INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Organisation: Powerhouse Museum Alliance
Date received: 19 August 2016
Powerhouse and Parramatta: 360 published opinions
Grace Cochrane AM, August 2016

Standing Committee 4: Museums and Galleries

Terms of reference:
d) access to the collections of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, [...] and programs that promote physical and online access
e) The sale of the Powerhouse Museum site in Ultimo and its proposed move to Parramatta; whether there are alternative strategies to support museum development.

Point of view:
I am an independent curator, writer, consultant and educator in the field of decorative arts, crafts and design. I have worked in this field for over 40 years, nearly 20 of them from 1988-2005 at the Powerhouse Museum as a former senior curator (CV supplied separately).
This is submitted on behalf of the working group, The Powerhouse Museum Alliance.

Submission:
In early 2016, a group identified as The Powerhouse Museum Alliance formed, and set up a website: https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/ describing itself as:

The Powerhouse Museum Alliance is a group of concerned citizens working to save the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo. The Alliance includes longstanding benefactors of the museum, former trustees, design and heritage experts and senior museum professionals.
The PMA strongly supports the development of a new museum in Parramatta. We ask the government to develop a coherent museum plan for NSW for the 21st century, underpinned by principles of equity and access to collections, and addressing glaring omissions in the profile of museums in NSW.

The website provides a news chronology of events associated with the proposal to move Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta, and a continuing archive of papers considering the obscure decision-making process, lack of consultation, faulty costing, lack of consideration for heritage aspects and ignorance of audience needs and preferences, in the context of both other options for Western Sydney, and for the Museum in Ultimo.

Since that time, a further 181 signatures and comments were added, from a range of informed and experienced people from NSW, other Australian states and overseas. The letter said:
An open letter from the Powerhouse Museum Alliance:

We join thousands of people from Sydney and beyond in urging the NSW Government to reconsider its plan to relocate the Powerhouse Museum from the heart of Sydney to Western Sydney.

For 122 years the citizens of our great city have found entertainment, enlightenment and education at this iconic institution in Harris Street, Ultimo. Its vast holdings embrace science, technology, social history and an encyclopaedic collection of decorative arts and design, making it a cultural institution unique in Australia.

The Ultimo Power House was brilliantly repurposed just 30 years ago as a world class museum. Since it opened in 1988 the museum building and its exhibitions have won numerous awards. The project was a major investment for the people of New South Wales. That investment will be squandered if the museum’s site is sold to developers.

The Powerhouse Museum is a vital part of the Ultimo education and innovation precinct. The new Goods Line walkway, light rail, and existing public transport ensure that the museum is easily accessed by visitors to Darling Harbour and the city.

We support the creation of a distinctive ‘cultural beacon’ in Parramatta, but to transport a pared-back, small scale Powerhouse would be folly. Western Sydney deserves better – a unique institution shaped by community consultation, one that reflects the history, achievements and cultural diversity of the region and the aspirations of its people.

Nowhere else in the world are governments moving major museums away from the heart of their cities. Instead they are building satellite museums to display the collections of their great museums. The Powerhouse has the collections with which to create an original, exciting new museum for Western Sydney without abandoning its historic home.

Over ten thousand people have signed a petition which will bring this matter before the Parliament this month. Contact your Member of Parliament and add your voice to the growing movement to save the Powerhouse Museum and seek a visionary new cultural centre for Western Sydney.

The further 181 signatures and comments that have since been added to the website are here: https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/open-letter/
See also attached pdf: Powerhouse Museum Alliance – further signatures.
INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Organisation: Powerhouse Museum Alliance
Date received: 5 August 2016
NSW Govt Upper House Inquiry:
Museums and Galleries, 2016

Agenda: 3.0 – 3.30 September 6, 2016

Submissions of specific relevance to the argument for not relocating the
Powerhouse Museum.
These papers include support for developing a new cultural facility in Parramatta,
within a strong policy for museums and galleries in NSW.

They were submitted by members of the informal lobby group, the Powerhouse
Museum Alliance, with related submissions from external colleagues and
organisations.

Links below refer directly to Parliament’s website for this Inquiry.

