



Lendlease project director Neil Arkless outside The Exchange. Picture: Flavio Brancaleone

The Exchange: Inside Sydney's newest vibrant 'meeting place'

Heath Parkes-Hupton

IN just a few short months, Sydney's next "meeting place" at the site of the old entertainment centre will bustle with people, cafes and restaurants.

Darling Square, built by Lendlease and one of the final pieces in the puzzle of the State Government's \$3.4 billion revitalisation of Darling Harbour, will be completed in August.

But from May the public square that will soon lead revellers into the project's centrepiece — the striking, mixed-use The Exchange building — will become a new thoroughfare linking Chinatown to the harbour via an extended Little Hay St.

Project director Neil Arkless told *Central Sydney* the project would create a new "meeting place" in the city and connect vibrant precincts including Chinatown, Pyrmont, the university precinct and Ultimo.

"We asked, 'How do you create a building that blurs the line between inside and outside, public space and private and reflects how people live today,'" he said.

"We've put a lot of energy into crafting this space because it will be here for 100 years. Sydney's not going to know what hit it."

He said The Exchange — skirted by 4000 unique pieces of timber that would stretch 20km if laid flat — would combine old concepts and

new over seven storeys to reimagine what a civic building could do in 2019. The ground floor will be a European-style marketplace with entrances on all sides, with an offshoot of Chinese restaurant Golden Century on the mezzanine level.

Above that will be two floors of a new hi-tech City of Sydney library, then two levels of childcare with places for 90 children. Mr Arkless said use of the top floor had not been locked in, but was likely to be a scenic bar or restaurant. When complete the precinct will have 77 new retail, restaurants and cafes on the ground floor near the four new apartment buildings bordering the site.