PYRMONT HISTORY GROUP

Heritage of the Powerhouse Museum: a one-page summary

In April we distributed a booklet entitled *Heritage Aspects of the Powerhouse Museum Precinct,* demonstrating the heritage values of the buildings. They are not fibro shacks that can be quickly bulldozed, but are beautifully built and must be preserved because of their quality and unique heritage value.

But an institution such as a museum is more than just buildings. This new booklet deals with the total picture and demonstrates that the total operation must be preserved, that if it is moved from the present site its qualities will be severely diminished, and further, that the costing of the whole process is irrational.

1. The museum is of world standard: this is enhanced because of the qualities of the building. It is the most significant arts and sciences museum in Australia. Because of its national importance, it is more important to have it in a position that is easily accessible to the state, the nation and international visitors than to have it in the population centre of Sydney. Its present site is ideal.

In modern society, the synthesis of arts and sciences is essential to agile innovation, and the museum is well-placed to meet this need.

2. As well as being a great example of building skills the buildings remind us of the incredible feat of the construction of this, Australia's first major power station, and the establishment of the tram line and tram service in a mere 25 months.

3. The museum is successor to a long process of development notably involving at the nearby Technological Museum, making many scientific, technological and artistic advances.

4. The museum is traditional home of many iconic exhibits, many with local relevance which will be lost in a relocation. Parramatta has its own proud history and deserves its own museum to reflect this.

5. The museum, both in terms of its 1988 buildings and as a symbol of Australia's cultural development, is a powerful marker of Australia's bicentenary. Many of the other buildings of the Darling Harbour precinct which marked the bicentenary have been demolished but this brilliant building conversion must be retained.

6. To trash such a remarkable cultural icon in its highly significant building is an act of barbarism that is unprecedented throughout the civilized peacetime world and would seriously damage our reputation as a cultured country.

7. The museum has an amazing human story. It also engenders great affection among many people because of its manifold qualities. If, despite all the facts that indicate that the museum should not be moved, the government goes ahead with its plans it must expect vigorous resistance and possibly direct action.

8. The project does not even have any economic benefit to the state. The bare site will not realise more than $250 million. It will cost about that much to demolish the buildings and to transfer the exhibits to Parramatta. In the process, the existing building (worth about $450 million) will be destroyed and to erect a new building of reasonable standard on the proposed Parramatta site will cost at least this amount. If the Powerhouse museum is retained, Parramatta can still have the museum it deserves and over half a billion dollars will be saved.

The idea of constructing a new museum at Parramatta has the full support of the Powerhouse Museum Alliance. It makes sense to establish a new facility, in the population centre of Sydney, to showcase modern Sydney's culture. It makes no sense at all to destroy the Powerhouse in the process.

The government has stated that regardless of the outcome of the coming Legislative Council inquiry, the 'move' will occur. This is a denial of due process that will be vigorously opposed.

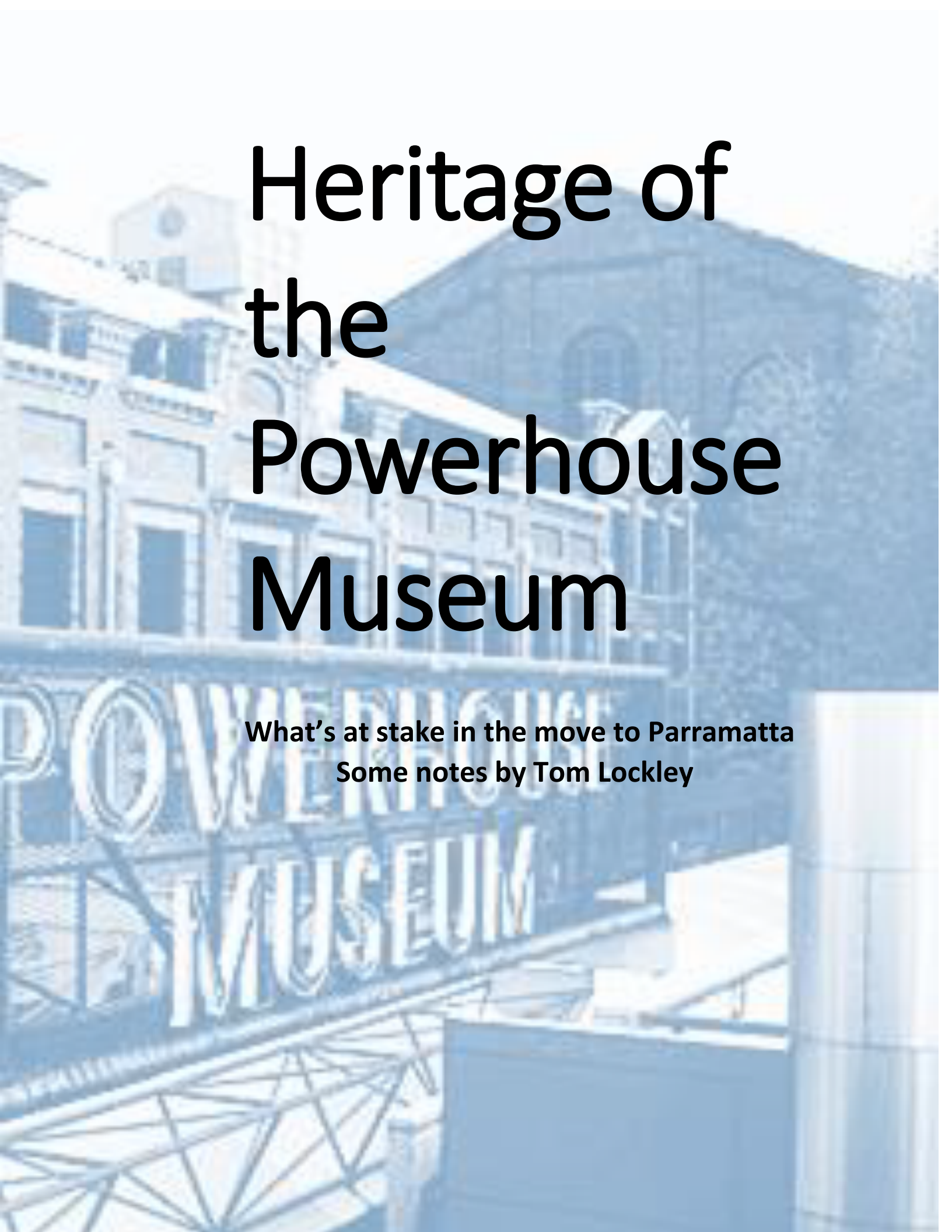
Tom Lockley, 4 August 2016:

The Pyrmont History Group is one of many organisations and groups determined to

SAVE THE POWERHOUSE

Australia's major museum of arts and sciences in Sydney's most evocative heritage building

See: https://www.powerhousemuseumalliance.com https://www.facebook.com/savethepowerhouse/ https://www.facebook.com/savepowerhousemuseum/ http://lockoweb.com/phm/



Heritage of the Powerhouse Museum

What's at stake in the move to Parramatta
Some notes by Tom Lockley

One of the more fatuous statements to come out of the government PR machine is the notion that the new museum would ‘rival the Smithsonian’.

The Smithsonian Institute has over 19 separate museums, all but a few of them bigger than the announced plans at Parramatta.

It is obvious that the genius who came up with this PR gem had not visited even the website of the Smithsonian Institution.

If this is the standard of our planners, then we have every reason to be very, very afraid.

The Powerhouse itself is a world-class museum, largely because of its heritage building. The spectre of losing this precinct and then having the government find that there was no money to proceed with the new building is the stuff of nightmares.

Heritage of the Powerhouse Museum

What's at stake in the move to Parramatta

Tom Lockley
with a lot of help from my friends!

The Powerhouse Museum is unique. It is significant culturally and historically. If we destroy it in the process of creating yet another luxury residential tower or internationalised shopping centre, we are ignoring the long-term economic and social benefits of our heritage.

More importantly, if we do not preserve and publicise the remarkable achievements represented by our heritage we have failed those who came before us, and what is worse, we have failed the generations to come.

Construction of thePower Station and (below) the museum conversion.

The story so far

The present government, with no resistance from the major opposition party, declared in late 2014 that the Powerhouse Museum would be relocated to Parramatta, and its site would be used for residential development. There was no consultation with stakeholders.

Simply because of the destruction of this heritage item, the decision was greeted with dismay. But when the whole process was investigated by many people with expertise in real estate, museum administration, engineering, architecture and building, it quickly became clear that the announced plan is also ill-founded and financially disastrous.

Resistance quickly developed. A *Herald* advertisement signed by 178 leading figures in Sydney's arts and business community appeared on 17 February 2016. An enormous petition was presented in State Parliament and resulted in a parliamentary debate on the matter on April 5. There is also a vigorous campaign on Facebook.

An Upper House (Legislative Council) Inquiry has been convened to investigate these and related matters. However, the government intends to proceed regardless of the course of the inquiry.

Our first booklet, *Heritage Aspects of the Powerhouse Museum* was well received. However, many people pointed out that the museum's heritage consisted not only of buildings but also many intangible factors.

Hence this booklet.

What we are saying is.....

PHM is an item of <u>world</u> heritage (page 3)
It is the nation's only Arts and Sciences Museum (page 6)
The heritage of the buildings IS important (page 7)
…… and the museum has its own heritage. (page 12)
The exhibits' home is this museum. (page 15)
This museum commemorates the bicentenary. (page 18)
If we trash the museum, we trash our reputation. (page 21)
We ignore the personal dimension at our peril. (page 22)
And the move makes no financial sense at all. (page 26)

Now read on.....

PHM is an item of world heritage …….

Throughout the world the best museums are typically in buildings that were not built for that purpose. Immediately, the Louvre and the St Petersburg Museums come into mind: they were built as sumptuous palaces for an elite, and now are extremely popular with the general public.

Other converted old buildings generally have more impact than new, purpose-built structures. Examples include the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry and the National Rail Museum in York (in the UK), Berlin's Museum of Technology and the Mainz ship museum (in Germany) and the Cincinnati Union Terminal in the US.

The fabulous Quai d'Orsay Art Gallery in Paris *(left)* is another converted railway station with amazing ambience, and probably the most striking of all such buildings.

Australia's Powerhouse Museum has claim to being one of the great museums of the world, largely because of the way it makes great use of its historical past. Unlike many of the other museums, its prize exhibits have remarkable affinity with its historic past: the museum is home to a magnificent collection of steam engines, and these are held in the turbine hall of Australia's first major power station. This theme is developed throughout this booklet, notably on pages 15 to 17.