1. Submissions: from the Powerhouse Museum Alliance

167: Powerhouse Museum Alliance: purpose and support
Background for this informal lobby group of professionals.

Nicholas Pappas
113. Abdication of statutory responsibilities by trustees and lack of inspection
transparency in government processes.

Jennifer Sanders
142: Mythbusting: addressing the arguments to move the museum
142a: Costs and risks of moving the museum
142b: A cultural plan for the 21st century
142c: Moving Museums: a brief survey
142d: Planning for NSW’s Cultural Development: a tale of two proposals

Grace Cochrane
96: Expectations of Audiences: constituents must be considered
96a: Sustainability? Appropriate investment for sites and programs
96b: For the Record: Briefing paper for Premier, August 2015

Kylie Winkworth
149: Ten important issues regarding the proposed move of the Powerhouse Museum
from Ultimo to Parramatta; and consideration of alternative strategies to support
museum development.
Lindsay Sharp
148: I: The Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta ‘move’: a critical analysis of the NSW Government’s planning and costing processes: main source document. Dr Lindsay Sharp
148a: II: The Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta ‘move’: a critical analysis of the NSW Government’s suppressed planning and costing documentation...
148b: III: A possible alternative focused on human creativity and the creativity of western Sydney’s multi-cultural Communities...
148c: IV: Widespread consultation required in the greater western Sydney region as to what kind of new cultural facility they wish to see established in Parramatta.
148d: V: Site selection process in Parramatta.
148e: VI: Commercial aspects driving Ultimo site divestment/sale by Govt to facilitate the unaffordable, destructive and impractical concept of ‘moving’ the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta.
148f: VII: Performance by Board of Trustees, dominance by Government, sub-optimal project oversight, potential conflicts of personal interest, reduced access and risks to collections, misleading messaging and lack of transparency. Decline of museum’s educational role; senior management project competence, appropriate design and exhibit development abilities and internal curatorial skills base.
148g: VIII: The new museum project in Western Australia – comparison with the ‘Powerhouse Museum move’ to Parramatta.
149h: IX: Committee of Review proposal; an appraisal of the ‘Powerhouse Museum move’ to Parramatta project in terms of consultation, location, planning process, cost and scale.

Trevor Kennedy
141: Plea to review decision, from PHM Life Fellow and benefactor.

103 and 103a: Anne Schofield:
Comments from PHM Life Fellow, Honorary Associate and benefactor, on responses from donors and benefactors, criticism of funding cuts, consultation process and others.

Marco Belgiorno-Zegna AM
162: International comparisons with proposal and no successful examples; value in satellites; inconsistency with other cultural institutions; Government’s unwillingness consider any improvement in accessing the Powerhouse site from the Haymarket/Darling Harbour side, including Light Rail access; ‘...nothing other than an attempt by the NSW Government to curry favour with the western Sydney electorate. In pursuing this strategy the Government is merely taking a short-term view that may be in its own interests and not those of the people of NSW.’
2.0 Related papers: Individuals who oppose the relocation and suggest better alternatives

Lionel Glendenning
155: Government cultural planning
155a: Powerhouse Museum: cultural investment
155b: Urban design and architecture

158: Bernice Murphy
Questions significant presumptions, consequences, and shortfalls in both process and long-term outcomes; some irreversible consequences; alternative planning for direct access, stimulus and enrichment of communities radiating around Parramatta.

132: Des Griffin
Within broad policy discussion, includes: The proposal to move the Powerhouse Museum to the western suburbs, specifically Parramatta, is one of the most ridiculous proposals concerning cultural institutions in the history of this state. Its rationale and costing are more than seriously flawed, the promoted reasons and outcomes are laughable and the major considerations which the government has addressed have been concealed.

Christina Sumner
136: 1) Access to the collections; 2) The sale of the Powerhouse Museum site in Ultimo and its proposed move to Parramatta, and whether there are alternative strategies.

Debbie Rudder
143: a. Question costing process and conclusions for move; PHM needs new investment rather than costly move; better strategies for museum and gallery development on Western Sydney; b. Adequacy of funding support for collection-based museums, and transparency of advice; c. consider Castle Hill venue; impact of efficiency dividend on museum programs; value of web-site access.

