

**Supplementary
Submission
No 148c**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Name: Dr Lindsay Sharp

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Submission IV: Government has studiously avoided consulting widely with Communities in the greater western Sydney region as to what kind of new cultural facility they wish to see established in Parramatta. The time has come for this matter to be illuminated by the Inquiry into Museums in NSW. There also needs to be a policy of Trans-NSW museum development outlined also based in part on widespread Community consultation.

Relevant Terms of Reference: (a) (d) (e) (f) (h)

[Dr LG Sharp Founding Director, Powerhouse Museum, 1978-1988](#)

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Key words: required- a large scale consultation of Communities in greater western Sydney as to what kind of new cultural facility this region needs; a wider NSW policy of regional museum development needed, also based on consultation; existing market research into visitor projections for the new museum facility in Parramatta to be required as tabled documents; verbal presentation to the Inquiry by an Arts NSW representative of existing, specific Government policy on State-wide museum development and consultation to be required; a consultative committee to be established to review existing plans and undertake such consultation, reporting back with recommendations within four months of inception.

The case for this recommendation:

It is a prime axiom of cultural planning that a new project which is mooted undergoes wide and deep consultation with Communities, organisations and individuals who are likely to be affected by its development and have views about what is needed. If a project's vision and basic structure are simply helicoptered in, dropped like cargo-cult wares onto an unsuspecting audience, then the resulting cultural institution will not be lodged in the hearts and minds of its constituents thereby lacking social sustainability and- in consequence- financial sustainability also.

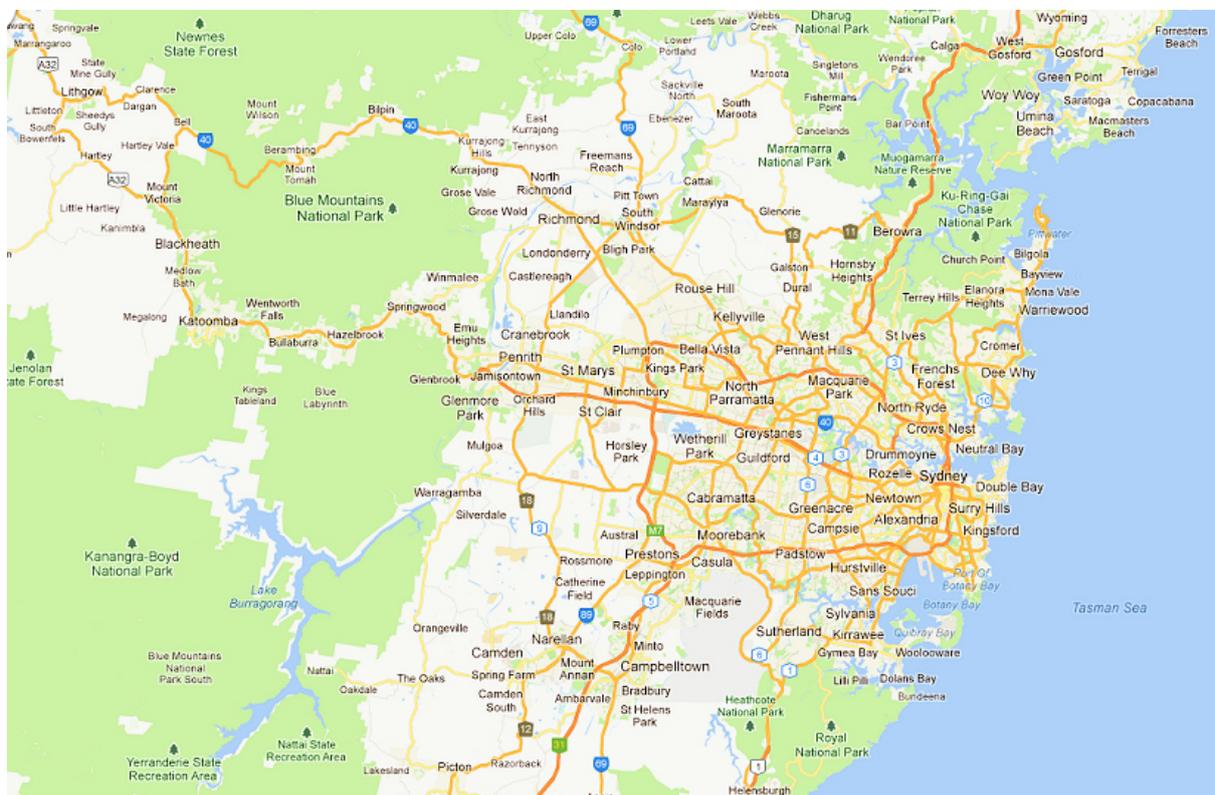
It is also a prime axiom of cultural planning that the creation of a major new cultural facility, if Government mandated and controlled, must fit into an equitable and equally consultative policy framework. The development of plans for the one must be in accord with a larger picture established in the other. Cultural facilities are not simply 'infrastructure' like sewers, kerbs and roads. Instead they are successful only when they are living, creative places extending the imaginations and aspirations of the people in whose midst they sit; extensions of the hearts and minds of those myriad communities.

