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**Sydney**

# Sydney lord mayor calls snap Pymont planning review an ‘astounding betrayal of trust’

**Clover Moore warns NSW planning rules at stake after Berejiklian says suburb is ‘open for business and ready to be taken to the next level’**

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Sydney lord mayor Clover Moore is furious after NSW premier Gladys Berejiklian ordered a speedy review of planning controls in Pymont, where the development of a 237 metre tower above Star casino has been blocked. Composite: Lukas Coch/Joel Carrett/AAP

The lord mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore, has warned that “the entire credibility of the planning system” in [New South Wales](#) is at stake after the premier intervened to order a speedy review of planning controls in Pymont, where her own planning department has blocked the development of a 62-storey tower on top of Star casino.

The rejection of the Star proposal for the 237 metre tower, in the historic area zoned for eight storeys to the west of the CBD, has bitterly divided the state government and led to a ferocious campaign by Star, [aided by the Daily Telegraph and radio talkback host Alan Jones](#).

The review by the Greater [Sydney](#) Commission will inevitably result in planning controls for the historic suburb – regarded as a model of urban renewal – coming under intense pressure from developers.

Moore called the review “an astounding betrayal of public trust”, given Pymont residents had chosen to live there based on the council’s planning process.

The mayor, who was due to move [a mayoral minute](#) at the city council meeting on Monday night, said the process was of “vital importance to maintaining public faith in the credibility of the planning system”.

“As residents in Pymont have expressed to me, their suburb is a successful example of urban renewal, guided by master plans and local environment plans with established parameters for redevelopment. But the Star Casino’s proposal undermines this community’s vision for their area,” she said.

“It appears that the certainty that the City of Sydney’s earlier planning process gave to residents in Pymont, which influenced their decisions to live there, is under threat. It is an astounding betrayal of public trust.”

The premier, [Gladys Berejiklian](#), said the NSW government now had a strategic vision for Pymont and the western harbour precinct as “a vibrant residential, entertainment and innovation hub on the fringe of Sydney’s CBD”.

“I am sending a strong message that Pymont is open for business and ready to be taken to the next level,” Berejiklian said.

“Sydney is Australia’s only true global city and we have a unique opportunity before us to transform Pymont and the western harbour precinct into an iconic destination.

“With a growing population, we know there will be more development in Pymont in the future. With that will come opportunities to build more transport links, including a potential Metro station.

“While individual applications will continue to be determined on their merits, this review sends a clear signal that our government believes the Pymont area has a bright and exciting future as a key part of the NSW visitor economy.”

Most of the Victorian terraces and turn-of-the-century warehouses have been preserved in the area, once home to dock workers and a power station, but there is some new development along the waterfront on the western edge.

Whole streets, including main street Harris Street, and many of the warehouses, have been heritage listed.

The Star casino, which was built in 1995 at the power station site, has continually expanded and now includes a 10-storey hotel.

In 2017, the Star lodged plans for a 62-storey, 237m high-rise tower on top of the existing casino, following a design competition. A tower of similar size is being built on the city side of Darling Harbour for the Barangaroo casino, owned by Star’s rival, Crown Resorts.

The Star Tower plans include 204 luxury residential apartments and a 220-room five-star hotel, a similar proportion to Barangaroo.

There were 85 objections from local residents, businesses and the City of Sydney, which has consistently espoused a vision of inner Sydney as a city of villages around the high-rise CBD.



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The Star casino in Sydney. The NSW planning department has blocked the development of a 62-storey tower on top of the casino. Photograph: Joel Carrett/AAP Advertisement

The planning department recommended against the Star tower last month, saying it was “inconsistent with its immediate context and would result in unacceptable visual impacts due to its scale, isolation and visual dominance of the existing Pyrmont character”.

The department said it failed “to promote good design and amenity of the built environment”.

This prompted a furious backlash from Star, backed by the Telegraph and Jones.

The fate of the Star tower was due to be settled by an Independent Planning Commission panel, which was to have held public hearings next month.

Now the premier appears to have preempted that process and signalled that she wants an entirely different future for Ultimo and Pyrmont – potentially as an expansion of the CBD.

The review, which will be conducted over just 50 days, will include the entire peninsula from Broadway down to the tip of Pyrmont and will take in other sites slated for development, including the Sydney Fish Markets and the Powerhouse Museum, which is being moved to Parramatta.

The Greater Sydney Commission is chaired by the former City of Sydney mayor Lucy Turnbull. It will review the current eight-storey limit for the area as well as other planning controls. It is unclear whether the review intends to revisit the hundreds of state heritage listings in the precinct.

The planning and public spaces minister, Rob Stokes, said the review would also include recommendations to the government on how to support a greater diversity of development in the precinct.

“We need to ensure planning rules for the area are still relevant, particularly with major projects planned including the new Sydney Fishmarket, the Ultimo Creative Arts Precinct and Bays Precinct,” Stokes said.

“We must ensure that our planning system is clear and effective in supporting the type and scale of development needed in a top-quality, vibrant, mixed-use precinct.

“We must also ensure that any major plans to transform the area are supported with the right infrastructure to create a vibrant destination for locals, visitors and businesses alike.”

More than 60 architects and planning professionals have signed an open letter to the Independent Planning Commission opposing the Star tower.