This tram was based, from 1899, in the tram shed that is now the Harwood Building, part of this building complex, and is a marvellous example of the link between museum and object.

Recreating the spectacular vistas afforded by the huge industrial buildings will not be an economic proposition for the new museum. These spaces are unique. The Catalina 'Frigate Bird II' is the largest suspended aircraft in any museum in the world.

It is the nation's only Arts and Sciences Museum

Current director, Ms Dolla Merrilees, in a recent address, made the point that this museum is unique in Australia as a museum of arts and sciences. Its origin echoes that of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, which aimed 'to make works of art available to all, to educate working people and to inspire British designers and manufacturers'. In the 'V&A' the science component was split off to become the Science Museum, in the 1920s. But the Sydney Technological Museum (see page 13) carried on the combined endeavour, hence was consciously renamed the 'Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences' in 1946, honouring the unique breadth of its collections.

The fusion of arts and sciences has become even more relevant over recent years, as personified by Steve Jobs, the inspired creator of Apple Computers. The innovator of the future will be the one who combines ideas from many disciplines which are then mediated through great design, resting still within the original inspired vision of the V&A. MAAS already leads in multidisciplinary endeavours and seeks 'to more effectively engage with the multiple communities with interest in the hybrid disciplines of the applied arts and sciences' (MAAS Annual Report, 2014-5).

Thus it must be emphasised that the Powerhouse is a national asset. It must be seen not as a Sydney institution that is to be placed in the city's centre of population, but as something that must remain in the most accessible place for the nation, and indeed for the world. It is close to the CBD: visitors may walk along the recently created Goods Line Walk, from Central Station passing some of Sydney's most important cultural, educational and media institutions, such as the ABC, UTS and TAFE to reach the museum. This is the ideal place for this special museum.

The fame of the museum's Boulton and Watt engine is world-wide. Enthusiasts from many countries come to visit it. Britain used its image on its £50 note.

The heritage of the buildings IS important…….

By 1897 Sydney had become a major city and it needed a public transport system, so the government got busy:

Building started 8 November 1897: This is what had to be done:

The **basic building** is over 40 metres by 50 metres, with a three-storey section on the northern side, and large machinery hall to the south. Rail connection to the eastern side of the machinery hall. More than two million bricks were required, made locally and at various places throughout Sydney, to various specifications and colours; imported steelwork was used for framework. Sandstone embellishments throughout, including massive carved lintel and the elaborate door frame and threshold.

North Annex building of three storeys: Sandstone foundations with classical arches on sloping site. **Basement** with foreman's office and amenities for engine drivers, boiler attendants, greasers and coal handlers: mess room, bathrooms and toilets; **First floor:** Office, testing room, chemical laboratory, storeroom, bathroom and toilets; **Second floor:** goods elevator, 200 12 cubic foot lead-acid batteries for reserve power; Gallery on the southern wall containing a direct current switchboard.

Machinery area:
Pump Room drawing sea water from the harbour, with 2 electric pumps;
Boiler Room with 14 boilers made by Babcock and Wilson, Great Britain, in two banks of seven;
Engine Room with four Allis-Chalmers horizontal cross compound steam engines (imported from Milwaukee, Wisconsin) each directly coupled to a General Electric multipolar generator rated at 850 kw (imported from the Edison General Electric Company of Schenectady, New York); Two thirty-ton travelling cranes (imported from the Case Company of Columbia, Ohio, complete with gantries to be installed first to enable installation of the boilers, engines and generators.

Tram Shed: Brick shed with steel sawtooth roof, with completely open interior area of approximately 40 metres x 120 metres capable of holding 140 trams. Again, various varieties of bricks for various purposes, including decorative brickwork; sandstone embellishments. Under-floor maintenance areas for most trams, under-floor storage areas. Mezzanine workshops, storerooms, office and staff facilities. Electrical switchboards and catenary wiring for all tracks. Rails and switches.

Tramcars: 100 bogies imported from the Peckham Motor Truck & Wheel Co., Kingston, New York, USA Tram, and fitted with metal framed timber bodies and seats by Hudson Bros, Sydney

Tramlines: Approximately 10km of dual tramlines with catenary wires (from corner of John Street and Harris Street, via Central Station, to Millers Point) with associated points and termini.

Staff: training of hundreds of maintenance people, drivers, conductors and electricity power station workers in entirely new technology.

The first trams ran 25 months later, carrying nearly100 000 passengers on their first day.

The builders had no computers, no international phones, no Internet, and very few mechanical tools.

No comparison is made with contemporary projects!

Built in only 25 months? But

The 1899 Powerhouse.
The chimney alone had a million bricks.

Right: Above: corbelled walls, with engaged columns, were widely used for strength and beauty.

Below: the interior was finished well, with graceful lamps, which can still be seen…

Right: even the utilitarian tram shed (Harwood Building) had a variety of brickwork, and sandstone trimmings.

built with skill and pride….

Left: sandstone arches of the basement were hidden by the ‘new’ 1960 William Henry Street bridge.

The tradition continues…….

The establishment of the Ultimo Power Station was the start of an enormous process of electrification of the state. Coal was brought to the major centres where electricity was generated until the state-wide grid was developed. As well as building new stations in Sydney, the Ultimo power station was enlarged, and by 1902 it had doubled in size, and with new machinery, was much more efficient.

Again, the workmanship was superb. These were the most beautiful industrial buildings possible within the budget, designed with architectural excellence on an increasingly vast scale.

