

10 October, 2016

Ms Shaza Barbar  
Council Officer Assistant  
Upper House Committees  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Barbar,

**General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4 – Monday 5 September 2016 – Inquiry into Museums and Galleries**

I have no corrections to the transcript for the evidence that I presented to the General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4, Inquiry into Museums and Galleries on Monday 5 September 2016.

As requested I attach two separate documents providing answers to the two questions asked me at the Inquiry as highlighted in yellow in the transcript.

Yours sincerely

Graham Quint  
Director, Advocacy



## FIRST QUESTION

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Considering the heritage significance that you have attributed to both the site itself and the site as a museum, why did it take the National Trust until after the Government had made the announcement in February 2015 to put them forward for listing?

**Mr QUINT:** With many of these places we had assumed they were already on the State Heritage Register and the Government itself had nominated them or they had been noted by the State Government department section 160 heritage registers. Unfortunately, often when items change hands they drop off these registers and they are no longer listed and protected. At that point, as with the National Art School we then have to take action.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Did you believe they were on a register previously?

**Mr QUINT:** Pretty well everybody we have spoken to, including us, thought it was already listed.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Was it previously on a register that it had dropped off, as you said could happen?

**Mr QUINT:** No, in this case it was only listed by the Sydney city council.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** In terms of the actual space itself or the space as a museum?

**Mr QUINT:** I think it is the space as a museum, but I would have to check that.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** If you would take that on notice, it would be appreciated.

**Mr QUINT:** I will take it on notice.

## ANSWER

The "Powerhouse Museum Former Warehouse Buildings, including interiors" was listed as an Item of Environmental Heritage (Item No 2031) on the Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012. The listing covers Lot 1 Deposited Plan 631345 and the address of the item is 500 Harris Street, Ultimo. The other name for this listing is "Ultimo Powerhouse (Former).

**The Statement of Significance** for this listing reads : -

*The former Ultimo Power House, dating from 1899, is historically significant for being the original generating station for the supply of electricity to power the tramway network throughout Sydney. It was also one of the largest and most important generating stations in NSW for many years and has associations with the electrification of the suburban railway system and with the general reticulation of electrical power. It was the first place where turbine driven alternators were tried in Australia, in 1905. It was amongst the largest of any generating stations operating in Australia with Ultimo and the White Bay Power being purpose built for the Railway and Tramways Department generating stations. The abandoned status of the power station and tramway system provided a potential to reveal a past transport system which ceased in favour of motor buses, which was underway from the 1950s.*

*The building dates from one of the key period of layers for the development of Ultimo as a direct result of subdivision of the Harris and Macarthur Estates and industrial redevelopment of the area at the turn of the century.*

*It represents a good example of a Federation industrial building which makes a positive contribution to the streetscape. The subsequent alterations undertaken for the building's conversion to the Powerhouse Museum is significant both for its successful re-use of the buildings and as a modern design, awarded the Sulman medal.*



**The Description for the Item** states: -

**Physical description:** A robust and substantial warehouse building typical of the Federation period. Of solid brick construction with sparse rendered brick details to window sills and cornice. Decorative brick arched lintels over the windows. Built on the eastern side of the Ultimo/Pymont ridge line, this original warehouse is the southernmost, closest to Parramatta Road on this side of the ridge. See also Ref. Nos. 6559, 6556, 6555, 6632. Category: Individual Building. Style: Federation Warehouse. Storeys: 3. General Details: Refer to Archaeological Zoning Plan.

**Physical condition and / or Archaeological potential:** The building is in good condition.

**Modifications and dates:** The building closed as a power station in 1963 and was restored and adaptively converted to a technology museum in the late 1980s. It won the Sulman Award in 1988.

**The History** for the Item stated: -

This site forms part of the land of the Gadigal people, the traditional custodians of land within the City of Sydney council boundaries. For information about the Aboriginal history of the local area see the City's Barani website: <http://www.sydneybarani.com.au/>

The first land grants were made in 1803 and 1806 to Surgeon John Harris who was granted 34 acres and then constructed and named Ultimo House in 1804. He named it Ultimo (meaning last month) as a result of a clerical error in his charge papers. There were further grants to Harris of 9 and 135 acres in 1806 and another 12 acres in 1818. He moved to his farm at Shanes Park (near St Marys) in 1821 but retained the estate and leased Ultimo House first to Edward Riley and then to Justice Stephen.