Andrew Grant
105. To discredit the argument advanced by Infrastructure NSW that the current location of the Powerhouse Museum is “remote” and therefore unsuitable because it falls outside a proposed “Sydney CBD cultural precinct”. It also expresses concern about apparent inconsistencies between the Government’s previous and current policy on this matter and in the decision-making process.

105a. Loss of the current site of the Powerhouse Museum would be a great loss to Australia’s cultural heritage.

135: Sandra McEwen
Mismanagement of public funds; inadequacy of proposed site; barrier to tourists; breakup of synergistic creative associations.
121: Patricia Johnston
Opposition to sale and relocation of Powerhouse Museum; request for better alternatives for Parramatta. 0121 Ms Patricia Johnston

93: Belinda Nemec
Recommendation to reverse ill-thought out decision; relationship between the collections, exhibitions and programs of MAAS and the Ultimo site is extremely important; if moved to Parramatta, it will close entirely within twenty years, through lack of visitation and community support. Better options for Parramatta. 0093 Dr Belinda Nemec

144: Louise Douglas
Absence of research and strategic analysis is perplexing; Western Sydney cultural facilities should be enhanced; not convinced that there is strong enough foundation for moving the Powerhouse to Parramatta, but support different solutions so the cultural facilities of Western Sydney can be enhanced. 0144 Ms Louise Douglas

153: Rosalind Ward
Alternative strategies; costs of moving; impact of efficiency dividend. 0153 Ms Rosalind Ward

65: Terence Measham
Significance of both collection and buildings; need central location. 0065 Mr Terence Measham

90. Shirley Fitzgerald
The future of the Powerhouse Museum, and access to its collections. 0090 Dr Shirley Fitzgerald

119. Leo Schofield
A dozen cogent reasons as to why this proposal is not only misguided but also absurdly costly, in terms of both money and loss of prestige. No. 119, Leo Schofield

Tom Lockley
137, a,b,c: Oppose the relocation; heritage value of buildings and large exhibits; and other issues such as costs, safety, place in Ultimo. 0137 Mr Tom Lockley
137a Mr Tom Lockley
137b Mr Tom Lockley

0015: Pyrmont History Group
For people of Ultimo and Pyrmont – and of the inner city as a whole – access to their own industrial and social heritage. 0015 Pyrmont History Group

0022: Ultimo Village Voice
Opposes the sale of the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo and its relocation to Parramatta, while firmly supporting the establishment of new cultural facilities in Western Sydney. 0022 Ultimo Village Voice

169: Mrs E Bosel
Concern at inadequacy of site and safety of collection; the move will devalue potential for cultural tourism; no alternatives other than purchasing an adjacent building in Ultimo and curtail any plans to proceed with a move to Parramatta.

118: Mrs E Boesel

Serious flaws in proposal to relocate; consideration of alternative strategies.

Darani Lewers

118: Mrs Darani Lewers

Oppose the move; questions of access, sale and transparency of process.

Jane Burns

139: Ms Jane Burns

Concerned the proposed relocation to Parramatta will effectively kill off the Museum as a significant cultural institution; should stay in ...the tourism, creative and education precinct of Ultimo..

Charles Wilson

156: Mr Charles Wilson

Access to collection from interstate; opposition to demolition of buildings; lack of adequate consultation re both Powerhouse and Parramatta.

Janet De Boer

101: Dr Janet De Boer

Significance of collection; importance of central location.

Carl Andrew

104: Mr Carl Andrew

Oppose total move; consider better options.

Sue Boaden

120: Sue Boaden Cultural Planner

Marina Garlick

97: Ms Marina Garlick

To protect the Powerhouse Museum and its outstanding collection, is to leave it where it is; resource it adequately where it is, so that it can do its vital job of educating and enlightening visitors...; build a brilliant museum in Parramatta, and lend objects to it from all of Sydney’s state museums.

Tim McDonald

122: Mr Tim McDonald

Oppose move: proposal appears arbitrary, lacks context, appears to be policy making on the run, politically motivated rather than a considered response to process and fails to respond to identified needs of the community.

