

**Submission
No 159**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Organisation: Australia International Council on Monuments and Sites
(ICOMOS)

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25 August 2016

The Honourable Robert Borsak MLC
Committee Chair,
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4,
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Borsak,

Re: Upper House Inquiry into museums and galleries No. 4

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission. I have just been made aware of the extension to the submissions and provide this letter as a submission on behalf of Australia ICOMOS. We will address specific Terms of Reference in turn, but will first outline who we are and what we do, and stress the importance of a vibrant, relevant and resourced cultural heritage sector to the enrichment of Australian society.

By way of background, Australia ICOMOS is a non-government, not-for-profit organisation of professionals dealing with cultural heritage places, formed as a national chapter of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in 1976. Australia ICOMOS' mission is to lead cultural heritage conservation in Australia by raising standards, encouraging debate and generating innovative ideas. The Australia ICOMOS membership currently consists of over 600 members. ICOMOS is one of the statutory advisory bodies to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. We promote an understanding of the cultural significance of places and raise conservation standards through education and communication. We have expert members on a large number of ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, as well as on expert committees and boards in Australia. We have a particular interest in Australia's world and national heritage places.

Terms of reference: 1e) the sale of the Powerhouse museum site in Ultimo, and its proposed move to Parramatta, and whether there are alternative strategies to support museum development

Whilst the concept of a museum in Parramatta is an extremely worthy one, there is no certainty that a costly relocation of the Powerhouse Museum, an iconic heritage listed building and a collection housed near its original site in Ultimo since inception as a Museum, is the best fit. This is an ideal opportunity to explore a number of options for a cultural institution relevant to the needs of the demographics of this fast growing region

There is widespread concern about the perceived inadequacy of the process leading to the decision to relocate the Powerhouse Museum and how the sale of the site, the move of the museum and its substantial collection, and the establishment of a fit-for-purpose museum will be carried out.

Australia ICOMOS strongly supports the provision of appropriate cultural facilities including museums in Western Sydney and suggests that the people of greater Western Sydney and the current cultural organisations and local government in the region should have a substantial say in planning and provision of these cultural facilities. Parramatta deserves a world class museum and cultural precinct-one that reflects the place, the people and the history as well as responding to community needs. We are concerned that such planning does not appear to have taken place.

Australia ICOMOS urges the New South Wales government to look at the implications of the loss of the Powerhouse Museum to the Ultimo precinct and to consider museum options at Parramatta which would embrace the distinctive history and contemporary cultural diversity of this region through community and wider consultation.

Terms of reference 1i) any other related matter

Australia ICOMOS is extremely concerned about the negative impact of the defunding by the Federal Government of TROVE. This means a loss of access for all Australians to their own cultural heritage in print. It can be related to 1g) the impact of efficiency dividends on the budgets and museums and galleries over the last 10 years.

Australia ICOMOS is also extremely concerned that the value of cultural heritage is not clearly acknowledged or seemingly supported as well as it could be in government policies and priorities. We continue to emphasise the importance of museums, galleries and libraries, in providing research material to understand our cultural heritage, particularly intangible values-past, present and future.

Thank you again for your consideration of the views of Australia ICOMOS in this important issue.

Yours faithfully

MS KERIME DANIS
President, Australia ICOMOS