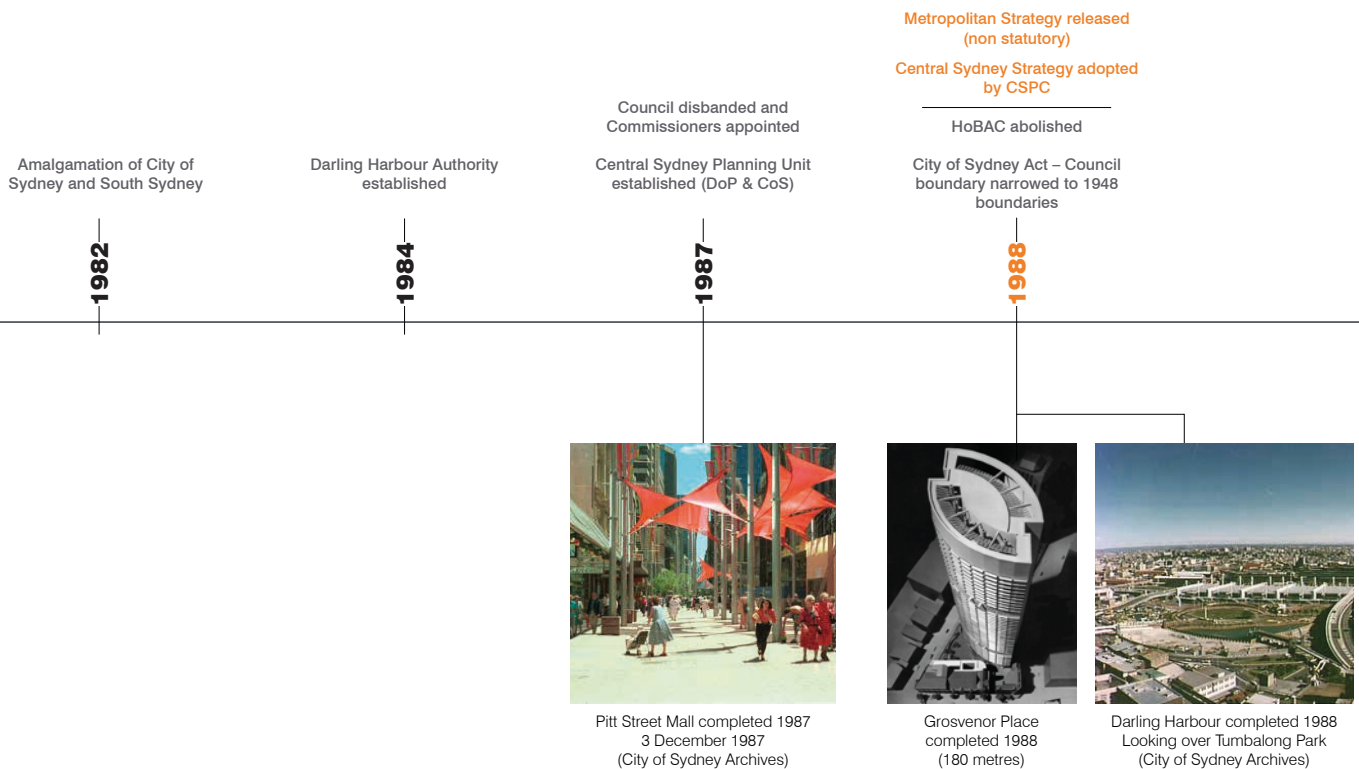
The Code was largely the City of Sydney's policy response to the considerable number of building approvals arising from the 1960s investment boom. A laissez-faire approach to development decisions in the previous decade resulted in 162 building schemes with FSRs of over 10:1 being approved between 1967 and 1969. This increased the potential supply of office floor space by five times. While many of these schemes would never be built, the development of a number of large Central Sydney sites stagnated for many years as a result of over-generous planning consents. So the Code gave the City of Sydney a degree of control over the supply of floor space and to achieve some amenities in the absence of prescribed building form controls.

Bonus provisions provided an incentive for public facilities to offset the high density of development that the floor space ratios generated with public amenities. This included facilities such as plazas, through-site links and retail frontages and potentially could increase the available base 6:1 floor space ratio to a maximum of 12.5:1. A floor space ratio of 12:1 was established in the City Core, with 10:1 in the Midtown and Southern precincts. These bonuses were also available for desirable uses within precincts, such as hotel or residential development. And Bonus No. 6 was a measure designed to encourage the protection of heritage buildings by permitting the sale or transfer of development potential.

A key limitation of the Code was that it did not consider building form or environmental impact issues, only the fulfilment of the bonus. Development proposals were able to exploit the bonus provisions to achieve the maximum permissible floor space ratio. Even though the maximum was intended to be the exception, it became the norm and led to very large buildings in a number of precincts.

Looking back, the Code had a strong influence on development but with mixed success. This was because it wasn't backed up by development controls that addressed the amenity issues that have since become a normal part of detailed development control plans. The bonus provisions resulted in a number of redundant building elements that contributed little value as civic assets. Poorly designed buildings with excessive bulk, wind impacts, intrusive car parking ramps, poor access and underutilised plazas were a direct result of a lack of prescribed amenity and design controls:

*"Foremost among these were the T&G Building with its bare plazas, missing pedestrian links and shadows cast across*



Hyde Park in the afternoon, and the Lanray Centre (Hilton) with its demolition of the Royal Arcade, inaccessible and oppressive shopping plaza and car parking ramps that blighted Pitt Street.

There were partial design successes like Harry Seidler’s MLC Centre, where architectural ingenuity created an excellent urban space, but where the 68-storey tower interrupted the street pavement and overshadowed Hyde Park.” (Punter, 2004)

Despite attempts to assign precinct-based floor space ratios, the floor space code did little to reign in the surplus of development consents. The bonus system did, however, provide an incentive to renegotiate some approvals from previous years.

**1972–1987: Limited implementation of the 1971 plan**

Making progress on the objectives of the 1971 plan was a challenge, despite much work and analysis by the City of Sydney into, for example, reductions of FSRs in the Midtown retail area and fringes of the central spine, and the mapping of maximum building heights. Jurisdictional issues created barriers. A range of committees, agencies and tribunals continued to be responsible for decision-making and lacked coordination.

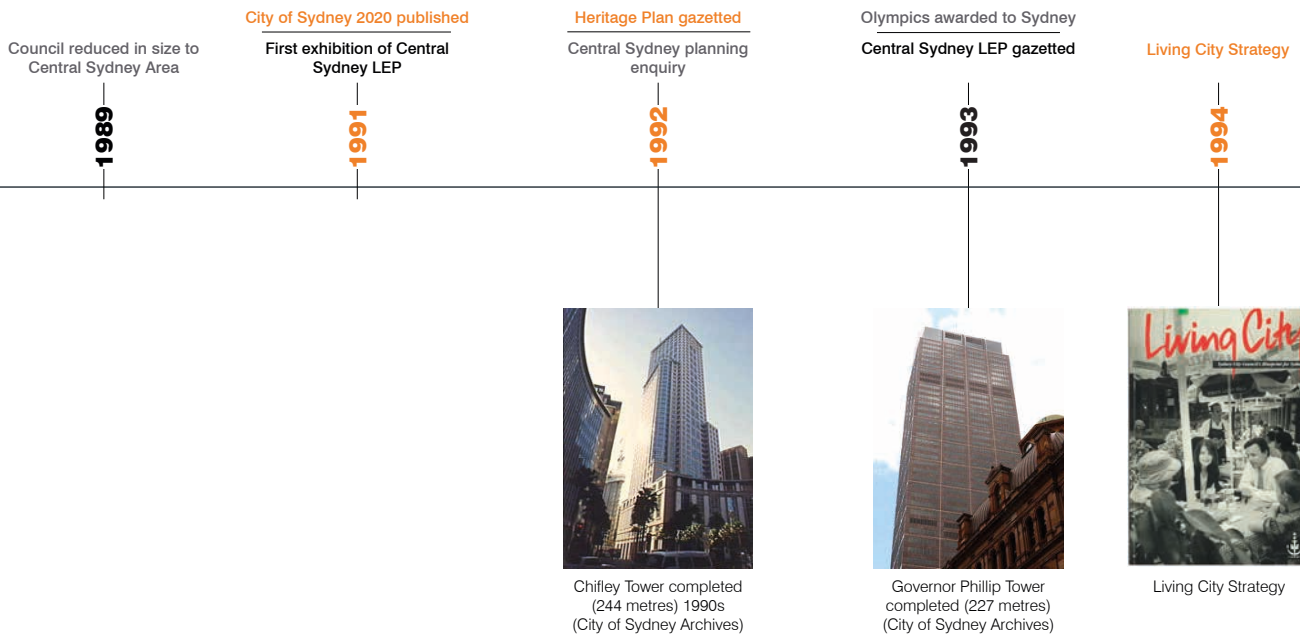
In 1972, a Professional Planning Unit was set up by the City of Sydney and commenced work on 27 action plans to achieve the goals and objectives of the 1971 plan. The unit worked with 14 consultant groups, and took 3 years to complete the action plans. The action plans covered all physical areas of Central Sydney and included detailed pedestrianisation schemes, and

district plans and policies for residential and redevelopment areas. The action plans foreshadowed a “character area” approach to the development of planning controls.

A Transfer of Development Rights mechanism was also prepared to compensate owners of heritage buildings for the loss of development rights, removing incentives for demolition. However, this “Heritage Floor Space” (HFS) scheme had little early impact because bonuses for public amenities were easily accessible to developers. The “Green Bans” of the early 1970s had a much greater impact upon heritage conservation in Central Sydney. The Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) refused to demolish any buildings that the National Trust recommended for preservation, or any of the heritage-classified buildings in Central Sydney. The lasting legacy of the BLF:

“... changed public opinion on the inevitability of insensitive change and [prompted] State legislation on environmental protection, heritage and environmental planning in 1979.” (Burgmann and Burgmann, 1996).

Thus, in the absence of implementing the 1971 plan, the modern New South Wales planning system was established in the form of statutory LEPs and DCPs that arose out of the new 1979 environmental planning act. It wasn’t until the mid-1990s that the City of Sydney could implement this system by way of its own new planning controls.



**1988: Central Sydney Strategy 1988**

Following the dismissal of the City of Sydney Council by the State Government in 1986, the Central Sydney Strategy was released in 1988, replacing the 1971–1983 strategic plan series. The 1988 strategy provided a revised framework for detailed planning and decision-making for Central Sydney, drawing elements from previous strategies. The 1988 strategy was jointly prepared by the City of Sydney and the NSW Department of Planning, and progressed many of the innovative ideas and principles of the 1971 plan.

The 1988 strategy outlined future directions for the growth and functions of Central Sydney and its surrounding areas, set upper limits for height and floor space, revised development control standards, and identified areas of Central Sydney which have an individual character that required protection.

The 1988 strategy had three themes – “central place”, “special place” and “place for people”. In addition to the traditional Central Business District, it redefined the “City Centre” to include the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Area, Darling Harbour, Ultimo, Pyrmont and Central Railway.

At the time of the 1988 strategy’s release, a complex patchwork of “planning instruments” applied in the City of Sydney Council area, many applying to single sites. There was also growing concern about the effect of development on Central Sydney’s environment, including the loss of important streetscapes and buildings, the overshadowing of parks and places, the loss of views, and wind effects. Increasing pressure for higher and larger buildings and to exceed floor space ratio controls coincided with community concerns about Central Sydney’s environment.

A number of principles and initiatives in the 1988 strategy were antecedents to the controls in the Sydney Local Environmental Plan 1996. The 1988 strategy was growth oriented and aimed to accommodate a growing workforce. It proposed to replace the complex bonus system of the 1971 Development and Floor Space Code with a basic FSR of 10:1 and a bonus of 2.5:1 for the purchase of unrealised floor space from heritage sites.

Significantly, it proposed a comprehensive set of 22 urban design and heritage principles that eventually translated into detailed urban design controls in the Central Sydney DCP 1996. These principles have since had a significant impact on city form, and continue to underpin the City’s LEP and DCP controls.

The 1988 strategy was a further ideological shift in the way that Central Sydney is planned – and represented a key division from previous practices. This ideological shift had two dimensions. Firstly, the 1988 strategy was oriented much more towards urban design and environmental outcomes. Although the 1971 plan strongly signalled the adoption of urban design controls, it did not include a comprehensive urban design plan to guide development. Secondly, the 1988 strategy heralded a transformation in planning governance to a partnership model with shared values about the importance of economic planning.

**1991–1996: The evolution and outcomes of the Central Sydney LEP and DCP 1996**

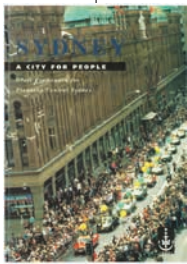
The initial outcome of the 1988 Central Sydney Strategy was the public exhibition of a draft LEP and draft DCP in 1991. These set out the planning controls for Central Sydney with an unprecedented level of detail and sophistication.



Sydney: A City for People  
– Framework for Planning  
Central Sydney exhibited with  
new controls

Central Sydney LEP and DCP  
amendments

1995



Sydney: A City for People  
Draft Framework for  
Planning Controls

New LEP and DCP gazetted

1996

Sydney Harbour Foreshore  
Authority formed

Review of LEP

1998

Sydney Olympics

Amendment to 1996  
LEP

Design excellence  
process introduced

2000



Aurora Place completed 2000  
(219 metres)  
(City of Sydney Archives)



ABN AMRO Tower completed  
(218 metres)  
(National Archives)

2001

Although the draft LEP included few development standards, it did include floor space ratio controls. Six precinct-based FSRs were prescribed: FSRs ranged from 2:1 in Millers Point to 6:1 in Railway Square with no bonuses available in these areas; in other parts of Central Sydney, a base floor space ratio of 10:1 applied, with an additional 2.5:1 available for heritage conservation or the provision of significant public benefits.