The Switch Room, built 1926, features art deco architecture and superb brickwork.

The 1902 chimneys are massive: in 1988 their demolition was suspended because it was too challenging a task. They now are used as part of the air conditioning system.

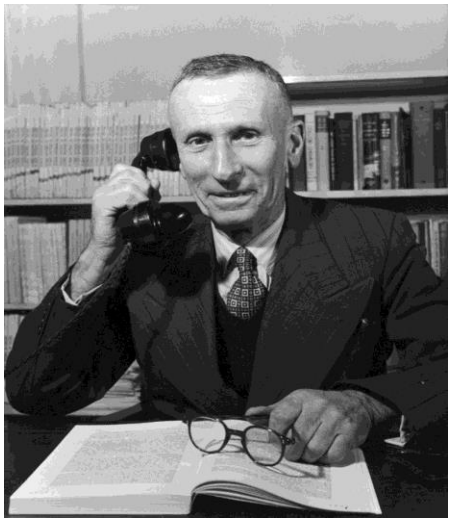
The huge equipment of the early power stations necessitated the magnificent galleries that are used to such dramatic effect for the transport hall display and in the turbine hall and steam gallery. Pioneer director of the 1988 museum conversion, Lindsay Sharp, has calculated that if the interior space available in the museum was made into a rectangular prism box, the Opera House would fit into it.

…… and the museum has its own heritage.

The buildings are indeed magnificent, but institutions such as museums also have non-material heritage.

Australia showed interest in museums from a very early stage in its history. The Australian Museum in Sydney can trace its origin to about 1821, an amazing development for the young penal colony. It capitalized on the current enthusiasm among the upper classes for zoology and botany. Sydney University, founded 1851, established the Nicholson Museum for antiquities in 1860.

The Sydney International Exhibition opened in September and closed seven months later. It put Australia on the world map as an important country, and Australians perceived this. The trustees of the Technological, Industrial and Sanitary museum, envisaged as 'the museum for the industrial classes', selected items from the display for their new museum but in 1882 the building was destroyed in a spectacular fire.



The Technological Museum, the immediate predecessor of the Powerhouse Museum, opened in 1893 in Harris Street next to the Technical College. As well as being a standard museum with displays, it was a leader in scientific and industrial research,performing much the same function as the modern CSIRO. For example, a farm block was purchased at Castle Hill for growing trial plots of eucalyptus trees for eucalyptus oil. This is the site of the Castle Hill Discovery Centre, a vital part of he Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.

On the lower floor work was done in animal husbandry, including wool classing; the establishment of recognised standards for the exported wool was vital to the wool industry when Australia 'rode on the sheep's back'.

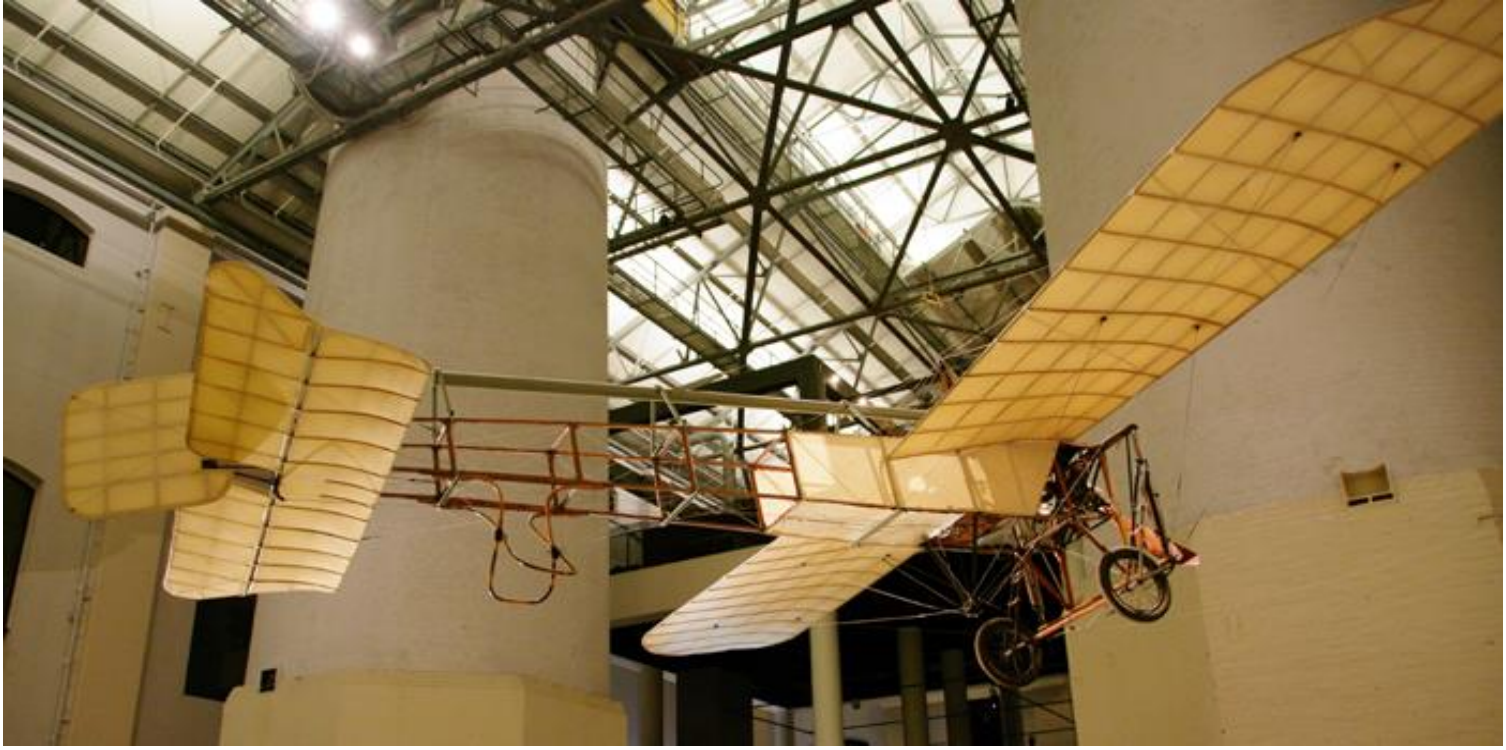
The Museum's early period was guided by some remarkable people: (l to r): Professor Liversidge, an eccentric but dedicated worker in the cause of developing this innovative museum – (he was the first dean of the faculty of Science at Sydney University, at a time when science was regarded as being of far lower status than the classics); Richard Baker, director for 27 years, established the academic reputation of the museum – he is seen with a bunch of eucalyptus, in suitably casual garb; Arthur Penfold, director 1927-1955 (see next page).