To date the planning for the Powerhouse Museum's destruction and 'move' to Parramatta has almost completely lacked any real consultation with the Communities of greater western Sydney, let alone those in central and inner-urban Sydney. The recent hiring by MAAS of an executive to 'communicate' with these Communities sounds more like a typical approach in which, as to date, the

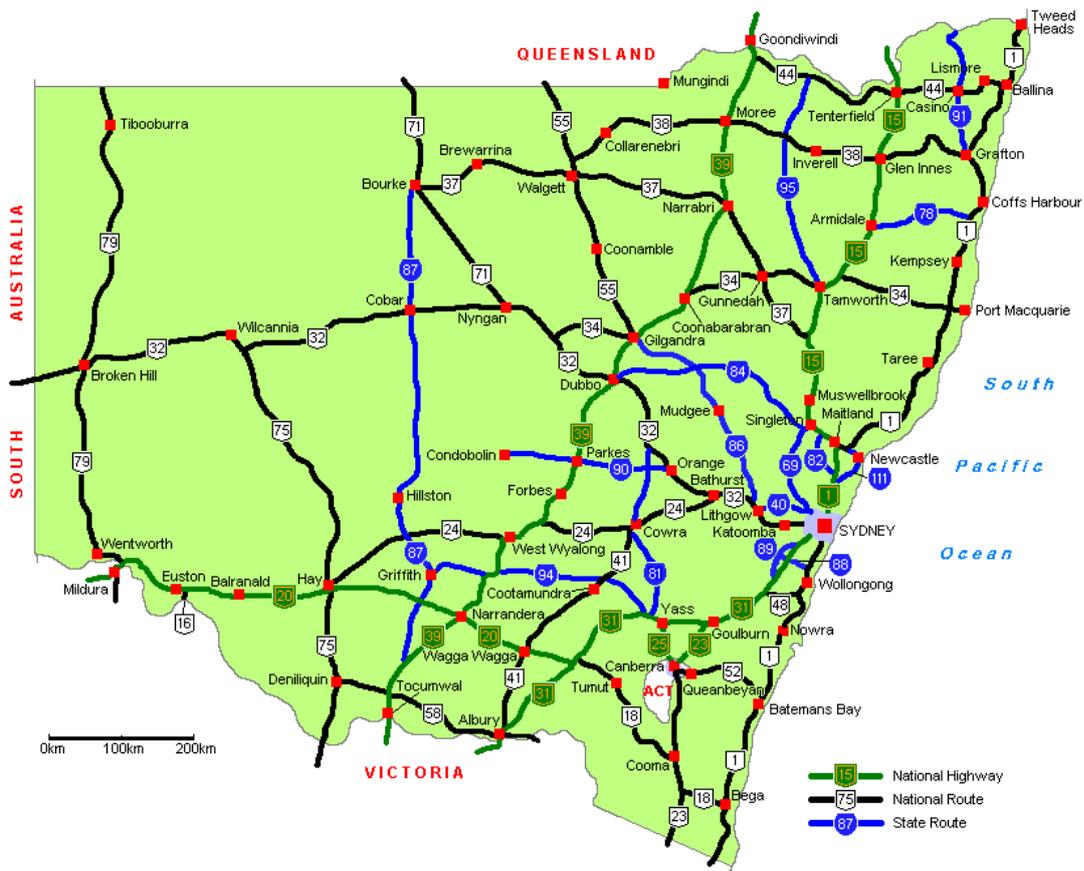
Government and MAAS tell the folks out in greater western Sydney what they are going to get: 'managing stakeholders' they call that. Even if there is a genuine desire to consult these communities core planning for the project is already far advanced. A large, aggressive horse has bolted and the gate is hanging off its hinges. It needs to be lassoed, corralled and inspected then re-trained to perform for its true owners- the people of greater western Sydney. (See also the submissions by Dr Grace Cochrane and North Parramatta Action Group).

Thus a critical issue, before pre-determining decisions are taken, is to find out what the people of Greater Western Sydney want for themselves, their communities and their shared aspirations. It is completely sub-optimal to simply place a reworked, smaller, brand-confusing institution (what is a MAAS? Intellectually contorted, marketing claptrap) in the centre of Parramatta without a full survey, commissioned by an independent panel of selected local citizens and museum and cultural experts, chaired by an independent person of stature, cultural expertise and demonstrated practicality, acceptable to all stakeholders. This panel, chosen by the Minister for the Arts, should be adequately resourced and tasked to provide a range of costed options, with SWOT issues identified and recommendations supplied for Government's consideration. Failure to do confirms that this Government is undemocratic and motivated principally by sale of the present site to one of a few large developers

Recommendation: That this Inquiry explores this matter thoroughly and proposes the urgent establishment and resourcing of a consultative committee to review existing plans, and issues raised above, which undertakes such consultation in greater western Sydney, reporting back with recommendations within five months of inception.



A huge area with a huge population, not consulted with to date



The same may be said of NSW as a whole