

## Plazas in the city's plans

SIR — I was interested in Mr George Clarke's comment (29/7) that criticism of the Sydney strategic plan by Mr Harry Seidler was "silly."

The crux of Mr Clarke's comment is his reference to plazas. He claims that "Mr Seidler's comments are strongly personal ones . . . many architects do not agree that plazas should proliferate."

Mr Clarke thus expresses succinctly my concern about the plan which he directed. It is an architect's plan produced by architects (Mr Clarke's profession) with their clients' (developers) interests well to the fore.

Mr Clarke should refer to his plan (page 158) where the Australia Square project (one of the very few contemporary projects mentioned favorably in the plan) is given as an example of open plaza space in an intensely developed area.

As Mr Seidler designed that project his criticism regarding incentives for the provision of plazas should not be cast aside as "silly", even if some architects (Mr Clarke among them?) reject their "proliferation".

Observation of Australia Square any lunch hour will indicate to Mr Clark's profession that the public want plazas even if some architects (and developers?) don't.

A great deal of disappointment in the plan will be expressed when it is generally realised that its provisions governing the bulk or mass of city buildings have made it possible for even larger individual buildings than before to be added to the city's "concrete jungle" — to the extent of almost 30 per cent larger bulk in the Tank Stream and Brickfield Hill areas.

In other words, imagine the area between King Street and Circular Quay with new buildings almost one-third larger than those existing buildings.

I might be a little cynical of Mr Clarke's profession, but I believe this plan is a presentation by architects on behalf of their developer clients.

The research, the professional presentation, the concepts count for nothing if the one practical feature from council's viewpoint, namely its future policy governing the bulk or mass of buildings, has been written with the interests of developers as the main criterion.

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(The writer is an alderman of the Sydney City Council.)

## Design idea

THE CITY of Sydney Strategic Plan report concentrates on all the usual political, social and economic factors but neglects the aesthetic or "design idea" of the central organising force which guided the growth of all noble cities such as Athens and Peking.

and traffic distribution will give rise to a mechanical pattern on the central reorganisation of the city. . . . whereas it should be free of it. The only exception is a fine pen sketch by Ken Woolley of the town hall precinct.

The forces which act upon participants as they move about cannot achieve full effectiveness unless the architecture is related to the special spatial demands imposed on them. Buildings which interlock or reach out across space to other buildings create inter-relations and tensions of clarity and form.

On the other hand, the development of each building as an entity in itself tends to repel and bland buildings lack all the necessary elements for inter-action. Worse still are the build-devoid of any character at all, curtain wall buildings which neither reach out nor receive space into themselves, sterile buildings which stimulate no desire or evoke response.

Clearly the privilege of creating forms of the city has passed from the hands of public authority to those of indirect possessors of capital and separated from real architectural environment as a specific physical entity.

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## A new row

MENTION WAS made in William Goff's State Politics column (31/7), of the troubles of Mr Fife in regard to the conservation lobby. The way things are going, his problems will not end with Clutha and Colong.

Myall Lakes, prime area for the only really major national park we can have on the north coast of NSW, is due to make the headlines as a top conservation issue, on a par with Queensland's Cooloola Sands.

This grand area, with its many features unique to NSW, is to be mined in a few months' time. Conservationists are redoubling the protests they have been making over the nearly three years since the Sim Committee recommendations were made public, recommendations which virtually sealed the fate of the whole north coast.

Mining is not permitted in a national park, unless it is already in operation before the park is dedicated. The NSW Government got around that one by the rather obvious dodge of granting mining leases before any park was dedicated (the Myall Lakes park still awaits dedication).

Most mineral sands mining on the NSW coast has hitherto been on flattish areas, where the scenic damage (but not the damage to scientific values) can be fairly well repaired by revegetation which, to the untrained eye, passes for the original.

But this coming orgy of exploitation will be on high dunes, forested by magnificent black-butts and angophoras which will not be replaced within a lifetime, if at all. There are only two such forests in NSW, and the other one is being mined!

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(The writer is vice-chairman of the Myall Lakes Committee.)