Under Arthur Penfold the museum gained a reputation for being at the forefront of technology and education. In the early 1950s the only place to see television was at the technological museum; the transparent woman (imported 1954) created a furore: The first viewing sessions were segregated by gender and a trained nurse was on standby to assist if anyone was overcome by the experience.

The museum at this site was a very important part of Sydney life and even today holds strong affection for those old enough to remember it.

But as the twentieth century progressed, it became obvious that it was inadequate as a display centre and that the times were changing. Museums, for example, were providing more activities for their visitors, not just displays in cases. More space was needed, and the brilliant solution was the rebirth of the derelict Ultimo Power Station as a state-of-the art museum.

Will the creation of a completely new museum at Parramatta be seen as a part of this developmental process? The evidence so far is not convincing!



The exhibits' home is this museum.

Iconic museum items are always associated with the museums in which they are displayed. We think of the Mona Lisa and we think immediately of the Louvre. It is even more significant when an object is in a museum where it has a direct connection with the nearby area.

To take an object almost at random: the Bleriot aircraft hanging from the transport hall ceiling was imported to Sydney in 1914, assembled nearby and first flew from Victoria Park, Zetland. Maurice Guillaux, the pilot, flew from Rose Bay in Australia's first seaplane, and was an early pioneer of Mascot and Richmond airfields. His spectacular Sydney displays brought the city to a near-standstill. Sydney was the destination for Australia's first airmail flight (Melbourne / Sydney) in July 1914, the longest such flight at that time. It attracted world-wide attention. In 2014 the centenary of this flight was commemorated with a re-enactment involving over twenty historic aircraft. The event was conducted by the Aviation Historical Society of Australia, an affiliated society of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. The mail was received at the Powerhouse in a Bastille Day commemoration that was the largest for many years.

About 30 pre-World War I aircraft have been preserved world-wide. Because of its remarkable history, the Bleriot can claim to be the third or fourth most significant of these survivors.

This aircraft belongs in this museum at this location.

The story of the acquisition of the Boulton and Watt steam engine is even more inspiring. Professor Liversidge found it unused in Britain and acquired it for the Technological Museum, where it was installed in the early twentieth century. Restored as a result of a public appeal in the 1980s, it takes pride of place in the Powerhouse Museum. It is the oldest working engine of its kind in the world.

Almost unique in the world is the fact that we have preserved New South Wales' very first train, and it is displayed within a kilometre or so of its terminus.

The Boulton and Watt engine, and the train, gain even more significance when considered as part of the Steam Revolution collection of the museum. It is certainly the most outstanding collection of steam

engines in the southern hemisphere, and among the four or five best such collections in the world.

The collection is displayed in the very building that was Australia's first industrial steam-powered electric generation station. This ambience cannot possibly be re-created in a purpose-built museum.

Further, the cost of replicating the steam production and reticulation apparatus at Parramatta will be huge.

And when this is achieved, we will still not have the items displayed in such an appropriate setting as at present: the mere size of the Steam Revolution display area cannot be easily replicated, and the Case cranes even if they can be relocated, will completely lose their context.

The Case cranes are the only major item of equipment left from the original power station, and are almost unique in the world.

Again, we have one of the original 1899 trams that inaugurated Sydney's first tram service, (see page 3) and it is displayed in the Powerhouse Museum, part of which is the original tram shed.

This section has concerned itself only with the major items, but this is only part of the story. The museum catalogue lists 3495 objects related to Ultimo: these include a large collection of archives and artefacts donated by the Harris family, very relevant to the history of the local area: the museum is in Harris Street, named after the first landowner, Dr John Harris, who settled here in 1800. The Harris family has been a major force in the development of Ultimo.

This museum commemorates the bicentenary.

Many events of 1988 were spectacular, and they remain as strong memories for those who attended. It was also a marker of Australian development. Ideas such as multiculturalism, Australian national identity, and the interpretation of history came to the forefront of national discussion: the Aboriginal actions brought the notion of invasion to the popular consciousness.