The 1991 draft controls were controversial and never adopted. In response to submissions, the Central Sydney Planning Committee appointed an independent panel (the Panel) to recommend appropriate planning controls. The Panel recommended that a development control system be adopted which contained mandatory urban design controls in an LEP (e.g. height, bulk and floor space ratio) and non-mandatory urban design controls in a DCP (e.g. parapet heights, setbacks, building alignments, colours and materials, and measures to protect pedestrian amenity).

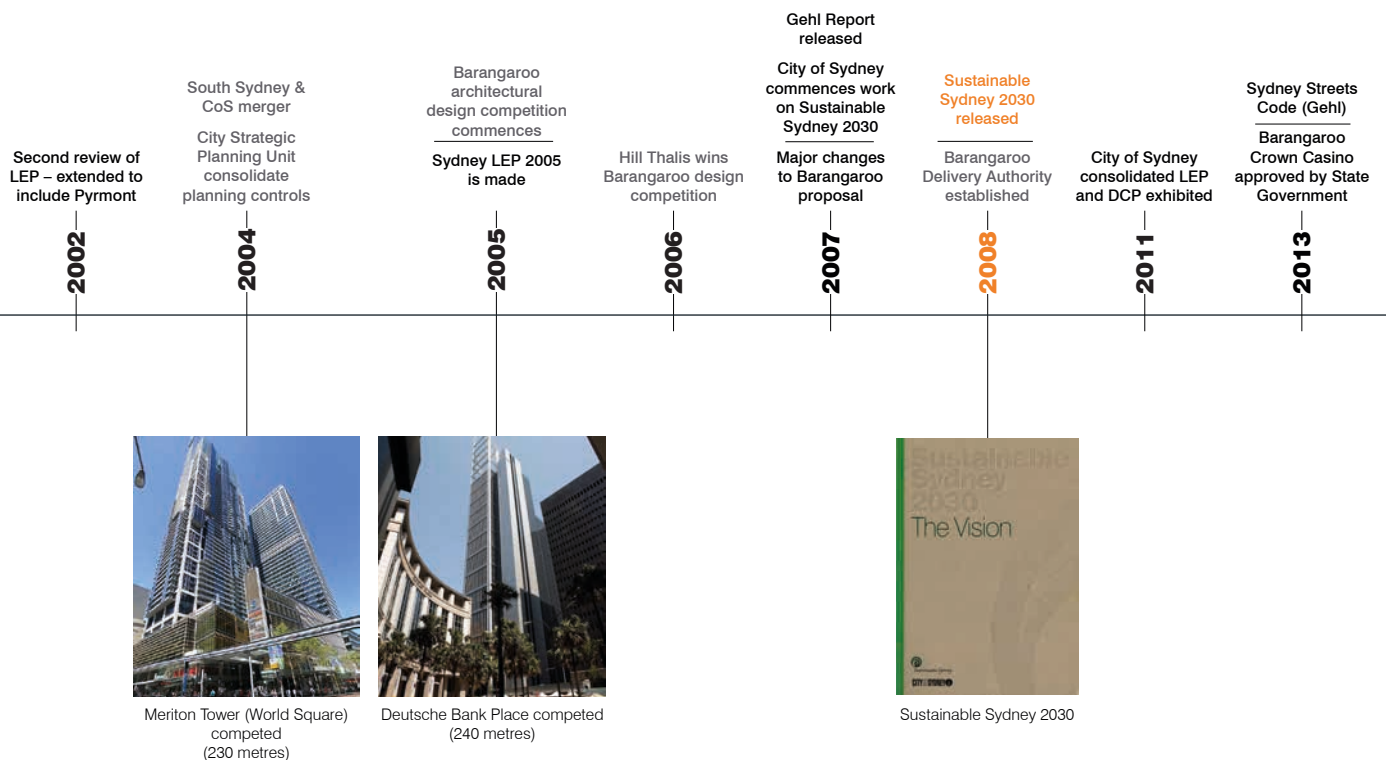
The Panel also identified that an improved system for the conservation of heritage buildings was needed, and recommended that special areas be identified for detailed development controls and that floor space bonus provisions be abandoned except for heritage conservation (recommending a base FSR 7:1 and maximum of 14:1). It also made recommendations on podium dimensions, maximum height and maximum floor plate size.

On consideration of the Panel's recommendations, an interim City Centre Local Environmental Plan was created in 1993 to implement the principles of the 1988 strategy. This plan was effectively a stop-gap measure while the 1991 draft controls were reviewed and redrafted. The draft 1991 controls were then replaced by a new draft Central Sydney LEP and DCP, exhibited in 1995, which responded to the recommendations made by the Panel.

The major determinants of urban form enshrined in the City of Sydney's current LEP were included in the 1995 LEP (e.g. floor space ratios, building height, sun access planes and car parking standards). Also, a detailed zoning map was introduced that effectively "downzoned" parts of the city where conservation or city edge issues were considered important. Maximum building heights were mapped, as well as a schedule of sun access planes to ensure direct sunlight on key public spaces. There were also special controls preventing additional overshadowing and to protect street and skyline amenity and microclimate.

The 1995 controls were not fully adopted because they were seen by the Central Sydney Planning Committee as too prescriptive; it was not until May 1996 that they adopted a revised LEP. The 1996 LEP was broadly similar to the exhibited LEP but emphasised Central Sydney's role in a global city. The height map was also changed to allow a maximum building height of 235 metres within two areas – around George and Liverpool Streets (around the current World Square site), and between Bridge and Hunter Streets. Bonuses were available for hotel and residential development, allowing them to exceed the maximum FSR of 12.5:1. A key aim of this policy was to increase the feasibility for hotel and residential projects while the commercial office market was experiencing a downturn.

The 1996 LEP contained several time-limited FSR incentives specifically tailored to encourage the development of hotels and serviced apartments in the lead up to the 2000 Olympics and to address vacant sites. Largely as a result of the 1991 recession, Central Sydney was populated by 22 vacant development sites where buildings had been demolished or sites excavated and redevelopment had not been completed.



A bonus above the maximum FSR was permitted for hotel and serviced apartments which commenced construction prior to 1 January 1998 but the bonus was only achievable if the buildings were approved for occupation before July 2000. The bonuses allowed hotels a maximum FSR of 14:1 and 15.5:1 for serviced apartments (without the need to purchase heritage floor space). By 1999, the 22 vacant sites were reduced to five.

In response to developers giving preference to the eastern side of Central Sydney, where views of the Harbour and parks could be achieved, the 1996 plan provided an additional bonus of 1:1 FSR for development approved prior to January 2002 along the western corridor of the CBD (i.e. generally considered land between York Street and Darling Harbour).

In the mid- to late 1990s, Sydney's high-rise residential development principally occurred in Central Sydney. This development was largely enabled by the Living City policy which envisioned a 24-hour city with a strong residential presence. The Living City vision was crystallised by planning controls within the 1996 LEP that permitted higher FSRs for residential, hotel and serviced apartment development compared to commercial development.

### 2000 and beyond: design excellence

During the 1990s, developers expressed an increasing desire to deliver high-quality tower buildings designed by renowned architects. This was largely driven by economic imperatives – iconic buildings provided opportunities to maximise floor space and attract commitments in advance from high-status tenants.

From the mid-1990s, approvals were given to a number of architecturally innovative commercial tower projects that have transformed Central Sydney's skyline. Examples include the ABN AMRO (Aurora Place) tower designed by Renzo Piano and Deutsche Bank Place designed by Norman Foster and Partners.

By the late 1990s, design excellence was an established policy position of the City of Sydney. Development applicants had to demonstrate how design excellence would be achieved, and buildings were subject to open or limited architectural competitions, or designed by renowned architects.

Design excellence was initially formalised by the City of Sydney's planning controls in 2000. The controls require that a building envelope is approved for buildings above 55 metres in height or on sites exceeding 1500 square metres, and then required to undergo a design excellence process. This can be done through a competitive architectural design process or through the consideration of design alternatives.

Since 2000, there have been over 150 design competitions held in the City of Sydney, making high-quality building design a key defining feature of all new buildings in Central Sydney.

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City of Sydney, by M. S. Hill  
3 September 1888



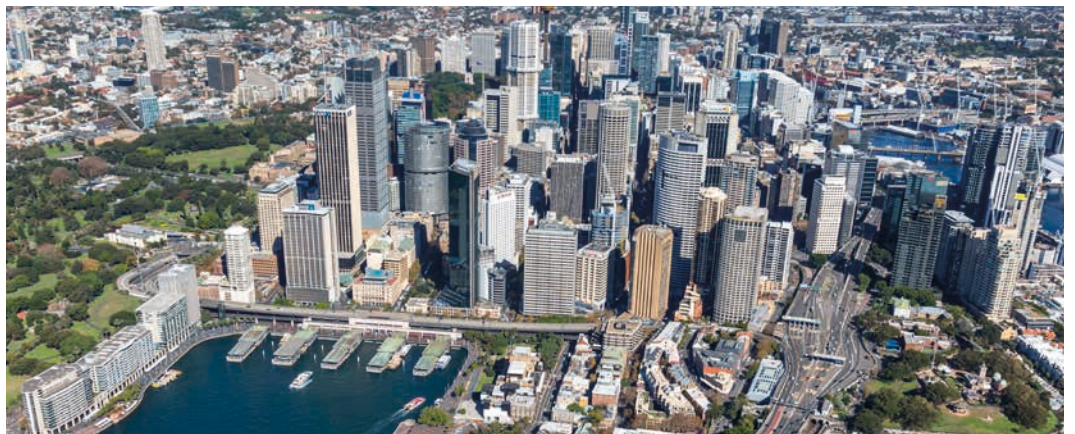
**2\_2**  
The Central Spine, 1960  
1971 Central Sydney Strategy



**2\_3**  
The Central Spine, 1970  
1971 Central Sydney Strategy



**2\_4**  
Sydney today  
Source: Sydney Aerial  
Photography, 2015,  
Sydney Images





## 2.2

### Policy and governance

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This sub-section describes the Strategy's guiding documents and governance. It outlines how the Strategy is overseen, what coordination and collaboration is needed to do this, and what roles and responsibilities are assigned to each stakeholder.

## Guiding documents

While the Central Sydney Planning Strategy represents an evolution of the 1971 Strategic Plan, it has its foundation in two other key plans: the City of Sydney's 'Sustainable Sydney 2030' and the NSW government's A Plan for Growing Sydney.

### Sustainable Sydney 2030

Sustainable Sydney 2030 is a community strategic program for the City of Sydney's sustainable development to 2030. Created in 2007 with the help of tens of thousands of Sydneysiders, it established a vision for the City of Sydney as green, global and connected. Sustainable Sydney 2030 represents a set of goals that transforms the way we live, work and play, and is the cornerstone of all of the City of Sydney's work. It is based on how residents, visitors, workers and businesses described the kind of city they wanted: a city that cares about the environment, has a strong economy, supports the arts and that connects its people to each other and to the rest of the world. The Strategy is inspired by and is consistent with the goals of Sustainable Sydney 2030. The Strategy envisions a plan for Central Sydney that reaches not only to 2030, but beyond.

### A Plan for Growing Sydney

The NSW Government envisions metropolitan Sydney as a strong global city and a great place to live. To achieve this, A Plan for Growing Sydney (the Plan) sets four goals, intending that metropolitan Sydney will be:

- A competitive economy with world-class services and transport
- A city of housing choice with homes that meet our needs and lifestyles
- A great place to live with communities that are strong, healthy and well connected
- A sustainable and resilient city that protects the natural environment and has a balanced approach to the use of land and resources.

The Plan establishes a series of directions for facilitating a competitive economy, housing choices and great places to live in metropolitan Sydney, as well as a healthy environment. The Strategy is consistent with these goals and directions.

## Planning for the growth of a global Sydney

What makes metropolitan Sydney a "global city" is linked to a broad range of factors, not only population size, growth rate or the height of buildings – but include also our economy, human capital, liveability, cultural offerings, accessibility and environment. Metropolitan Sydney is one of the world's highest ranked global cities.

Central Sydney's growth should not be at the expense of its global status. The challenge for Central Sydney is to ensure it can accommodate reasonable growth to support its role in a multicentre metropolitan Sydney. The challenge for metropolitan Sydney is to enhance transport and technological connections between its centres to encourage growth and the fast and effective flow of capital, trade, ideas and people.

Both Sustainable Sydney 2030 and A Plan For Growing Sydney include strategic objectives for maintaining and growing a global metropolitan Sydney. The Strategy aligns to these objectives, as outlined below in Sustainable Sydney 2030's and the Plan's opening directions.

### Sustainable Sydney 2030

- *Strategic Direction 1 – A globally competitive and innovative city*
- *Objective 1.1 – Plan for growth and change in the City Centre*
- *Action 1.1.1 – Ensure the City Plan provides capacity for employment growth in the City*
- *Action 1.1.3 – Plan for long-term increased development opportunities*

### A Plan for Growing Sydney

- *Direction 1.1 – Grow a more internationally competitive Sydney CBD*
- *Action 1.1.1 – Create new and innovative opportunities to grow Sydney CBD office space by identifying redevelopment opportunities and increasing building heights in the right locations.*
- *Action 1.1.2 – Create new opportunities to grow Sydney CBD office space by expanding the CBD's footprint, particularly along the Central to Eveleigh corridor.*

Employment growth is key, and the Strategy plans for and provides capacity for it, noting that Central Sydney's ability to accommodate employment growth, and therefore compete for capital, business, visitors, knowledge workers, and academics and their students, is intrinsically linked with the ability for metropolitan Sydney to maintain its global status.

## 2.5

What makes Sydney “global”?