Irma Havlicek

128: Ms Irma Havlicek

Criticism of government decision and process in the face of existing Powerhouse strategic plan; opposition to proposed move.

Garry Horvai

78: Mr Garry Horvai

Closure of Powerhouse Museum’s Migration Heritage Centre as a consequence of efficiency dividends and budget cuts, is an example of high level of inequity in arts and cultural funding for ethnic communities and rural and regional areas of NSW.

John Petersen

157: Mr John Petersen

5: Tor Larsen
Observations on audiences for both the Powerhouse in Ultimo, and for Parramatta; lack of transparency in planning. 0005 Tor Larsen

82: Rebecca Spindler
Opposition to move of Powerhouse; government has a visibly, very poor record of community consultation; move is symbolic of the Baird government consistently placing the desires of big business over the needs of its citizens. Better opportunities for Parramatta. 0082 Dr Rebecca Spindler

12: Jesse Adams Stein
Powerhouse Museum to be retained at its existing location in Ultimo: Cost, Community, Heritage and architecture, urban amenity, linkages with educational institutions. 0012 Jesse Adams Stein

19: Robert Jeffrey Mellefont
Oppose moving Powerhouse from harbourside where it is part of an existing cultural and heritage precinct for existing and growing audiences. 0019 Mr Jeffrey Mellefont

112: Ms Jeanie Kitchener:
Feels strongly about maintaining the Powerhouse museum on its current site; where museum designed around the original power station. 0112 Ms Jeanie Kitchener

106: John August
Oppose the sale and total relocation; look at better options. 0106 Mr John August

133. Dr Megan Hicks
Consideration of new museum in Parramatta and maintaining site in Ultimo. 0133 Dr Megan Hicks

149 b-f: Kylie Winkworth: (extra papers re NSW museum policies)
- Potential funding impacts on museums and galleries affected by council amalgamations. 0149a Ms Kylie Winkworth
- NSW government policy funding and support for museums and galleries; & opportunities to revitalise the structure, reach and impact of museums in regional NSW. 0149b Ms Kylie Winkworth
- NSW government policy; Opportunities to revitalise the structure, reach and impact of museums; Impact of the efficiency dividend; Development and transparency of advice. 0149c Ms Kylie Winkworth
- Access to the collections of NSW government museums. 0149d Ms Kylie Winkworth
- The economic impact of museums and galleries on cultural tourism; Sydney and regional NSW. 0149e Ms Kylie Winkworth

3.0 Related papers: Institutions that oppose the relocation and suggest better alternatives (among others)
21. Save the Powerhouse campaign 0021 Save the Powerhouse Campaign
15. Pyrmont History Group 0015 Pyrmont History Group
40. The Design Institute of Australia 0040 The Design Institute of Australia
44. 44a. North Parramatta Residents Action Group
61. Professional Historians Association of NSW
   0061 Professional Historians Association NSW and ACT

50. Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials
   0050 Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials

22. Ultimo Village Voice
   0022 Ultimo Village Voice

29. Blue Mountains Cultural Centre - Blue Mountains City Council
   0029 Blue Mountains Cultural Centre - Blue Mountains City Council

51. NAVA: National Association of Visual Arts
   0051 National Association for the Visual Arts

42. Museums Galleries Australia
   0042 Museums Galleries Australia

60. The Australian Ceramics Association
   0060 The Australian Ceramics Association

46. The National Trust of Australia
   0046 National Trust of Australia

131. Oriental Rug Society
   0131 Oriental Rug Society of NSW

166. Australian Society for History of Engineering and Technology Inc. (ASHET)
   0166 Australian Society for History of Engineering and Technology Inc

159. Australian International Council on Monuments and Sites
   0159 Australia International Council on Monuments and Sites

108. Engineers Australia
   0108 Engineers Australia

27. Engineers Australia NSW Division - Engineering Heritage Sydney
   0027 Engineers Australia NSW Division - Engineering Heritage Sydney

30. Greater Western Sydney Action Heritage Group
   0030 Greater Western Sydney Heritage Action Group