

# SYDNEY'S 'TOASTER' BUILDING – AN INTRUDER IN DISTINGUISHED COMPANY

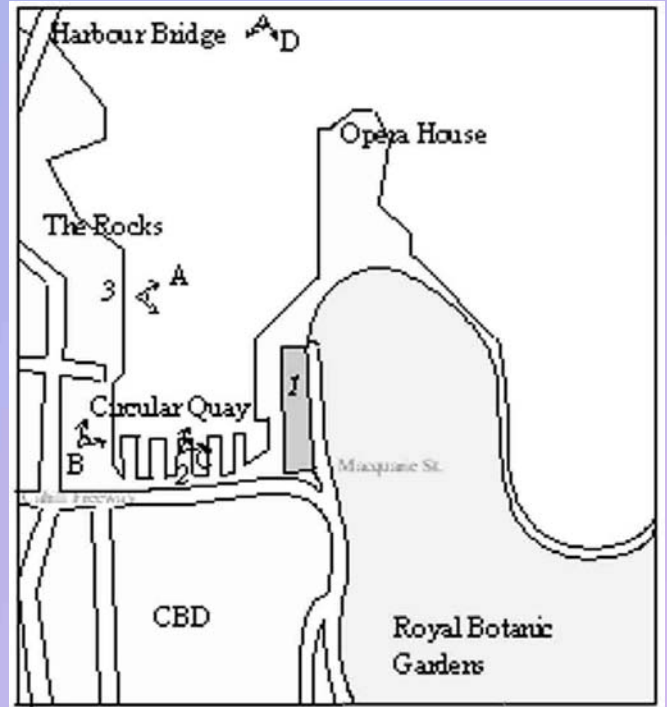
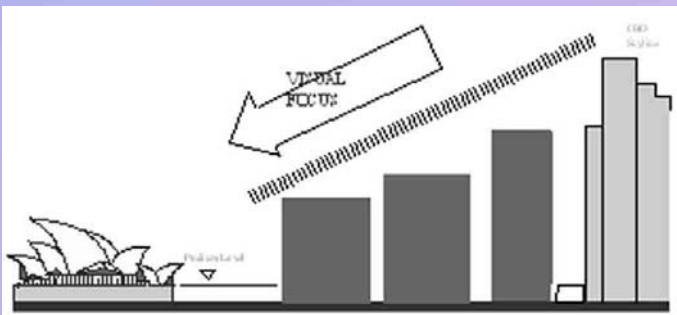
*Dr. Shahed A. Khan*

*Programme Coordinator, Environmental Planning,  
School of Construction, Property and Planning,  
University of Western Sydney, Australia*

## ABSTRACT

A city's skyline is defined by structures that often acquire the status of icons and landmarks. While these icons generally provide a sense of place to the community helping it to identify with the built environment, certain additions to the skyline may be unpopular and may take away from this sense of place and belonging. Most Sydneysiders believed that the 'Toaster' would visually "intrude" into the city's skyline, partially block out public access to some cherished views and interfere with the visual space of the familiar icons that form the city's skyline. Having followed proper and appropriate development approval process, however, the developer could successfully withstand a lengthy community protest and negative media campaign aimed at blocking the development. However, the community opinion created its own pressures in the shape of options and imperatives for the various actors involved in the planning and development control process and brought to light various shortcomings of the planning system that allowed an unpopular development to proceed.

The following paper touches upon some of the major issues related to this saga and presents facts in a case-study fashion. It is hoped the case-study will shed light on the nature of the community's response that is generated against negatively perceived development and the potential impact of community sentiment on the planning process. It is also hoped to learn some useful lessons from the Sydney experience so that we may better utilize the community sentiment as a resource in shaping our cities for the better.



## EXCERPT FROM THE TEXT

One would assume that the developers were the winners because the development eventually went through. However, the lengthy controversy, the series of development applications, compromise design solutions and community reaction must have taken a lot out of the win.

The real loser seems to be the CML, who reportedly absorbed a significant financial loss in selling over 95 percent of its rights to another party. Either the CML miscalculated the real estate potential of the amalgamated site or the cost of amalgamating the site or it had underestimated the community response.

The Professionals' community may feel that a great opportunity for creating something spectacular has been wasted by allowing a non-descript structure on to the site of sights.



**The Final Outcome:** This photo shows the Opera House and the 'Toaster' on East Circular Quay. While the view of the Royal Botani obscured by the "toaster" – the gaps between the buildings provides a compensatory glimpse.