	City Ranking	Index
Business	6 of 30 (up from 12)	PwC Cities of Opportunity 2014 – Ease of doing business index
Connectedness	5 of 30 (up from 17)	PwC Cities of Opportunity 2014 – City Gateway index
Cost	7 of 30 (up from 26)	PwC Cities of Opportunity 2014 – Cost
Economy	15 of 84 (up from 21)	Financial Centres Futures – Global Financial Centre Index 2015
Education	4 of 50 (#4)	QS Top Universities – Best Student Cities 2015
Health and Safety	4 of 30 (down from 3)	PwC Cities of Opportunity 2014 – Health, Safety and Security Index
Infrastructure	13 of 30 (up from 24)	PwC Cities of Opportunity 2014 – Transportation and Infrastructure Index
Innovation	17 of 445 (up from 20)	2thinknow – Innovations Cities Index 2014
Liveability	5 of 25 (up from 11)	Monocle’s 2015 Most Liveable Cities
Reputation	1 of 100 (up from 3)	Reputation Institute – City RepTrak Index 2015
Social and Cultural Life	8 of 40 (up from 10)	The Mori Memorial Foundation Institute for Urban Strategies – Global Power City Index 2015 – Cultural Interaction Index
Sustainability and Natural Environment	1 of 30 (#1)	PwC Cities of Opportunity 2014 – Sustainability and the Natural Environment Index
Technology	16 of 30 (down from 13)	PwC Cities of Opportunity 2014 – Technology Readiness index
Tourism	4 of 25 (up from 7)	Condé Naste Traveller – Top 25 Cities in the World to Visit 2015

## Coordination and collaboration

Governance structures make a difference in how cities respond to challenges, and how they implement effective city planning. Many major cities overseas have regional governance structures or “city governments” that cover an entire metropolitan region. These can be either unitary governments where the metropolitan council looks after all local government services (for example, Shanghai and Toronto) or a two-tier structure, as in London, where local services are provided by local councils, but a metropolitan body looks after broader issues.

The governance structure of Central Sydney has generally reflected a multi-tier structure. During the history of Central Sydney, a number of its functions and areas of responsibility have been transferred in whole or part to various boards, commissions, trusts and departments established by the State. The more important of these areas are social housing, major roads, water, sewerage, drainage, electricity, many aspects of health and welfare, and urban planning and development approval for “State-significant” sites and development types.

The effect of this gradual erosion of responsibility is that the City of Sydney finds it increasingly more challenging to deliver consistent, streamlined and certain outcomes, especially in the areas of urban renewal precincts, transport and development control. In these areas, there are perceived conflicts of competing strategic priorities and outcomes, and considerable duplication of responsibility and activity.

To address this, the Strategy aligns with state-level frameworks so that the City of Sydney can have a meaningful and productive working relationship with the State, particularly with the Greater Sydney Commission. The Greater Sydney Commission is a dedicated new body with the responsibility for coordinating the various State agencies to ensure that growth is aligned with infrastructure and delivered in the right places at the right time.

At the same time, the two committees that govern the Strategy, the Central Sydney Planning Committee and the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee, represent collaboration between two tiers of government; each committee’s membership represents both the City of Sydney and NSW State. Through these two committees, the City of Sydney can be confident that a whole-of-government approach will contribute to strong, collaborative and effective city planning.

## Roles and responsibilities

Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the city in urban planning is necessary and useful. The City of Sydney’s roles and responsibilities are defined by the New South Wales (NSW) Local Government Act 1993. The basic functions of local councils are:

- **Service functions** – such as providing and maintaining community, health and recreation facilities and municipal, transport and housing services
- **Regulatory functions** – such as development approvals, orders and building certificates
- **Ancillary functions** – such as resumption of land and the power of entry and inspection
- **Revenue functions** – including rates, charges, fees, borrowings and investments
- **Administrative functions** – such as employment of staff, urban planning and reporting
- **Enforcement functions** – such as prosecution of offences, and recovery of rates and charges.

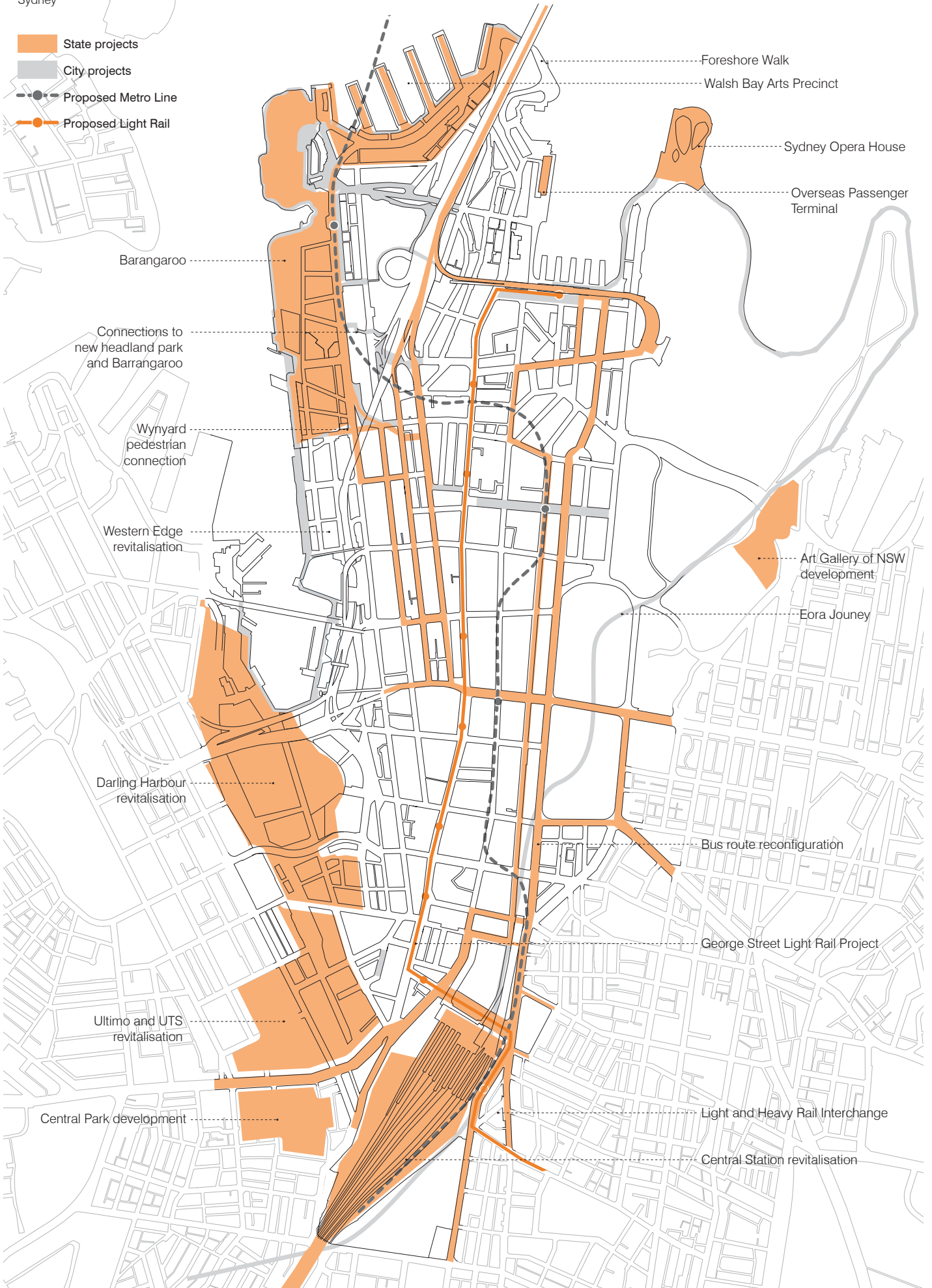
While the City of Sydney’s core service and regulatory roles are defined principally by this legislation, it plays a wider role as an advocate and a partner in planning and funding. The City of Sydney also addresses broader issues identified of strategic importance and which impact on our communities.

Planning and development in the heart of metropolitan Sydney, which contains the Metropolitan Centre, is of fundamental importance not just to the City of Sydney but to the whole State and beyond. Therefore, a workable and democratic mechanism for integrated City–State environmental planning and development control is essential. The City of Sydney Act 1998 represents this mechanism and contains roles and responsibilities specific to Central Sydney. It acknowledges the unique development environment of Central Sydney, as compared to other centres across metropolitan Sydney, and at the same time the imperative that purely local planning and development control remains at council level.



2.6

Current projects shaping Central Sydney





## 2.3

### People

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The City of Sydney is one of the largest, fastest growing and most dynamic local government areas in Australia. Central Sydney is its heart, currently host to nearly 300,000 workers, over 27,000 residents and 480,000 day visitors including a significant share of metropolitan Sydney's over 10 million annual visitors. The Central Sydney Planning Strategy recognises the importance of people to the city, and its principles and development controls aim to put people first in urban planning.

## Workers

Central Sydney is home to Australia's workers of highest value. This means that, at \$104 per hour per worker, Central Sydney has a higher worker productivity than any other Australian centre of employment. This productivity is reflected in the large contribution of Central Sydney and its jobs to the national and state economies: employment in the City of Sydney contributes to over 7 per cent of Australia's GDP and 25 per cent of NSW's GDP.

This means that jobs matter – and contribute to the maintenance and growth, as well as the global competitiveness, of metropolitan Sydney. Continuing to attract workers to Central Sydney has benefits that flow onto the nation and state. With a total workforce population of 300,000 people<sup>1</sup>, Central Sydney houses 20 per cent of metropolitan Sydney's workforce. And at over 80,000 jobs per square kilometre, Central Sydney represents one of the highest density CBDs in the world.

This large pool of highly skilled workers and access to an extensive customer base are reasons businesses choose to be located in Central Sydney. So it is essential that the City of Sydney provides business of all types with easily accessible opportunities to grow. This growth must be balanced with sustaining the factors why people choose to work in Central Sydney: for its livability, vibrancy, natural beauty and its strong cultural and community identity.

Since the early 1990s, Central Sydney has experienced steady employment growth. For many, the 2000 Summer Olympic Games represented metropolitan Sydney's first steps onto the world stage, when it first established itself as a truly global city. Even with the economic downturn in 2007/2008 when employment growth dipped, the strength and diversity of Central Sydney's employment sector, with ties to mining profits, strong Asian investment and burgeoning creative clusters, meant that the numbers of employees and businesses has continued to grow in Central Sydney.

The predominant industry sectors in Central Sydney are Finance and Financial Services and Professional and Business Services. These two sectors combined employ over 50 per cent of the workforce, representing the greatest concentration of knowledge-intensive industries in Australia (refer to 2\_8).

The composition of workers within Central Sydney varies significantly north and south of Bathurst Street. North of Bathurst Street, unsurprisingly, Finance and Financial Services and Professional and Business Services make up 60 per cent of the total workforce population. South of Bathurst Street, these two sectors account for only around 30 per cent (refer to 2\_10).

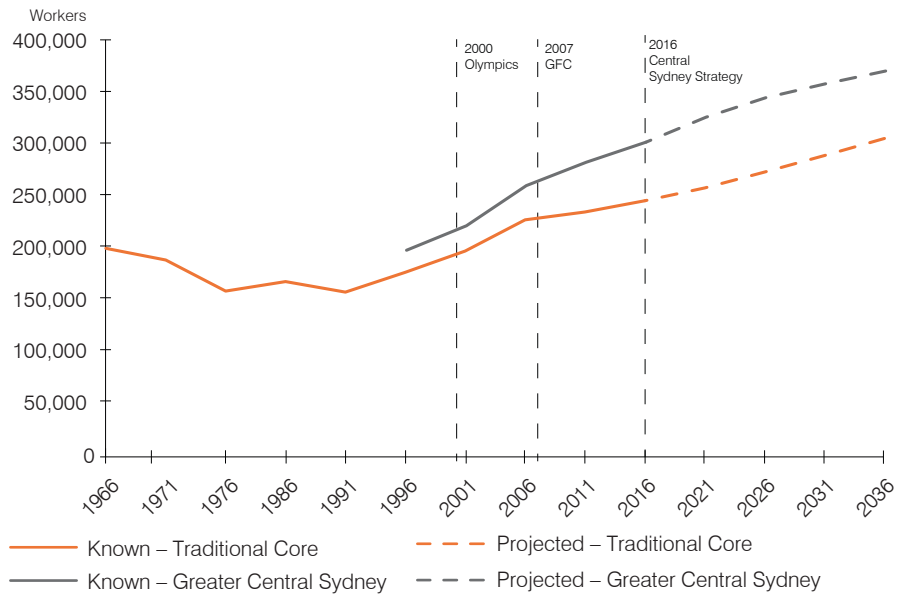
North of Bathurst Street represents a traditional global CBD in regards to the predominance of office space and a workforce that operates 9 to 5, 5 days a week. The areas south of Bathurst Street are much more diverse. The workforce is more evenly proportioned between retail services, technology services, food and drink premises, and government use – and they use the city and its services in more diverse ways and outside of traditional office hours.

Between 1991 and 2012, Central Sydney's traditional core employment population grew by close to 50 per cent. Employment losses in recent years in Central Sydney are attributed primarily to conversions of employment land and floor space to residential strata developments.

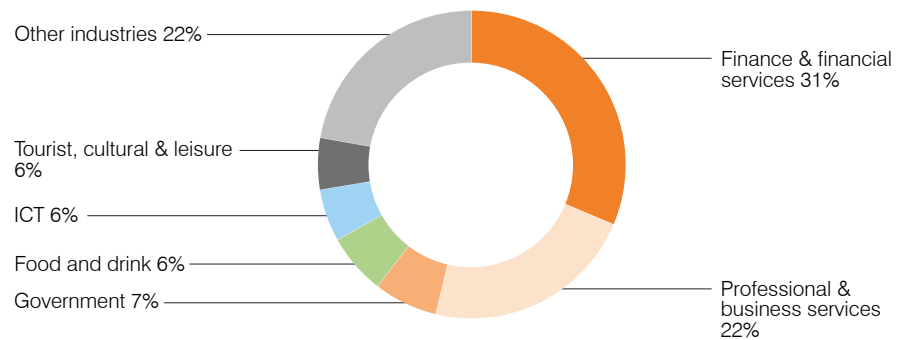
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<sup>1</sup> The workforce population of 300,000 represents the worker population for greater Central Sydney as measured in 2012 and estimated for 2015. The estimated growth of these combined areas is shown against the growth of Central Sydney's traditional core in Figure 04\_01. The traditional core area growth is provided as a historical reference as data for this area is the most accurate across a larger time period.