Brisbane held an Expo that took it from being a country town to being a world city. Sydney had the Darling Harbour re-development as a permanent marker of the bicentenary. Taking over the land of the defunct Darling Harbour goods yard, the development included the creation of a shopping centre, an entertainment centre, an exhibition centre and a conference centre. These were designed by well-known architects and were regarded as good examples of contemporary architecture.

The Exhibition Centre (left)was designed by Philip Cox and was awarded the Sulman medal for architecture in 1989. The Convention Centre (below) was designed by John Andrews, an Australian architect who has designed many award-winning buildings, Australia and overseas. Both have been demolished to enable new development.

The shopping centre (previous page) is also to be demolished to make way for a new shopping centre with residential towers.

The National Maritime Museum, completed 1991, is set to be the only surviving new building of the era.

The conversion of the Ultimo Power House to form the new museum was indeed a more inspiring project than the erection of the new buildings elsewhere. It was awarded the Sulman medal. The NSW Government Architect, J W Thompson, and the project architect Lionel Glendenning, were both recognized. The post-war buildings were demolished to make space available for a new wing in the contemporary style, and the rest was refurbished to 'better than new' standard. The basic structure, and almost all the brickwork was in surprisingly good condition.

The conversion had some surprising benefits. The huge areas that were necessary for the early machinery made for spectacular galleries. The 1926 switch room is ideal for displays of valuable items that may not be exposed to bright lighting. The two chimneys in the transport hall were too difficult to remove, but form an important part of the air conditioning mechanism that also made use of the cooling water piped from Darling Harbour.

The Harwood Building and the former Ultimo Post Office (now the PHM volunteer centre) both appear in the register of the National Estate as noteworthy historic buildings. The museum itself is not listed on the register: it was never thought that this would be necessary! Steps are being taken to remedy this.

We seem to be taking Dubai as a model for our modern architecture, and maybe we could also emulate the way the city preserves its heritage. The national museum is in the restored Al Fahidi Fort, built from 1787, and the oldest building in Dubai.

If we trash the museum, we trash our reputation.

A stereotype of the typical Australian sometimes portrays this person as uncouth, uncultured, unsophisticated. But the facts contradict: early in our history we established museums and universities; individual Australians have led the world in all fields of the arts and sciences, and in areas as diverse as archaeology and cosmology we are typically performing well 'above our league'. Our orchestras, opera, ballet and dance groups are of world class.

But what would happen if we 'relocate' this museum?

Jennifer Sanders, former deputy director of the Powerhouse Museum, recently surveyed world museums to try to find a similar process, but basically this is the only such example. Read her research on www.lockoweb.com/phm/bulletins/may32.pdf. This will do irreparable harm to our image as an advanced society. Our image will in no way be redeemed by such projects as the casino for multibillionaires being built on public land at Barangaroo, touted by the Premier as a marker of our advanced civilisation.

The Bel Temple, Palmyra, Syria, 2014; below left - the coming of ISIS; right - the temple today.

The implications of this sequence of pictures are legally irrelevant.

Although the destruction of heritage items in war is discouraged (*Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention 1954*) there is no such legal sanction when the destruction is performed in peacetime.

We ignore the personal dimension at our peril.

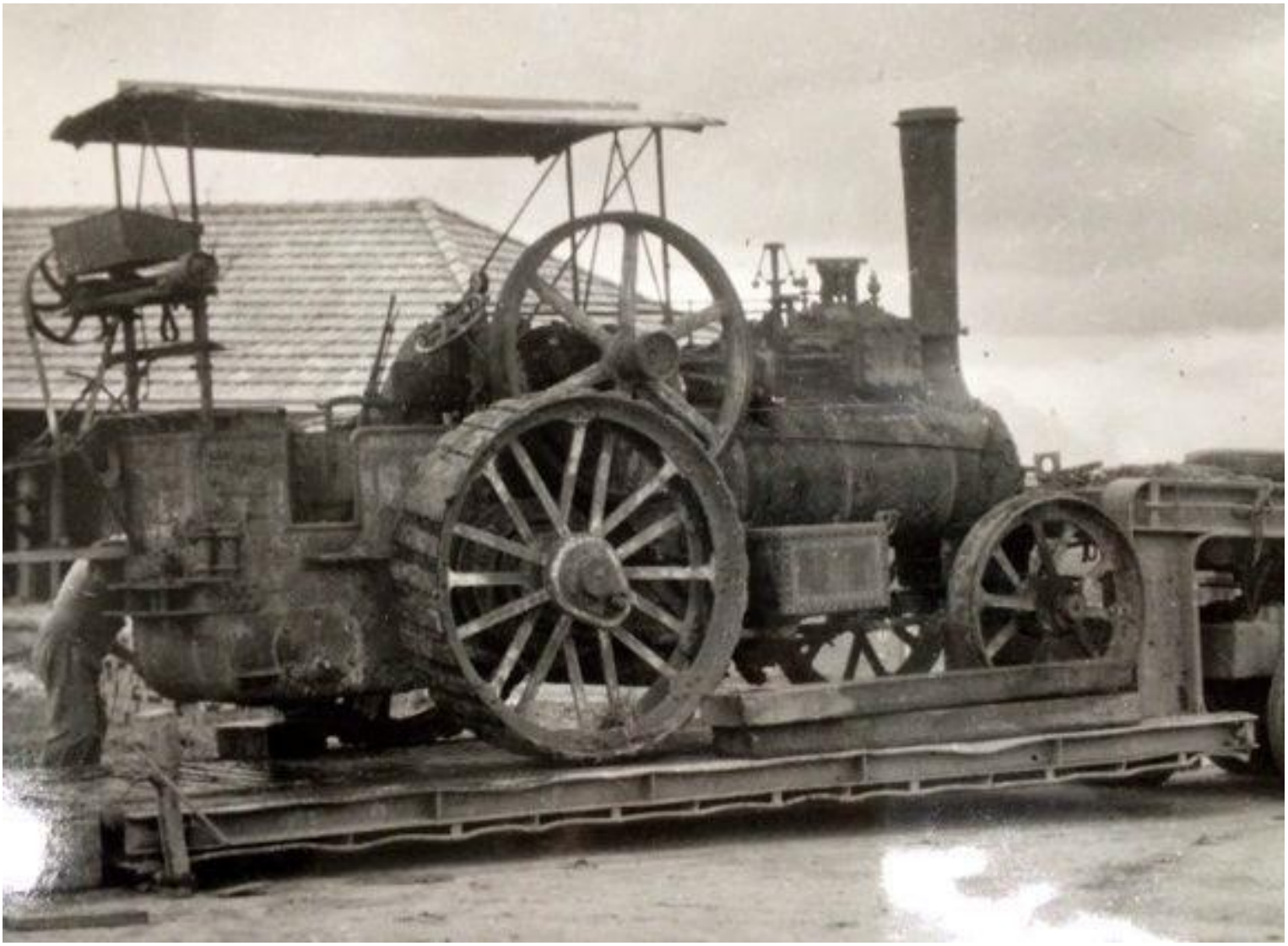
There are many human stories that relate to the Powerhouse.