Proposed improvements along the first few miles of Parramatta Rd prompted subdivision by Harris along the Parramatta Rd and George Street frontages, and these were developed into houses, shops and public houses over the next 10 years. The remainder of the estate remained largely undeveloped and following Harris' death in 1838, legal complications prevented further subdivision until 1859. Ultimo was incorporated into the City of Sydney in 1844 and the early 1850's saw a number of major developments in Pymont and also in Ultimo to a lesser extent. Its close proximity to the city's expanding central business district, Brisbane Distillery port and transport facilities made it an attractive area for housing. In 1853, the Sydney Railway Company resumed 14½ acres of the Ultimo Estate for a railway line to and with a terminus at Darling Harbour. The area was further subdivided in 1860 which established major north/south streets including Pymont, Harris, Jones and Wattle Streets although the roads were not fully formed until 1870. The west side of the estate was dominated by quarrying activities and the remainder used for dairying paddocks. Services including water and sewer came to the area in the early 1860's and gas lighting between 1868 & 1872.

The population doubled during this time, and industry began to establish including Castlemaine Brewery in Quarry Street, Atlas Ironworks, and manufacturer and merchant Samuel Freeman in Harris Street. The early 1880's saw a boom in housing in the area followed by Goldsborough Mort's woolstores in 1883 and other substantial warehouse buildings including a large grain and produce store in Allen St, Waite & Bull's woolstore in 1893, Winchcombe Carson No.1 in 1895 (in Wattle St) and Farmers and Graziers (between Wattle and Jones Sts). In 1892 the Ultimo Technical College opened in Mary Ann St. By the early 1880's Union Square was established as a commercial centre and by 1900 most residential development had ceased by which time the Pymont and Ultimo Power Houses had opened and the new Pymont Bridge had been constructed. Most development in the 20th century was commercial and industrial and included additional woolstores, Pymont Incinerator (1934), flour mills (1940), additional power stations (1955) and the Government Printing Office (1960's).

The building was constructed in 1899 and ceased being used as a powerhouse in 1963 with the phasing out of Sydney trams at that time. It was adaptively re-used to become part of the Powerhouse Museum from 1985. The Powerhouse Museum (formerly the Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences) opened to the public in 1988.



The Listing's **Recommended Management** for the Item: -

The building should be retained and conserved. A Heritage Assessment and Heritage Impact Statement, or a Conservation Management Plan, should be prepared for the building prior to any major works being undertaken. There shall be no vertical additions to the building and no alterations to the façade of the building other than to reinstate original features. Any additions and alterations should be confined to the rear in areas of less significance, should not be visibly prominent and shall be in accordance with the relevant planning controls.

#### **Sale of the Powerhouse**

Transferring a traditional de-contextualized museum to Parramatta, a place which is so richly site specific, fails to capitalize on the city's unique heritage tourism and collection assets.

Parramatta is the cradle city of NSW settlement and contains a unique ensemble of historic buildings (including the only three surviving eighteenth century structures in Australia), landscapes (particularly in Parramatta Park and the former Cumberland Hospital site) and collections.

The NSW Government should be fostering the development in Parramatta of a multi-sited museum, set within a contemporary and developing city, which ties together existing museums and landscapes, a new museum on the Cumberland Hospital site with a mission to engage modern audiences in experiencing, understanding, interpreting and narrating the formative stories of NSW life and history.



## SECOND QUESTION

**The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN:** Apart from extra funding, is there anything else in this space that you would recommend that we consider in terms of supporting regional areas? I am happy for you to take this question on notice.

**Mr QUINT:** I will take that on notice, if you do not mind. We would be very happy to give you a detailed response.

## ANSWER

Increased funding for the maintenance, conservation and presentation of the National Trust's properties in regional areas is the key to providing improved visitor experiences and in maximising the contribution to regional economies via tourism, education and enhancement of local identity.

The Trust is a community based statutory body and charity which works to protect Australia's heritage through advocacy, conservation and education within New South Wales. As an independent charitable organisation, the Trust and the entities the Trust controls are supported by memberships, donations, sponsorships, bequests and volunteers.

The work of the Trust's employees complements the estimated over 140,000 hours contributed by volunteers to conserve and interpret heritage for the people of New South Wales.

Income and interest in heritage is raised by events, gallery and property visitation (155,386 visitors in 2016 and 144,570 visitors in 2015), and inspections and guided tours which are conducted by staff and volunteers.

The National Trust of Australia (NSW) operates **the largest regional museum network in NSW** with seventeen historic places, galleries and museums located across the State including western Sydney, the Blue Mountains, the Hunter Valley and Western, Southern and Northern NSW.

**Collectively the properties explore the history of New South Wales.** Some of the major themes are set out in the table below.