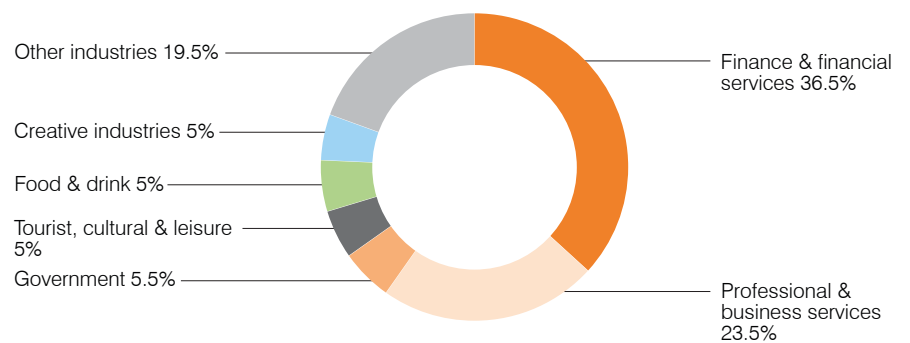
**2\_7**  
 Worker growth – Central Sydney Traditional Core and Greater Central Sydney  
 Known and projected 1966–2036



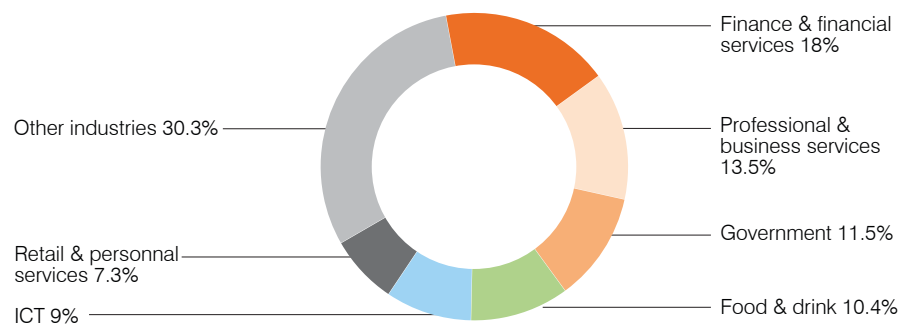
**2\_8**  
 Workers by industry  
 Greater Central Sydney



**2\_9**  
 Workers by industry  
 North of Bathurst Street



**2\_10**  
 Workers by industry  
 South of Bathurst Street



## Residents

Central Sydney is not only a place where people work and visit: people live here. Going about their daily tasks, residents contribute to Central Sydney's vitality as well as the image of Central Sydney as lived in, cared for and looked after.

Central Sydney provides very high amenity for residents. The proximity to the largest concentration of high-wage employment opportunities makes it one of the most attractive places to live in Australia.

Central Sydney has high quality streets, parks and squares and generous continuous public waterfront access. The active transport modes of walking and cycling are more comfortable and safer than many places that lack a growing network of pedestrian connections and separated cycleways. Heavy rail directly connects Central Sydney to other centres within metropolitan Sydney and the surrounding regions. The domestic and international airports are close, making it easier to travel for work and pleasure.

Entertainment that is not available elsewhere in the state is accessible and frequent in Central Sydney. Living in Central Sydney allows one to be within walking distance of opera, symphony and chamber music, musicals, popular music, dance clubs, small bars and a diversity of amazing restaurants. International and local fashion houses, specialist goods suppliers and department stores are also concentrated here.

Much of this amenity is provided for residents throughout metropolitan Sydney and indeed the state; its consequence is that it engenders a high demand for residential accommodation in Central Sydney.

Between 1996 and 2012, the residential population of Central Sydney more than quadrupled from around 6,500 to 25,000 residents, a demonstration of the success of the City of Sydney's Living City Policy (refer to 2\_11).

In 2012, the two most populous age groups were of "tertiary education and independence age" and the "young workforce", reflecting a large student population and a highly mobile and educated young workforce (refer to 2\_12).

In 2012, approximately 25,000 Central Sydney residents lived in 12,000 dwellings, 85 per cent of which were multi-storey apartments. Occupancy rates were variable depending on location. Between 2007 and 2012, occupancy rates for dwellings north of Bathurst Street fell from 1.75 residents per dwelling to 1.56. Yet south of Bathurst Street, occupancy rates rose dramatically from 2.04 to 2.54 reflecting a predominance of share accommodation.

Central Sydney is multicultural with growing numbers of residents from China, Indonesia and Thailand. Over 75 per cent of the area's residents were born overseas, more than 50 per cent of whom arrived in Australia since 2006. This is the largest concentration of migrants in the City of Sydney, much higher than the City's average of 49 per cent. This community includes international students studying at the University of Sydney, the University of Technology and other educational institutions (refer to 2\_13).

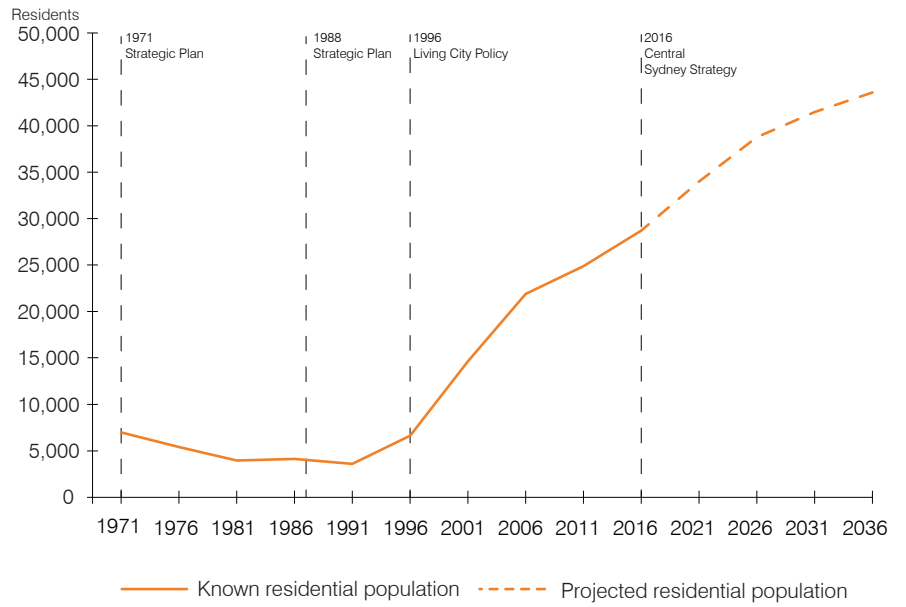
Central Sydney is one the least disadvantaged areas of the City, with the lowest number of low-income households, social housing and single-parent households of Sydney's four city areas. While 23 per cent of Central Sydney households earn more than \$2,500 per week and are considered high income, the average weekly household earnings are lower than other city areas, where closer to 30 per cent of households are high income. This lower average is partly because just 16 per cent of households are high income in the areas south of Bathurst Street, and only 11 per cent in the suburb of Haymarket, the lowest percentage of households in the City of Sydney.

Pockets of disadvantage are concentrated in Millers Point, Dawes Point and the Rocks where social housing has historically been located. However, these communities are undergoing significant change with the NSW Government selling off social housing.

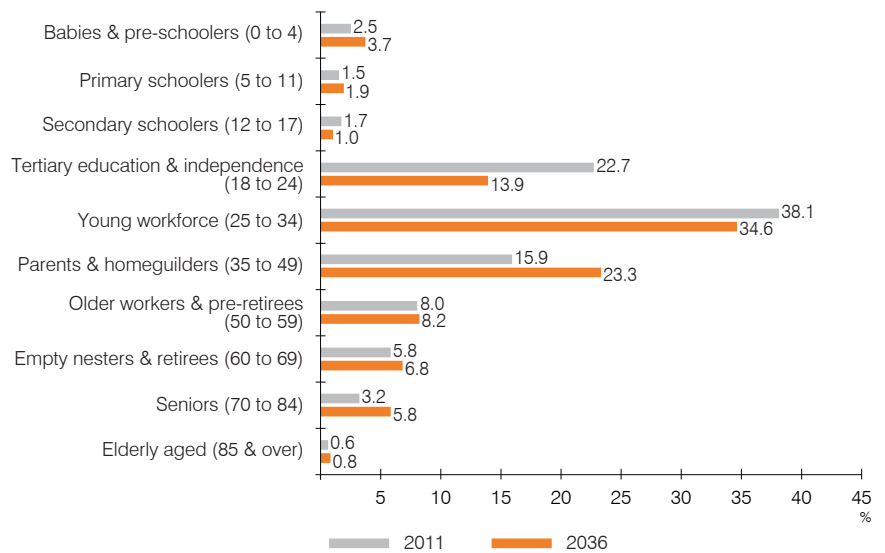
As metropolitan Sydney's social and cultural engine, the City of Sydney is committed to ensuring Central Sydney is welcoming to all and culturally inclusive. The City of Sydney does this by celebrating metropolitan Sydney's diverse community and cultural groups through social, community and cultural facilities; and by providing a diverse choice of housing and workplace.

Central Sydney is of vital importance to community groups across metropolitan Sydney; in turn, communities are valued for contributing to the modern identity and image of Central Sydney as vibrant, multicultural and inclusive. It is therefore important that the economic growth of Central Sydney is balanced with the growth of those facilities and programs that bring value to the residents of Central Sydney, and make metropolitan Sydney a city of choice to move to, live in, work in, visit and enjoy.

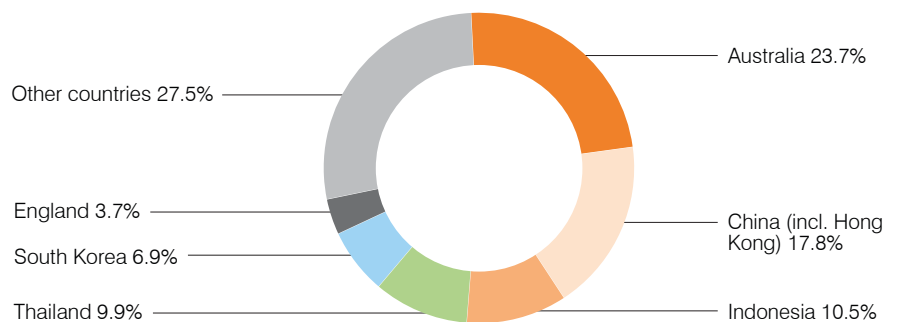
**2\_11**  
Residential population of Central Sydney  
Known and projected 1970–2036



**2\_12**  
Residents in Central Sydney  
Age profile



**2\_13**  
Residents in Central Sydney  
Australian-born and migrants (2011)



## Visitors

Tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. It contributes significant economic growth and diversification across a wide range of employment opportunities. Tourism generates more than \$30 billion of the state economy every year, and contributes approximately \$36 million a day across metropolitan Sydney.

Metropolitan Sydney is Australia's leading destination for tourists and is the gateway to NSW: it attracted 10.5 million visitors in 2012; 4.3 million of those stayed within the City of Sydney. Those visitors made a significant local economic impact, spending more than \$5 billion in 2012 with around \$1 billion spent on shopping and \$2.8 billion in hospitality.

Because visitors spend their money on a variety of activities – such as accommodation, transport, shopping, restaurants and attractions – a wide range of businesses benefit from across the metropolitan area. The tourism industry supports 10,000 businesses, makes up 11 per cent of Sydney's workforce and provides a total of 47,000 jobs: 26,700 people directly and 20,300 people indirectly employed.

Close to half of all visitors from overseas and two-thirds of international business travellers come to metropolitan Sydney as their first Australian destination, confirming metropolitan Sydney's status as Australia's only global city. In 2011/12, over 2.5 million business visitors from abroad and around the country stayed in metropolitan Sydney.

At the end of 2012, metropolitan Sydney's accommodation providers recorded close to 80 million visitor nights (refer to 2\_14). Sydney is home to 60 per cent of metropolitan Sydney's hotel rooms and around 27,500 people stayed within Sydney on any given night in 2012. The majority of hotels are located in Central Sydney, but with a growing number to the south in the precincts surrounding Central Railway Station and Broadway, where a large number of backpacker hostels attract visitors.

Cruise ship arrivals continue to be the fastest growing area of the tourism sector. The 2012/13 season was the busiest on record with 265 cruise ships docking in Sydney Harbour. The combined economic contribution to the NSW economy of the cruise ship industry was \$350 million in 2010/11; this is forecast to grow to \$1.1 billion in 2019/20.

In 2012, about 60 per cent of Sydney visitors who stayed in paid accommodation were leisure travellers, almost 30 per cent were corporate travellers, and about 4 per cent visited for meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE). Although corporate travellers are fewer, they occupy a similar number of rooms as leisure travellers, who tend to have more people per room.

Over the last 10 years, the proportion of corporate and MICE visitors staying in upscale hotels has increased, but there has been a decline of these visitors in standard hotels. Standard hotels have had growth in leisure and education visitors, who are also choosing to stay outside of Central Sydney.

As well as supporting the tourism sector, visitors coming for business, exhibitions, conferences and meetings are important to expanding Sydney's global business networks and opportunities.

Whether Central Sydney remains a popular destination for international visitors is dependent on its ability to respond flexibly to their needs and interests with events, public spaces, and a diversity of accommodation and visitor services that can respond to different levels of demand.

### Day visitors and students

On any given day, Central Sydney attracts 480,000 day visitors, who come to shop, be entertained, to learn, to visit friends and to conduct both personal and corporate business. Day visitors combined with international and domestic visitors are responsible for an estimated 20 to 25 per cent of Sydney's retail turnover.

A key category of day visitors are students. Central Sydney is home to Sydney University, the University of Technology and numerous smaller colleges, attracting thousands of students into the city each day. With 35,000 students studying within the City of Sydney each year, their economic contribution and their employment in service industries are crucial elements of Central Sydney's culture and community.

