

The Sydney Morning Herald

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1970

A live city

THE FIRST progress report on the City of Sydney "strategic plan" prepared by the City Council's planning consultants is a document which will be welcomed by the many citizens worried about the current redevelopment of the inner city. Within their general recommendation that Sydney should be made a "live city, 24 hours a day," the planners have pinpointed many of the problems which are tending to make the city a dead heart of concrete office blocks. Among the deficiencies listed in the report are lack of planning for building redevelopment, pedestrian and traffic movement and parking; failure to take advantage of the unique harbourside setting; inefficient bus operations and an inflexible rail system; badly located, poorly designed and limited community facilities and a lack of long-term planning in council works.

All of these are important factors in converting the city into a soulless place lacking colour and amenities, but none is more so than inadequate planning of the city's redevelopment. The report acknowledges that the city environment created by the new buildings is often worse than that which existed before. This is a melancholy statement because the need for comprehensive planning of the city's redevelopment—now proceeding at a rapid rate—has been evident for many years. But apart from coloured zones on maps there has been little attempt in the past to plan beyond individual buildings.

In the main, as the planning report points out, the existing regulations favour small-plot, single-use redevelopment. As a result, interesting and historic old build-

ings have been torn down indiscriminately and small shops have disappeared to be replaced by dreary office monoliths. Only in large-scale rebuilding projects has the public obtained a token amount of plaza space in return. Much has been talked about block redevelopment, but little achieved. Nevertheless, from what we have seen in schemes such as Australia Square, the advantages of planning redevelopment for areas rather than sites are obvious. It might mean, however, that property owners and the public must be prepared to accept much more stringent building controls.

Later progress reports and the final plan scheduled for completion next year will recommend action plans for various areas of the city as well as the need for long-term budgeting by the City Council to implement them. With much of the city already rebuilt, especially the Circular Quay end, the final plan will arrive none too soon. It is to be hoped that the City Council aldermen, who are to be congratulated for initiating the plan, retain the inspiration and courage to put it into effect.

In the meantime, the first report makes suggestions with which the council and other city authorities can deal immediately. Car parking policies in the inner city between the various authorities involved must be finally determined and easier pedestrian movement provided at congested locations such as Wynyard, Town Hall and St James stations. Facilities such as a new stadium and an amphitheatre or outdoor music bowl for concerts are urgently needed amenities to attract people to the city.

More 'black' properties

A SIXTH property has now been added to the five Riverina sheep stations which have been declared "black" by station hands striking in support of a 40-

graziers' problems. In spite of trouble at some 14 NSW properties, this still seems generally true. It must be remembered that the Full Bench of the Arbitration