There are actually three people in this 1904 picture which makes up for its poor quality because of the story it tells. In the front we have Wally Heath, a boilermaker. He is weilding a steam pump to clean off salt encrustations from the boiler tubes. His assistants are behind him, barely visible. The temperature in which they are working is accurately recorded at 156° Fahrenheit, just under 70° Celsius. For this Wally received 9 shillings a day, rising to 10/- after a pay case in 1911.

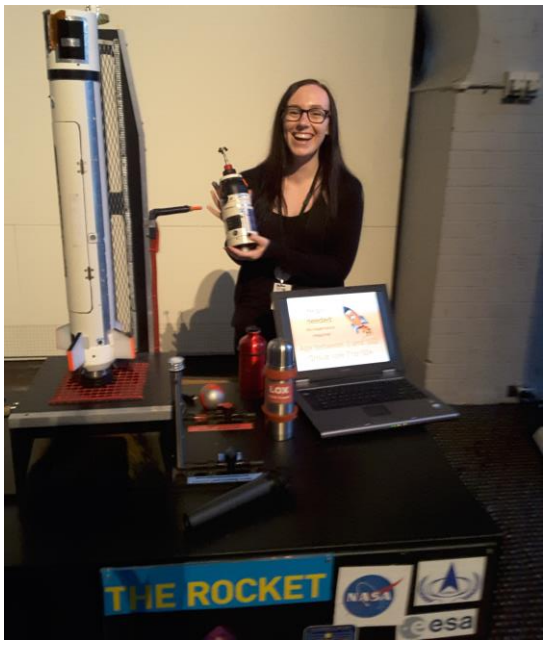
The museum stands as a reminder to this type of human labour.

In terms of of the museum we have already mentioned Messrs Liversdge, Baker and Penfold, early directors. We could mention other remarkable directors, but other workers have also had remarkable influence on the musuem. One of these is Norm Harwood, after whom the Harwood Building was named. Norm was curator of transport and engineering from 1950 to 1980, at a time when a lot of our heritage was being destroyed by unthinking modernisers. For example, it seems incredible that in 1956 the coastal artillery battery on North Head, useless for defence, but amazing technology, was just cut up for scrap metal. Wartime aircraft were also scrappedin huge numbers, some of those surviving being the results of illegal individual action.

There are countless examples of significant acquisitions brought into the collection at Norm Harwood's initiative. Working with virtually no acquisitions budget, he recognized the value of discarded machinery or dilapidated vehicles that could be 'rescued' rather than purchased. He saw a future when the Museum's collection would finally have the



funding it so desperately needed to be restored and conserved, properly accommodated and showcased. The crowds that mill around the transport gallery, or are guided through the Castle Hill collections are not aware of the amazing contribution of this man, for whom the best memorial is the building that bears his name. Typical of these acquisitions is the 1904 McLaren steam traction engine, obtained from a farm at Bathurst in 1962; Norm acquired it, delivered to Sydney, for a total of £25.



Picture: Alex,who is studying theatre arts and administration, working full time and volunteering at PHM. She is demonstrating a discovery station designed and built by another volunteer, a former chief engineer of a trans-national technology company.

As well as staff, the museum has always been able to attract high-quality volunteers. About

400 people work for the total MAAS organisaiton, and about half of these are at PHM. They fill many roles. Many have had distinguished careers in a wide variety of fields. There is a sizeable group of young people: typically, they are studying full-time, often doing PhDs in various fields, and working to support themselves. They want the experience so as to get into the competitive museum field, and a positive reference is prized on any CV.

At least four former curators regularly work as volunteers. Their input should be particularly valued by the museum as of recent years positions for specialist curators such as those for transport, space and aviation, have been made redundant.