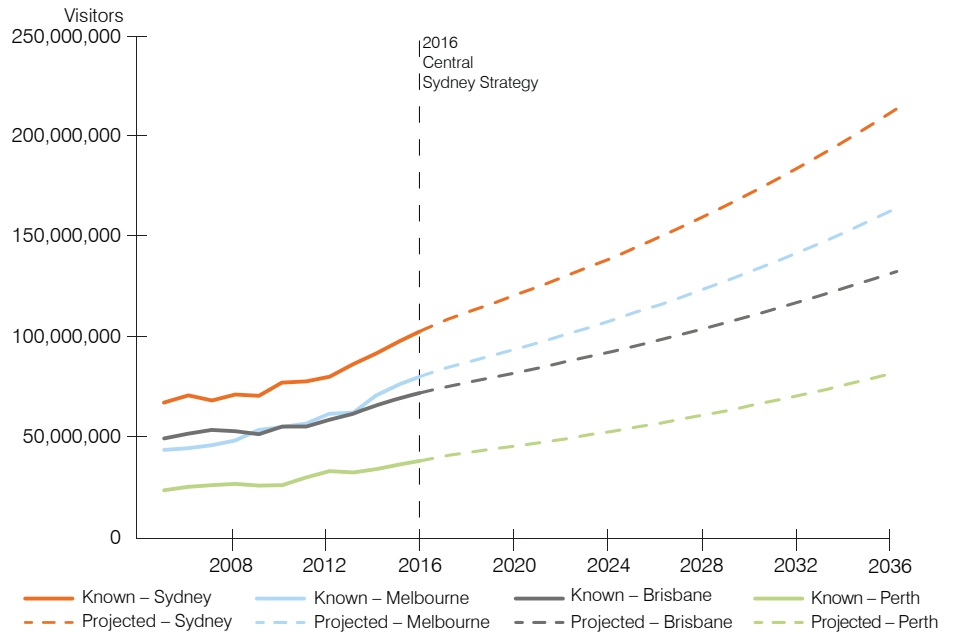


**2\_14**

Annual visitors to major Australian cities

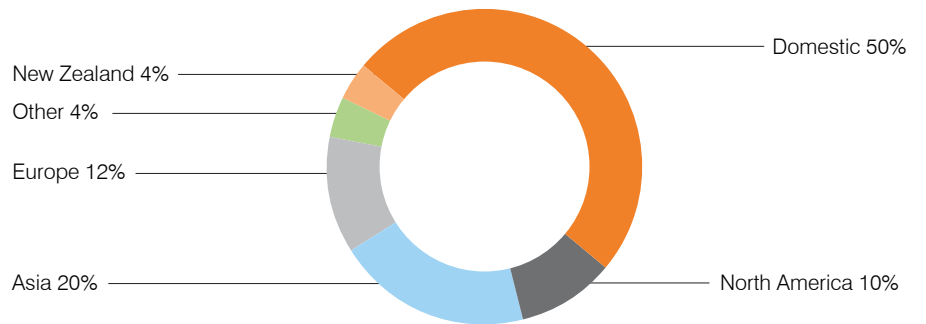
Known and projected 2005–2036 by capital city tourism region

Source: State tourism forecasts, 2014, Austrade and City of Sydney



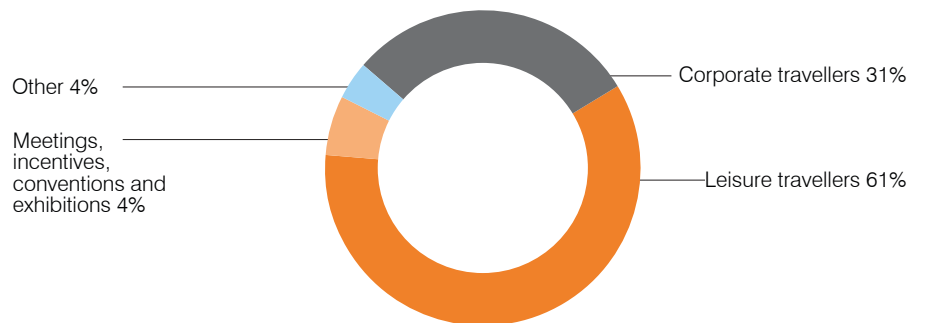
**2\_15**

Visitors to Sydney  
Place of origin



**2\_16**

Visitors to Sydney  
Reasons for visit





## 2.4 Place

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Central Sydney is a unique place with a stunningly beautiful physical setting and a warm climate, contributing to people spending much time outdoors. Its unique shape has implications for how people move around the space, and enjoy public spaces and views. Its orientation and topography can create both sunny streets and parks, as well as uncomfortable conditions, including that caused by too much wind. Central Sydney is surrounded by and rich with green spaces and parks. Central Sydney's ecology is dominated by planted native and exotic trees; landscaping of street-lined streets and parks are an important part of Central Sydney's sense of place.

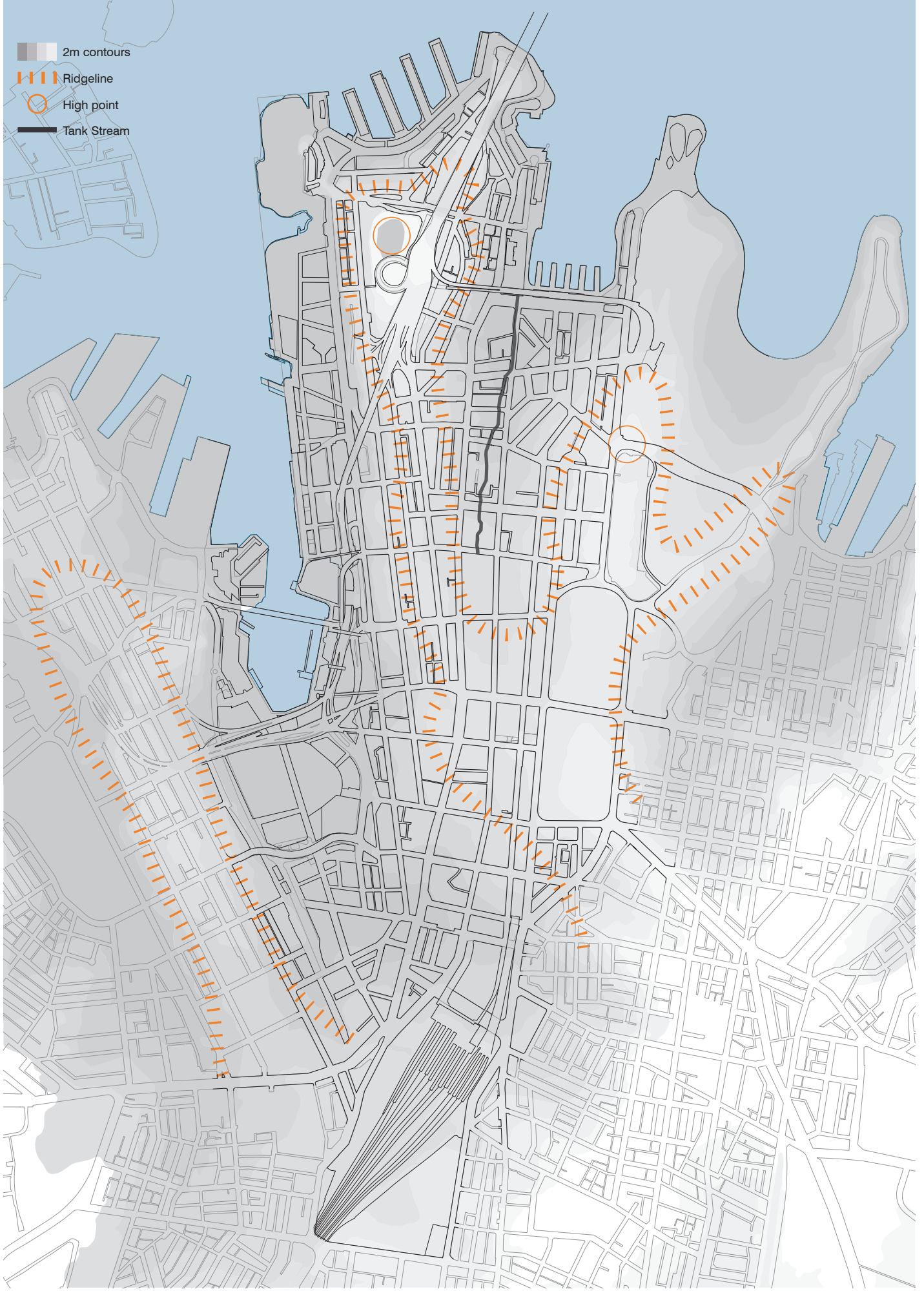
## Physical setting

Sydney's first water supply was called the Tank Stream, and Central Sydney is built in the valley around it, the Tank Stream valley. The Tank Stream now runs underneath Central Sydney, but its fresh water was one of the main reasons why Europeans set up camp in Sydney Cove in 1788. The stream drained swampy areas that existed around what is now Hyde Park, and flowed north into Sydney Cove or Warrane (also spelt as War-ran, Warrang and Wee-rong), its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander name as recorded in a number of First Fleet journals.

If you travel west from Macquarie Street down any of Central Sydney's streets, you can still see how the streets dip down to where the Tank Stream flowed, before rising up again towards George Street. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander name of the stream is not known, but it was of significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a source of drinking water and for the resources that grew along its banks.

Warrane and Sydney Harbour were integral to the everyday lives of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The women line-fished from their nowies (canoes) while the men speared fish from the shoreline.

Today, Central Sydney's natural landscapes, including its parks, shores and gardens, create the magnificent setting for a world-class city. Central Sydney is a peninsula bound by the harbour to the north, the Royal Botanic Gardens and Hyde Park to the east, railway yards to the south and Darling Harbour to the west. Its form, like an outstretched hand, reaches into the quiet waters of Sydney Harbour to create a variety of small bay areas and inlets along its 9 kilometres of shoreline. The different topography of land create views and variety. The land rises steadily to the south from Circular Quay with knolls at Observatory Hill and the Macquarie Street government precinct, and rises more dramatically from Darling Harbour, following the contours of the valleys and waterways known by the local Aboriginal peoples and the First Settlers.



## Climate

Central Sydney is an outdoor city located on the southern shores of Sydney Harbour; its climate and lifestyle are major points of difference to other national and global urban centres.

It is a sunny city. Located in the South Temperate Zone on the 34th parallel south circle of latitude, Central Sydney enjoys great access to sunlight in its streets, parks and other public places. For three to four months over summer, the streets and spaces around Central Sydney are filled with sunlight. The sun can be very hot, leading people to seek shade. In the remaining months of the year, the streets and spaces of Central Sydney are more shaded through parts of the day due to the lower sun angle.

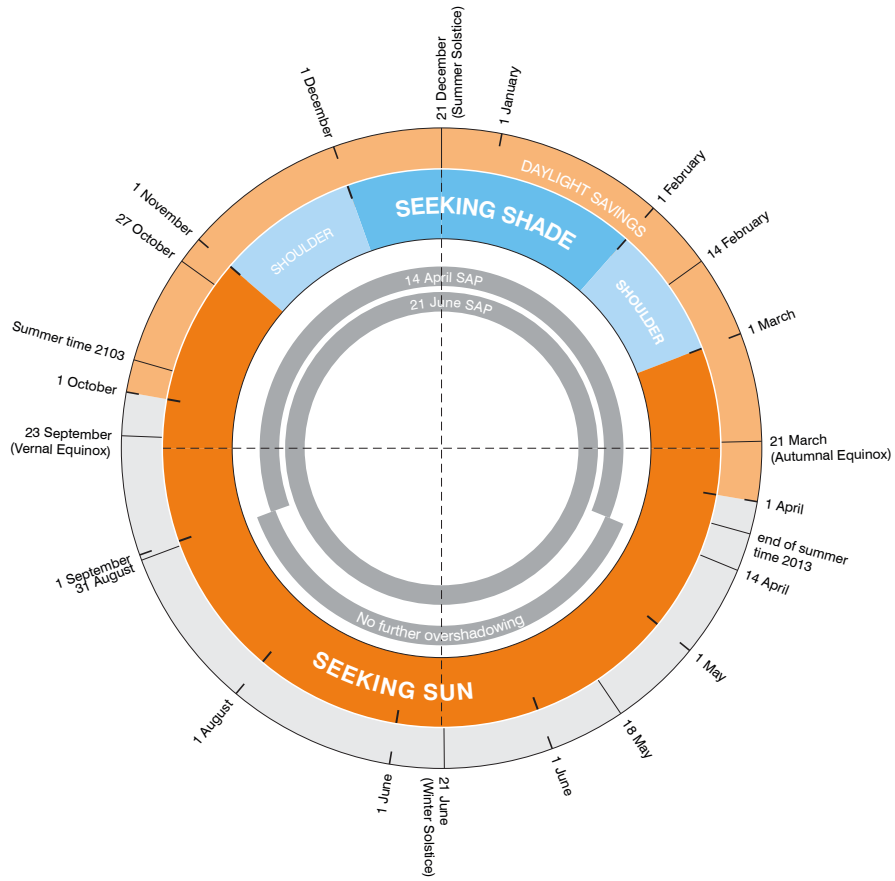
Despite this shading, many aspects of buildings and streets – such as their materials, heights, spacing, orientation and ground cover – contribute to the “urban heat island effect”. This means that Central Sydney heats up during the day and retains this heat well into the night. A well-planned city can actively reduce the urban heat island effect and prevent excessive heat from being a stress on a city’s community, plants, and its road, water and energy infrastructure.

During most of the year, people seek out direct sunlight in public open spaces. The landscape naturally creates varying degrees of light and dark spaces related to topography. Some of the lower-lying areas of Central Sydney’s topography, or southern slopes, are naturally darker; this has been exacerbated by the development of taller buildings on narrow streets. Combined with the orientation of Central Sydney’s streets and prevailing winds, this can, in some streets and spaces, create environments that are uncomfortable, dark, and cold.

Central Sydney is warm and windy, and generally with little rain. The average daily mean temperature ranges from a high of 25.9°C. in January to a low of 8.1°C. in July. The mean annual rainfall is 1213 millimetres. Rain falls only on an average of 8.3 days a month, and often comes in short deluges on summer afternoons.

