

**Submission  
No 82**

## **INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES**

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To The Director and Committee Members - Standing Committee 4, Inquiry into Museums and Galleries,

I write to yet again express my concern about the implications of the closing of the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo, and am grateful for what appears to be a genuine opportunity to have the government listen to the community on this issue. This is particularly important to me as this government has a visibly, very poor record of community consultation. The Powerhouse move is symbolic of the Baird government consistently placing the desires of big business over the needs of its citizens. The government is not there to facilitate developers business growth, but to maintain and improve the quality of life of their constituents. This seems obvious, yet the Baird government appears to need a reminder. Specifically on the issue of the Powerhouse, the lack of consultation has been obvious, given that both communities, Ultimo and Parramatta have expressed that this is not a solution that would benefit either community. All voices in positions of some influence who speak out against the move, are silenced by the government. These voices have expressed genuine and valid concerns in the following matters:

1) There will be no benefit for Parramatta. The government has attempted to pit the residents of Ultimo against the residents of Parramatta. In stark contrast the reality is that the residents of Ultimo stand with the residents of Parramatta Parramatta deserved a cultural centre that is genuinely founded in their multi-faceted community and the history of their location, rather than sending them a hand me down museum that has specific relevance to the Centre of Sydney City. Cultural centres have the capacity to bring understanding, empathy and harmony, and should never be used as a cynical exercise, sacrificing these ideals to pander to business associates of the government. If these ideals are a genuine priority of the government, why is this not funded through the State Infrastructure Strategy? Why is this "investment in Parramatta" the only cultural centre that must be budget neutral?

2) The disproportionate impact of losing the large, diverse, interactive, discovery space on the children of the most densely populated area of Australia will be part of the Baird government legacy for decades. These are children for the most part without back yards, who delight, revel and grow in the safe, undercover, engaging spaces of the Powerhouse to play and learn on weekends. It is a mainstay of families across Sydney, and provides an important service. Admittedly the resourcing has meant that some of the great benefits of the museum are not as fruitful as needed. However this can be remedied and the community of Ultimo has great skills, diversity, and will to contribute to the museum and bring it back to the exciting central position of the community it held just a few years ago. Visitation remains high and could be a jewel in Sydney's cultural offerings.

3) The move is a shameful waste of investment to date and spending in the future. The recent investment in the infrastructure of the museum courtyard, the development of the Goods Line that proudly runs from Central to the Powerhouse, providing a much needed link through these suburbs, and celebrating the history of the area. Where will this end now? In a centre that puts this history into context, eliminates the elements of build environments that unite communities or yet another high rise apartment building that will stand to illustrate the governments disregard for its people? It also does not recognise and build on the recent investment of a space that is open to the public just 10 kilometres from the proposed site - a flood prone carpark in Parramatta. The valuation of the land upon which the Powerhouse and its storage sheds sit around \$200 million is patently and purposely misleading, providing a business advantage to would be developers, and should be separately investigated. However, even with a realistic land valuation, there will still be a significant gap in the unnecessary expense of moving a museum to a community who do not want it. We the taxpayers are stating clearly and loudly - we DO NOT WANT OUR TAXES TO PAY for this move that will not benefit either target community.

4) The legacy of the NSW government does not just impact the politicians. I am concerned for our reputation across the world as they only state that destroys cultural and community centres rather than building new innovative spaces that add to quality of life, education and community. The cultural ignorance and incompetence of the Arts Minister and the Premier will be on show for many decades to come, but will tar us all - you do not have my permission to do this in my name, and I do not stand alone. Thank you again for this rare opportunity to enact democracy and provide feedback to the public servants of NSW.

Sincerely, Rebecca Spindler