From this 2001 picture of volunteers, at least 15 are still 'on the staff'.

The museum has a particular strength because of all this human history, past and present. To an extent, new associations would be formed at Parramatta, but there would be definite losses as a result of this move.

The following sections of this booklet deal briefly with the logistic problems of the move and also with the financing of the total process. They demonstrate that major difficulties need to be resolved.

But even if these are resolved, there is a huge reservoir of emotional attachment to this museum on the current site. Despite appalling weather, there have been major protest meetings: as time goes on, such activities will escalate.

This is a factor that must be taken into account in the total equation.

And the move makes no financial sense at all.

The move of the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta was forecast in the *Create in NSW: NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework* released on 26 February, 2015. It included as a key aim 'investigating the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum to the Parramatta Cultural Precinct'. On 24 November 2014, even before the release of this document, the Parramatta Advertiser carried a story confirming that the move would take place. The Premier and the Arts Minister announced the relocation of the museum to Parramatta and flagged their plans to sell the site, using the proceeds to erect a new museum in Parramatta. The site would be used for new residential buildings. All proceeds from the sale ($150 to $250 million) would be used for the new museum.

$10 million was set aside to examine the feasibility of the move. A specialist firm was employed for the purpose, but their findings have not been made available despite 'Freedom of Information' requests.

The loss of heritage is deplorable, but even setting this aside, the lack of information has led to serious doubts about the basic financial aspects of the project. Engineers, museum experts, town planners and other informed people have expressed doubts along the following lines:

- The costs of demolishing the buildings will be considerable. They are not fibro prefabs. There is also a strong likelihood that the northern area will be seriously polluted by the fuel oil used in the later stages of the power station's active life. The site is not level so that will also be a problem for the developers.
- The costs of simply moving the exhibits will also be considerable: informed estimates are typically at least $200 million. The reasons for this are indicated on the following pages.
- Already, over 3,500 new residences are being erected in the Darling Harbour precinct, along with 2,200 residences for student accommodation. Will the additional 2500+ dwellings to be erected on the museum site cause an oversupply? Is it wise to have so many dwellings in such a concentration? The preservation of the museum will add variety to the streetscape and improve the amenity of the area, adding value to the dwellings already being constructed.

Moving the exhibits….

This is not just a job for a crane and some semitrailers. Almost everything requires care far beyond that of the average removalist. Looking first at a few of the big items:

- The cast-iron components of the Boulton and Watt machine were never robust and have become more frangible with age. They will need to be handled like eggs. The heavy wooden frame is showing signs of decay and we have an engineer's opinion that it will need to be replaced.
- The Saturn 5 rocket engine (pictured) cannot be rested vertically: the exhaust flange is too weak. It has to be manipulated in a very complex way to remove it.
- Moving the Catalina flying boat is obviously a huge problem. Based on previous experience in aircraft relocation, it will cost at least a million dollars to move and reassemble. However, the Beech Queen Air (our world pioneer aerial ambulance) is even more difficult to move. The wing stubs and engines are integrated with the fuselage construction. This section is very frail and will need a specially made cradle, again at huge cost.

These are some of the obvious problem items, and an added complication is that many large items such as these will have to be last out of PHM and first in to the new buildings. The new buildings will require strengthened floors and ceilings in many areas.

The provision of steam throughout will be another huge problem.

But the large items are not the only problems. In the climate-controlled storerooms of the Harwood Building are thousands of smaller items that will need equal care. For example, this Japanese Edo period suit of armour (left) is extremely fragile, and is valued at $500,000. Not something to just put in a suitcase!

In short, it is apparent that the costs of clearing the site, and simply moving the exhibits will take all the money raised from the sale of the site, before even purchasing the new land, much less erecting the new building.

We will have lost this magnificent building for nothing.

This is terrible economics. The building itself is valued, at a minimum, at $450 million; to rebuild something equivalent at Parramatta will cost at least a similar amount.

The resistance to the move has been characterized by the government as a class war: ‘inner city trendies’ versus ‘westies’. Nothing could be farther from the truth. We share a common cause: similar atrocious planning is apparent in Parramatta, for example in the proposed demolition of the Parramatta swimming pool, and we stand united in opposing senseless destruction.

Every PHM supporter, and every thoughtful person in Parramatta, wants a museum in Parramatta that reflects its own wonderful past and future. Parramatta has a fascinating indigenous heritage, culminating in the resistance of Pemulwuy. It was our first successful farming area, our first inland city, and has a vibrant industrial and multicultural history. The area deserves its own museum. This can be afforded if money is not wasted by the senseless destruction of the Powerhouse.

The site for the Parramatta Museum has been named, but not yet purchased. It is just under a hectare in size (a little over half the size of the Powerhouse site). Those who have questioned its suitability on various grounds have been told that everything is under control.

Reminiscent of Jo Bjelke-Petersen:
'Now, don't you worry about that'.

(The picture comes from the Facebook page
https://www.facebook.com/savepowerhousemuseum/ which also has a brilliant video on the subject of the Smithsonian – see back cover, overleaf.)

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It is not possible to include source references in this small book. The background material can be seen on www.lockoweb.com/phm , and I am happy to provide the source for any statement made if it is not readily available on the website.

See also
https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/
https://www.facebook.com/savethepowerhouse/
https://www.facebook.com/savepowerhousemuseum/

Tom Lockley,