Climatic changes are predicted for Central Sydney within the next four decades, including periods of extended extreme heat (multiple days when the temperature exceeds 35 degrees) and more intense rainfall events.

**2\_18**  
Solar calendar



**2\_19**  
Wynyard Park  
12.30pm 21 June 2013



**2\_20**  
Wynyard Park  
12.30pm 4 July 2013



**2\_21**  
Wynyard Park  
12.41pm 22 August 2013



**2\_22**  
Wynyard Park  
12.20pm 30 August 2014



## Wind

Prevailing winds strongly influence the mood of Central Sydney at any given moment. Summer winds consist of sea breezes from the northeast that tend to bring welcome relief on hot summer days. Southerlies, while refreshing, can be strong and associated with frontal storm systems which can last for several days. Winter winds tend to be the strongest of the year and are associated with winds from the west. Winds from the west are driven by inland conditions and can be warm or cold depending on the time of year.

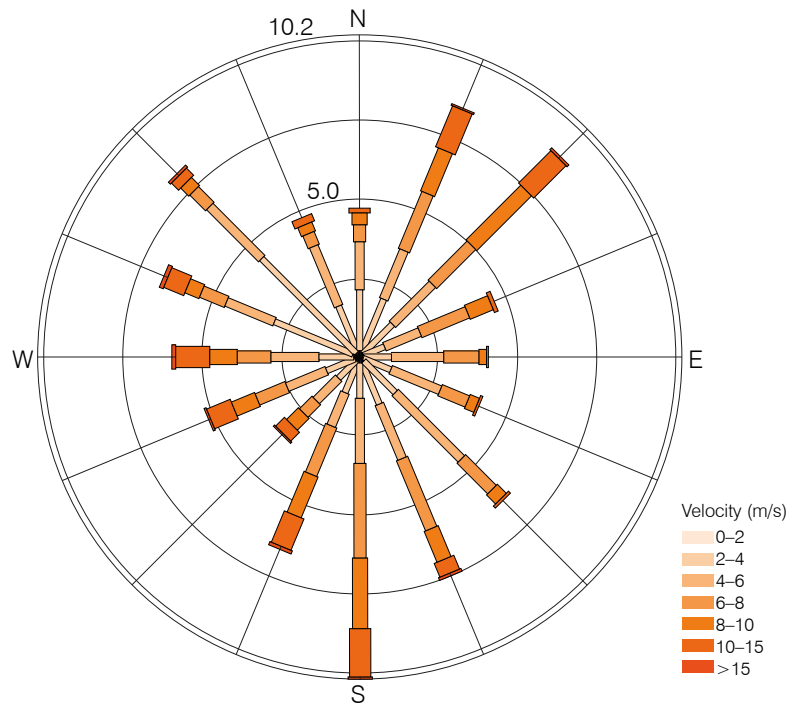
With one side of Central Sydney exposed to the strong westerly winds and the other side to the strong northeast and south-easterly winds, Central Sydney is only protected against the strong southerlies with its street grid and rising land form dispersing potentially uncomfortable conditions.

Central Sydney's wind environment is a major determinant of amenity for pedestrians and people wanting to linger in public places. It can be very uncomfortable or even dangerous to be in very windy places and must be taken into account in terms of Central Sydney's architecture and design.



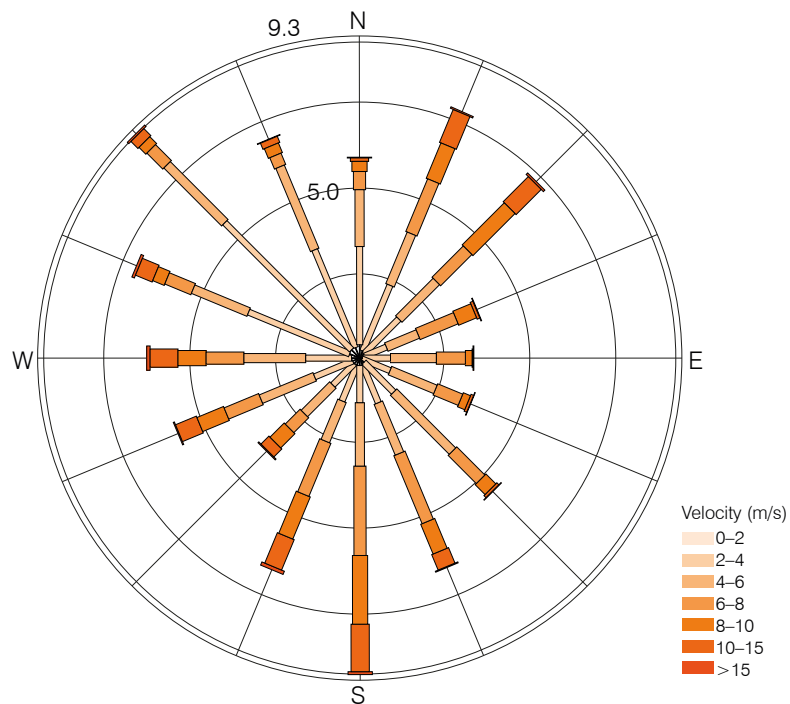
2\_23

Wind rose – Sydney airport  
Corrected to open country terrain  
1995–2014, all months  
6am – 10pm  
10m height  
Calm –0.6%



2\_24

Wind rose – Sydney airport  
Corrected to open country terrain  
annual, all hours  
1995–2014  
Calm 1%



## Green spaces and parks

Central Sydney is bound by green spaces that are nationally significant, and make an important contribution to the experience, image and memories of Central Sydney. Enhanced by our attractive climate and physical setting, they are a key attraction for both visitors and residents, acting as meeting places and landmarks, and the backdrops for film, photos and postcards.

Central Sydney's green spaces encompass the shore and parks. Sydney Harbour, synonymous with metropolitan Sydney and Australia, surrounds Central Sydney with a coastline fringed with many opportunities for beautiful views and public access to a foreshore promenade. For many people, the Harbour and its foreshore are the way they orient themselves in Central Sydney.

Open green space, including the Royal Botanic Gardens, Hyde Park and the Domain, make up close to 40 per cent of Central Sydney's land. With a park within at least 500 metres walking distance no matter where you are, Central Sydney is an area that highly benefits from landscaped open space. In fact, only a small proportion of properties are not within 400 metres walking distance of a large grassed area. These vast parklands offer a diversity of recreational possibilities for Central Sydney's community and with their quiet, gentle sensory stimulation, space for events, and low noise and pollution levels, beautifully oppose the characteristics of a dense and busy urban centre.



## Ecology

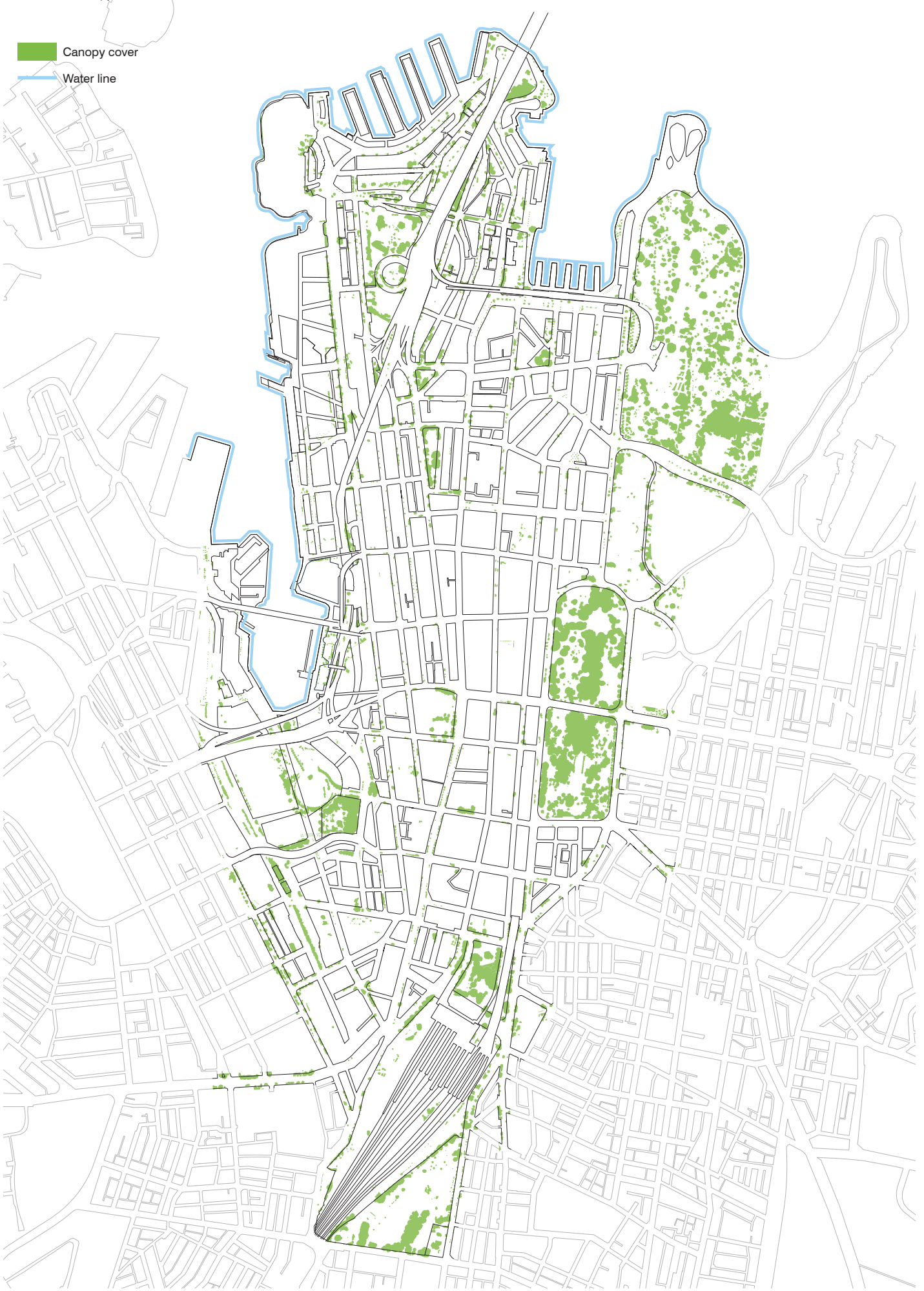
Central Sydney's ecology has changed much over the previous centuries. In 1788, Central Sydney and its surrounds were covered in a vast, uninterrupted mosaic of vegetation which included estuarine and freshwater wetlands; open woodlands on steep sandstone scarps; heaths and Banksia scrubs on old sand dunes; and forests on the richer shale-derived soils of the higher ridges and plateaus.

Since European settlement, the natural vegetation cover has been reduced to a few scattered individual trees and shrubs, descendants of this once vast and complex natural system. These descendants are largely confined to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Mrs Macquaries Point, the steep slopes of Garden Island and parts of Glebe.

As natural vegetation was cleared, a new landscape began to take shape. Avenues and parklands of planted native and exotic trees progressively replaced natural landscapes. The new cultivated landscape of Sydney's public parkland, dominated by Moreton Bay Figs and Port Jackson Figs, was established in the mid- to late nineteenth century – a landscape that was to transform the visual and aesthetic character of Central Sydney.

Today, landscaping in Central Sydney is an important way to contribute to the urban ecology, and has a range of environmental, social and economic benefits. Not only does Central Sydney's landscaped character contribute greatly to its image, but a thriving urban forest of parks and street trees provides cleaner air, manages noise, filters stormwater and is a cost-effective means of managing Central Sydney's temperature in periods of extreme heat. Trees, shrubs and other plants create important habitat for birds, insects and reptiles – and they make for beautiful city streets also. In an environment characterised by tall buildings, awnings and busy streets, landscaping and street trees have psychological benefits in reducing stress and providing spaces for relaxation and contact with nature. People typically linger, shop and dine longer in tree-lined streets, hence increasing the attractiveness of business and tourism areas, enhancing property values and playing a role in the economic sustainability of the city. And importantly, they provide a sense of place.

The Strategy maximises opportunities within the public domain to improve urban ecology by other measures as well: prioritising streets for people, protecting and widening footpaths and increasing opportunities for street tree planting. The Strategy promotes green walls and green roofs within development sites. The City of Sydney is working to create an urban forest with greater tree canopy and more diversity to provide the proven benefits to cities of plants and trees. For Central Sydney, this means increasing the average total canopy cover to more than 15 per cent by 2030.





## 2.5

### Structure and form

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The structure and form of Central Sydney are as much a part of what makes Central Sydney unique as its more obvious attributes such as its setting, climate and parks. The architecture of buildings, its orientation, the shape of its street grid and precincts, how people interact and respond to what is around them: all of these add up to create an experience of Central Sydney as a special place. Central Sydney hosts beautiful heritage buildings and open spaces that enrich the precincts that surround them. It has an intimate scale and compact nature that appeals to both visitors and workers. Views are an important commodity for people in Sydney, with a challenge to balance their maintenance with a constantly developing and changing centre. All of these factors will need to be taken into account in terms of planning for Central Sydney's future: preserving and maintaining what is positive and unique, while reshaping attributes to meet the needs of tomorrow's Central Sydney.

## Architecture

Central Sydney is undergoing an extended process of transformation. It was once a city comprised of a multitude of moderately scaled brick warehouses and offices, and beautiful sandstone buildings. It is now changing to a city of very large and very tall steel, concrete and glass towers.

The height of Modernism in the 1960s marked this evolution from a mid-scale city to one of high-rises. Modernist architecture, with its iconic towers striving for purity of form, where functionalism, universalism, and economic and constructional efficiency ruled, started to influence the character, feel and environment of the city at street level.

While heritage listings and planning controls for areas with distinct character have preserved some of the fine buildings from Central Sydney's earlier phases of development, much has been lost. And the trend of Modernist redevelopment set up an ongoing conflict between architecture and urbanism – the idea of a city for people and its humanistic focus on their experience.

