

**Submission  
No 120**

## **INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES**

**Organisation:** Sue Boaden Cultural Planner

**Date received:** 13 August 2016

---



12 August 2016

Hon Robert Borsak MLC  
Chair, General Purpose Standing Committee No 4,  
Inquiry into museums and galleries  
Legislative Council.

Dear Mr Borsak,

Thankyou for the opportunity to provide information to this important inquiry. As a leading Australian cultural planner I frequently provide advice to government in relation to planning and managing galleries and museums. The advice relates to both major Commonwealth and State institutions as well as to small to medium galleries and museums in metropolitan, regional and rural Australia and including in NSW.

It is my belief that museums and galleries, and collecting institutions generally, play an important role in celebrating local identity, in encouraging broad understanding of complex issues, in fostering community cohesion and in contributing to economic wellbeing.

My comments relate to clauses a), c) and e) of the Inquiry Terms of Reference.

- a) The NSW government through Arts NSW supports, at arms-length, **Museums and Galleries NSW** as the go-to resource for the small to medium gallery and museum sector. This is a fine model with an exemplary track record for innovation, research and scholarship, collaboration and consultation over many years. It should be continued and its funding increased.
- c) The most pressing need for all galleries and museums including the State Cultural Institutions is the need for **increased levels of technology funding** to deliver global access – online, onsite and on tour - to their rich holdings via the use of innovative digital technology. By focusing on collections and technology, these organisations including volunteer run museums at the community level, would have to get their collection management policies and procedures in order as they prepare for digitisation. The resulting improvements in management efficiency and effectiveness and in audience satisfaction would be powerful. Examples of innovative technology that deliver remarkable experiences are Cooper Hewitt Museum, NY, MONA , Hobart and ACMI, Melbourne.
- e) The proposed sale and relocation of the Powerhouse Museum demonstrates a serious lack of understanding of the role of museums in cultural vitality and city

sue boaden



cultural planner

building in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Leaving aside the fact that the Powerhouse is widely regarded as a significant cultural asset to Sydney with its integrated collection covering the humanities and the sciences, the Powerhouse is an anchor in a newly emerging cultural and education precinct in Sydney's downtown.

Whilst acknowledging that Western Sydney, an area in which I am very familiar, needs significant infrastructure investment, the relocation of the Powerhouse is not the answer. Rather than dismantling a much loved cultural treasure, strategies that celebrate its rich holdings should be considered and lessons learned from other museums taken into account. The 21<sup>st</sup> century environment for museums and galleries invites innovative new solutions. Options for consideration in relation to museum and gallery planning and the Powerhouse in particular include:

- Develop a satellite model eg. Tate London, Tate St Ives, Tate Modern in London.
- Retain Powerhouse Museum in its Darling Harbour site and expand
- Develop Sydney Modern in Western Sydney (i.e. and not on Domain land adjacent to AGNSW) and incorporate aspects of the Powerhouse collection into the new cultural facility.
- Powerhouse Museum partners with a metro or regional gallery museum to permanently showcase a specific aspect of its collection e.g. in Liverpool, Bathurst
- Include a new Museum precinct at the proposed Bays precinct, Balmain and incorporate aspects of the Powerhouse collection thus freeing up storage/ collection space.
- Upgrade and develop the Powerhouse Discovery Centre as an accessible public museum experience – open 7 days in Western Sydney.

Thankyou for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

Sue Boaden  
Principal.