The museums comprise the World Heritage listed Old Government House, Parramatta as well sixteen other properties of national and state significance.

Theme	Property
Contact History between the traditional owners and transplanted people	Old Government House, Parramatta Cooma Cottage, Yass Tomago, Tomago
The Colonial Experiment	Experiment Farm Cottage, Harris Park Old Government House, Parramatta Harper's Mansion, Berrima
Exploration	Cooma Cottage
Pastoralism	Dundullimal, Dubbo Saumarez Homestead, Armidale
The growth of provincial cities	Miss Traill's House, Bathurst Grossmann House, Maitland Miss Porter's House, Newcastle
The development of democracy	Sir Henry Parkes School of Arts, Tenterfield
Bohemianism	Norman Lindsay Gallery, Springwood
Feminism and Progressivism	Tomago, Tomago Ahimsa, Cheltenham



	Stella James House, Avalon
The development of education	Tenterfield School of Arts, Tenterfield Woodford Academy, Woodford St Ignatius School, Wentworth Grossmann House, Maitland
Modernism	Everglades Leura The Poolhouse, Retford Park, Bowral
Multi-Culturalism	Experiment Farm Cottage, Harris Park Old Government House, Parramatta
Decorative Arts	Collectively the properties house the world's most significant collection of Australian Colonial furniture, as well as rich collections of fine art, ceramics and ephemera.
The Evolution of the NSW House	The Trust manages twenty-one houses dating from 1799 to the 1960s, seventeen of which are located outside Sydney. The ensemble includes buildings by architects as diverse as Francis Greenway, John Wiltshire Pender, Walter Burley Griffin and Guildford Bell.

Four of these properties are government owned but the National Trust has the responsibility for their maintenance and upkeep. In the 2015/16 financial year the NSW Government provided \$132k funding for repairs and maintenance to the State owned properties that the Trust manages for the government. The total cost of maintaining National Trust properties in 2015/16 was \$3.5m and the cost of maintaining the Government-owned properties was \$1.1m.

### **Collections**

The Trust Collections are nationally significant. They include furniture, textiles, fine art, ceramics costume, photography and agricultural equipment. They are valued at over twenty million dollars.

### **Staffing & Volunteers**

The Trust has a small properties team based at its Observatory Hill headquarters which include people with specialist skills in conservation and collections. They work with a small paid team and a large team of volunteers, currently over two thousand people. The volunteers include many highly skilled people. The Trust sees volunteers as central to its mission and seeks to foster voluntarism at all levels of the organisation. For the Trust's volunteers, its properties provide an important community focus and source of great pride, contributing to a higher sense of well-being in regional areas.

### **Visitation and Programs**

The Trust properties provide a diverse range of programs including guided tours, specialist tours, adult education programs, school programs and temporary exhibitions. In the 2016 financial year 155,386 people visited National Trust properties.

### **Economic Impact**

The Trust's museums make a significant contribution to local economies.

It is estimated, for example, that each dollar spent by visitors at Saumarez Homestead, a National Trust property at Armidale in the New England, generates conservatively twenty dollars for the local economy.

The site is rich and complex and includes an Edwardian mansion, a farm area, extensive gardens and a café. Visitors can choose from a range of activities including a guided tour of the homestead or self-guided tours of the gardens



or the farm area. Typically, visitors choose at least one activity preceded or followed by a visit to the café. The minimum time of a visit is two hours but may be longer.

Visitors often combine their Saumarez visit with a visit to the local art museum, the New England Regional Art Museum, which is home to the famous Hinton Collection and/or a visit to Dangars Falls, a spectacular waterfall which is located seventeen kilometres away in the northern part of the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park.

Visitors fall into several categories – residents, people visiting residents and tourists. The largest group are tourists heading either north or south along the New England Highway. The duration of the Saumarez visit means that visitors stay the night in Armidale or the nearby town of Uralla and thereby add accommodation and meals to their local spend.

### **Opportunities**

The Trust exists through an Act of the NSW Parliament, however the great majority of its funding is generated from its own sources including admission fees, business enterprises, donations and endowment income. The creation of such a remarkable ensemble of museums with their rich collections and active programs is a remarkable achievement.

In order to further develop the potential of its aggregated museums the Trust is proposing the following projects.

- Making its collections accessible on the internet
- Expanding volunteer recruitment and training
- Creative interpretation of its properties
- Increasing the marketing of its properties

Other avenues for supporting regional areas include: -

- Providing/improving motorway signage to attract visitors to regional museums and galleries
- Promoting of regional museums and galleries in NSW Tourism publications and on-line publicity
- Increasing subsidies for museum and gallery service charges