More specifically, the result of Modernist influences on Central Sydney has been:

- Tall towers that sit in open but difficult-to-use and often overshadowed and windy plazas
- Very large foyers or ground-level and underground empty spaces that are unpleasant and unwelcoming to use, and uninteresting for passersby
- Internal food courts and shopping malls with few retail shopfronts that face the street
- Oversized ground-level building services, and loading and parking facilities that have resulted in large areas of blank walls and cavernous portals for vehicle entry that face the street
- Architectural character, materials and a general shape and size that have no relationship to the surroundings, including repetitious, boring facades with poor quality.

The City of Sydney has developed policies to work with the community, land owners and businesses to moderate the tension between public and private interests. An important tool has been the City's policy for design excellence, achieved through competitive design processes. This policy has delivered a substantial improvement in the quality of architectural design in Central Sydney. However, it requires continual innovation and the City of Sydney needs to continue to shape the culture of architecture and urban planning to focus on public interest and the needs of people.

Further, the design of buildings must support the City of Sydney's strategic direction to attract the most valuable and productive jobs. To do this, Central Sydney's commercial architecture must deliver high-quality workplaces that are desirable environments for workers and boost their work satisfaction and productivity.

All of Central Sydney's architecture must contribute to the host of amenities that attract people to work in and visit the city: shops; retail services; places to eat, drink and socialise; and accessible cultural and entertainment facilities. It is particularly important that these are inviting and available to everyone. This means mostly being located at street level with some services or venues immediately above and below. Central Sydney also has an iconic role in the imagination of Sydney's citizens. The city's tall buildings need to be both memorable and of very high quality to reinforce the pride that Sydneysiders have in their city. Architecture should contribute to public space and, through design skill, protect and contribute to a comfortable, pleasant, delightful and safe public domain. It must address any challenges related to buildings, such as overshadowing, reduced daylight in the streets, glare, noise, footpath crowding at entries, vehicle access that disrupts pedestrians, wind effects on public places and trapping of pollution in street canyons.

The City of Sydney supports the provision of housing with high amenity such as outlook, visual privacy, access to sunlight, natural ventilation and space. This will include a mix of types and costs of housing to support a diverse population. The architecture of apartment buildings must be carefully handled to ensure that all areas of the city remain attractive for commercial developments; they should not be easily distinguished from their commercial neighbours.

Finally, the City has taken a strong role in promoting the maintenance of existing, and creation of new, extraordinary public architecture. Opportunities to create great spaces and buildings will be pursued through the renewal of major institutions and new and reimagined infrastructure projects.



**2\_27**  
Tall buildings in Central Sydney



**2\_28**  
NAB House, George Street – tower forecourt



**2\_29**  
AMP Circular Quay – food court escalators



**2\_30**  
Ground-level building services



## Orientation

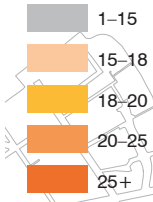
Long and narrow, Central Sydney measures about 1.3 kilometres east to west and about 3.5 kilometres from Walsh Bay to Central Railway Station. Its dimensions make it easy to get around without a vehicle, with the majority of people preferring to walk or cycle: east to west for shorter trips and north to south through its traditional but evolving four precincts – the City Core, Midtown, Western Edge and Southern. Along Central Sydney's Western Edge, its steep land form can be challenging: pedestrians usually opt for a longer but flatter route rather than one that is short but steep.

Central Sydney is oriented northwards towards the harbour and views of the water. Its streets generally run north–south and east–west. Sunlight penetrates the north–south streets more readily than the east–west streets. The northern ends of street blocks, with the best access to sunlight, provide the best locations for pedestrian areas and public spaces like squares, plazas and pocket parks.

The desire for views to the north favours the northern foreshore precincts and the ridges behind them, but in an increasingly dense and compact urban centre, the ability to protect private views comes secondary to the protection and enhancement of public views and the protection of outlook as a focus of the planning framework.

2\_31

Street widths (m)



## Streets

Central Sydney's streets are quite different than others around the world. Global cities like San Francisco, Vancouver, New York and Chicago have typical street grids with clear and legible geometry that promote regular and efficient development and transport. Central Sydney's grid was instead influenced by the natural form of the land, Gadigal trading routes, and decisions made by the first British colony. The grid subtly reinforces the natural forms of hills and valleys. The major ridge lines have been used for long straight thoroughfares such as Macquarie Street and York Street. The spine of Central Sydney, George Street, runs its entire length tracing indigenous trading routes and marking the mouth of Tank Stream.

Between these ridges and across valleys, a fairly ordered but irregular street grid has been established. In places, the grid breaks down altogether, as in the northern end of Central Sydney and in parts of the Haymarket, Surry Hills and Chippendale. It is the narrow and curiously warped streets that gives Central Sydney its unique character and creates the "sense of place" so different from that of more rigidly planned cities, and yet creates its own set of challenges.

A comparison of Central Sydney and the Melbourne CBD illustrates the differences between Sydney and other cities. While Melbourne shares a similar historical background as Central Sydney and a similar history of urban planning, the original layout of each city's grid and has affected the urban development process and traffic differently.

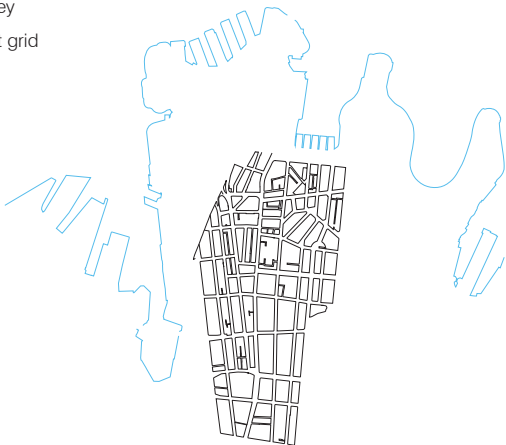
Central Sydney characteristics include:

- Generally narrow street widths of 20 metres
- Narrow east–west blocks, creating more streets running north–south
- Narrow streets lined by high buildings, creating shadows and high wind velocities at street level
- Few laneways as a result of previous development: block amalgamations for office towers destroyed many of Central Sydney's laneways servicing the high buildings. Service is mainly done in the streets, demanding more space for service vehicles and for parking.
- Its containment in a peninsula with everything from rail and roads to buildings and the movement of people seemingly terminating at Circular Quay.

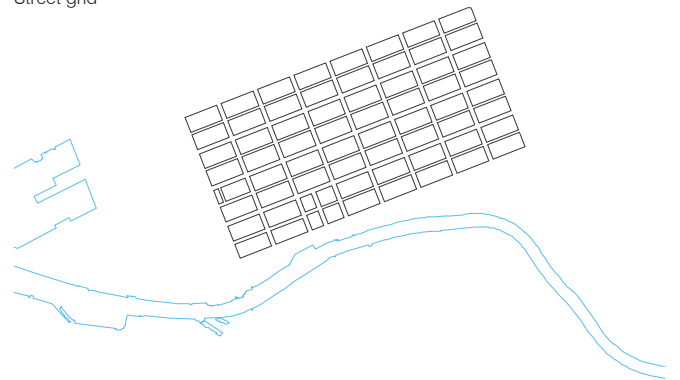
Melbourne CBD characteristics include:

- Generally generous street widths of 30 to 40 metres
- Large east–west blocks creating fewer streets running north–south
- Height controls that have been applied in the City Centre, especially at Swanston Street
- Laneways running through the large blocks servicing tall buildings.
- An orderly pattern of streets and laneways which contributes to a predictable flow of traffic and people.

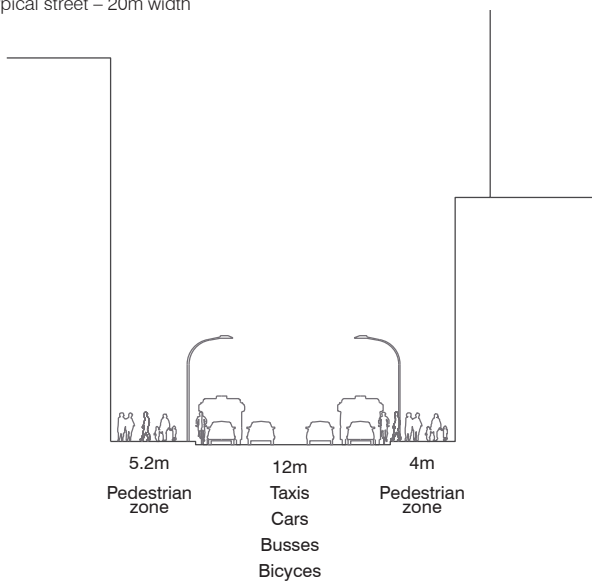
**2\_32**  
Sydney  
Street grid



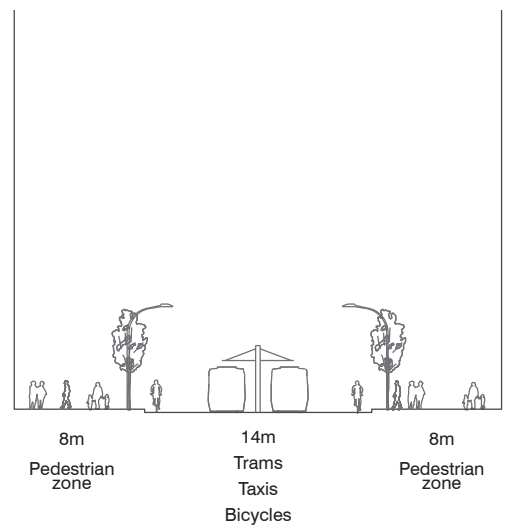
**2\_34**  
Melbourne  
Street grid



**2\_33**  
Sydney  
Typical street – 20m width



**2\_35**  
Melbourne  
Typical street – 30m width



## Heritage

European heritage is physically represented in Central Sydney with the presence of each period from the beginning of European settlement throughout the centre; only a few blocks do not contain buildings or structures from an earlier period. That so much historical fabric has been retained is the result of the City of Sydney's now strong, but tumultuous history of heritage conservation.

The 1971 Central Sydney Strategic Plan was the first plan to recognise the importance of maintaining Central Sydney's character and sense of place in the face of very strong pressures for high-density redevelopment. Through the 1960s, there was little to prevent owners from demolishing historic buildings at will. The ambitious heritage policies of the 1971 Strategic Plan were a huge step forward for Central Sydney.

Where the policies of the 1971 Strategic Plan were a progressive administrative tool in promoting heritage conservation the "Green Bans" of the early 1970 had a greater and direct impact on heritage conservation in Central Sydney. Building unions allied themselves with middle-class environment and residents' groups and the National Trust, refusing to work on projects they considered to damage the environment or destroy heritage. The Builders Labourers Federation refused to demolish any building which the National Trust recommended for preservation and any of the 1700 "classified" buildings in Central Sydney at the time.

The Green Bans changed public opinion on the "inevitability" of the unthinking destruction of heritage, character and lower-end accommodation that came in the form of smaller heritage properties in Central Sydney. Their lasting legacy was State legislation on Environmental Protection, the establishment of the NSW Planning and Environment Commission, the Federal Government's Environmental Impact legislation (both in 1974), and subsequent State legislation to protect historic buildings (1977 Heritage Act) and ensure public participation in environmental decision-making (1979 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act).

By 1983, there was clear progress in heritage conservation with 19 Permanent Conservation Orders and 44 cases pending in Central Sydney. In the 1983 Strategic Plan, the City of Sydney identified seven "conservation precincts" as having completed appraisals and design guidelines.

However, the identification of local heritage items occurred on an ad hoc basis until the early 1990s when the City of Sydney systematically identified and evaluated heritage items, precincts and streetscapes to protect and conserve those of significance under a development control system. It

wasn't until 1996 when heritage listings became formalised as scheduled individual items and precincts in the Central Sydney Local Environmental Plan 1996.

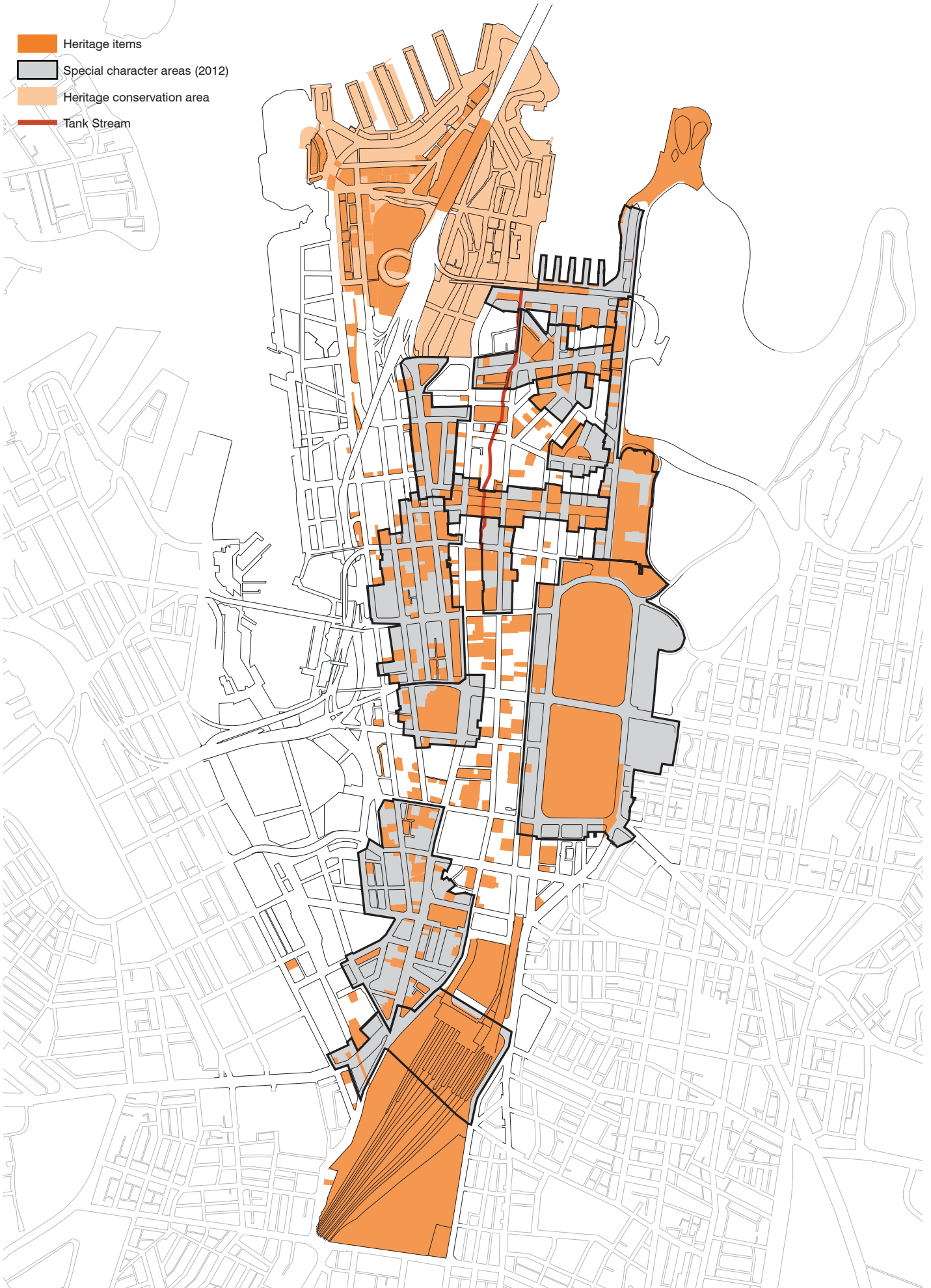
Central Sydney's heritage is the cornerstone of its unique character. But our heritage is not only European. Today's topography was informed by our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage. Evidence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life has survived two centuries of urban development in Central Sydney, typically in the form of stone artefacts, campsites and middens discovered during major excavations for modern developments. It is likely that more discoveries will be made through the continual redevelopment of Central Sydney, revealing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander use of the Tank Stream valley.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage informs the story of Central Sydney, as importantly as our European heritage. In many ways, it requires more careful management and celebration, for it is not as obvious, remembered or known.

Central Sydney is highly significant to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a site of first contact between the Eora and the Berewalgal peoples (meaning people from a distant place: the Europeans) – and there is the continuity of evidence of its history since the First Settlement.

In contemporary Sydney, buildings from different eras reveal a diversity of styles and themes which contribute to a sense of place. Within Central Sydney, precincts have differing functional, architectural and symbolic roles. Their predominantly sandstone masonry facades express a tactile character that captures the daylight and projects a warm look and feel that is uniquely identifiable to Central Sydney.

Heritage buildings are part of Central Sydney's diversity, though the diversity – between new and old – needs to be managed and balanced for the good of the city. The challenge is to create places and spaces with a rich mixture of old and new buildings but with an overall sense of order. The concept of precincts offers an effective basis for developing objectives for urban design and controls that can adapt as precincts evolve and boundaries change. Diversity of precincts is essential to maintain a culturally rich and interesting urban centre. Diversity is also a strong element of Central Sydney's image where new buildings contrast with old; architectural styles vary from Victorian to postmodern; parapet heights step up and down; towers project irregularly into the sky; and arcades and lanes offer different passageways than major streets.



## Intimate scale

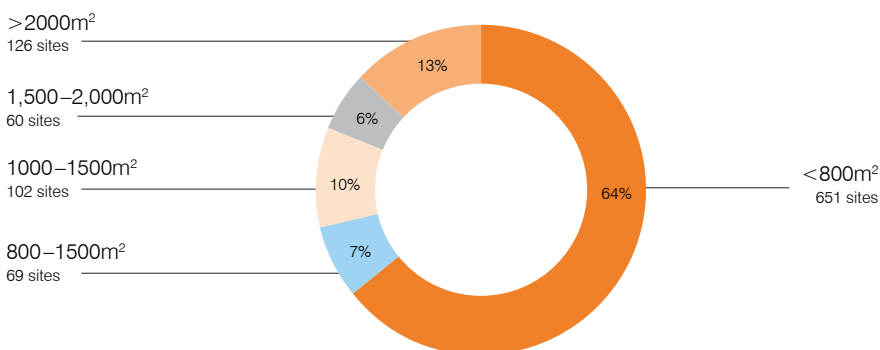
The intimate scale and compact nature of Central Sydney provides for a memorable experience for the pedestrian, one with very human scale. Within slightly warped city blocks, a large number of relatively small lots of land have been redeveloped. The predominance of smaller sites is reflected in the scale of buildings, which is still fairly small, much more so than is usual in comparable cities of North America and Europe.

Small-scale and diverse spaces at street level, in lanes and basements and on the upper floors of buildings, provide for small retail and service tenancies, set in vibrant and attractive streets. The spaces are adaptable, comparatively affordable and support start-up and fledgling businesses. With different owners and leasing patterns than larger developments, organic changes can occur throughout Central Sydney that respond to shifts in fashion and desire – translating to a city that is resilient to economic shifts and able to adapt to the changing social needs of Central Sydney’s broad communities.

At the same time, to realise the full development potential of the city, developments are increasingly proposed for multi-site amalgamations. By grouping smaller sites together, landowners are able to realise greater development potential, accessing higher heights and larger buildings. The City of Sydney is also seeing more and more heritage items being amalgamated and included within the site area of development proposals. These amalgamations and the appropriate consolidation of heritage items into new development proposals represent a positive and efficient use of land. By allowing sites to pool together, Central Sydney is maximising what land it does have to achieve a greater supply of floor space.

The challenge therefore is one of balance, for the planning framework to encourage amalgamations while maintaining Central Sydney’s intimate scale and character. For example, the laneway resumptions of the late 1960s to 1980s, where developments were built over public and private laneways to create some of the city’s largest towers, are no longer seen as best practice for the planning and management of public spaces.

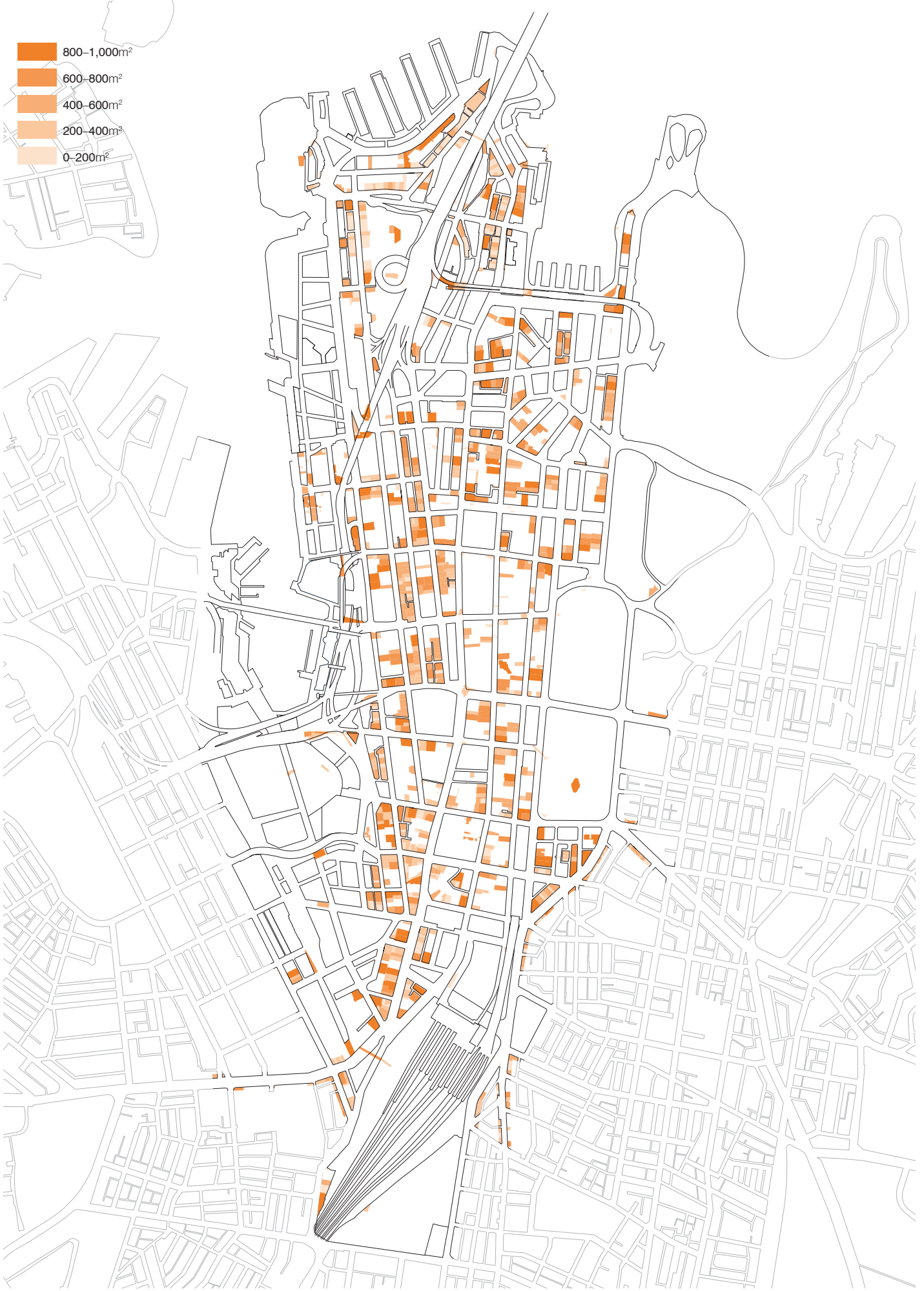
**2\_37**  
Site size in Central Sydney





2\_38

Site size <1000m<sup>2</sup>



## Open spaces

With Central Sydney increasingly being chosen as a place to work, live and visit, open space is becoming the greatest challenge in such a physically constrained setting: its provision, delivery and protection, and ensuring it is sunlit, meaningful and connected.

Central Sydney's open spaces includes big and small green, open spaces (encompassing the green spaces and parks described in sub-section 2.4), as well as public squares and the network of streets, footpaths, malls, laneways and public thoroughfares that connect them. They are all parts of Central Sydney where people congregate and move, and provide opportunities for recreation, rest, contemplation, reflection, public events and social gatherings. These open spaces provide a contrast to and relief from the density and urban materials of Central Sydney's office blocks and towers. They service workers, visitors and residents alike and provide places for Central Sydney's inhabitants to mix and mingle.

Central Sydney's more formal open spaces such as Martin Place, Pitt Street Mall, Sydney Square and Circular Quay are places for people. They make up the spine of Central Sydney's open space network and provide spaces for gathering, demonstrations, people watching, shopping and eating.

Increasingly, it is Central Sydney's growing network of smaller spaces that provide Central Sydney's precincts with local identity and character. A large proportion of properties are farther than 200 metres from public open space (that is not a street or lane). It is important to provide these spaces for workers to sit, visitors to people-watch and residents to meet. Some minor public spaces are dispersed around the centre that are homogenous and lack substance, meaning and purpose. It is these forgotten spaces, laneways and courtyards that require redefinition and connection to promote Central Sydney's character from the inside out.

The City seeks to capture the opportunities created by new development to increase the provision of open space, improve the quality of existing open space and improve the connections between open spaces. New open spaces have largely been created on an ad hoc basis, when individual sites come up for redevelopment, and their distribution around Central Sydney is largely confined to the City Core and the upper part of the Midtown precinct. These smaller spaces have benefits including stimulating retail activity and increasing the profile of local businesses. They increase the diversity of public space offered to Central Sydney's workers, residents and visitors, and can rejuvenate daily life and investment in a precinct.



## Views

Central Sydney contains private and public lands. The majority of public lands consist of streets, squares and parks, without being substantially built upon. Some public lands are occupied by public buildings.

The majority of private land is occupied by buildings that almost fill their sites, though some includes open spaces including gardens, courtyards and setback areas.

The combination of built and unbuilt land allows for views from private and public buildings across private and public open spaces. Due to the varying heights of buildings and their setbacks, views are also available across and around buildings.

As old buildings are replaced with new ones, views are subject to change. Given the constantly changing built environment of Central Sydney, regulating for maintenance of private views is overly restrictive and complex. Maintaining existing private views inhibits change and would render Central Sydney uncharacteristically static.

Central Sydney has a privileged position on a peninsula in a harbour surrounded by water and parklands, containing a large number of highly significant structures and buildings of a height that vastly exceeds its surroundings. This means that the large majority of available views are considered “iconic”. This sets Central Sydney apart from other places; standard principles around views and the sharing of them are not applicable.

Development in a suburban context is flexible. Building adjustments to form are relatively simple through more skilful design. However, the scope is often not available within the confines of planning requirements to adjust the shape of a building in Central Sydney or move its location on the site. For example, tall commercial buildings consist of large regular floorplates and their complex structural requirements and high-quality repeatable exterior cladding reinforces this regularity. For these buildings, better design to provide a better view is rarely possible.

The streets, parks and squares of Central Sydney provide multiple and various public views to pedestrians, providing orientation and relief from the enclosure provided by the buildings of the surrounding city. A few of these views have higher significance due to their association with significant public places and buildings. Some significant views have been purposely composed; for example, the clock tower of Central Station was placed where several streets align.

Other views connect significant places: for example, the Town Hall tower viewed from Hyde Park; and the Lands Department tower viewed from Sydney Cove. Others are important historically: for example, the view from the signal station on Observatory Hill to the South Head Lighthouse.

Others are possibly well remembered in the collective unconscious because of their association with special places over a long period of time: for example the view of the sky at the end of Martin Place viewed from Macquarie Street, that includes the silhouette of the GPO tower, or the view down Bent Street from the steps of the Mitchell Library. These public views from public places are worthy of conservation.

### 2\_40

View west along Martin Place, 1913

Source: State Library NSW



2\_41

View corridor to Central Station clock tower



2\_42

View corridor west along Martin Place



