



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 4 – LEGAL AFFAIRS

MEDIA RELEASE

POWERHOUSE MUSEUM RELOCATION SHOULD NOT PROCEED

Museums and galleries final report released

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

28 February 2019

The Upper House committee inquiring into museums and galleries in New South Wales has today tabled its final report, urging the NSW Government to not proceed with the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum from Ultimo to Parramatta. The committee's first report was tabled in December 2017. This latest report comes after the NSW Legislative Council obtained the final business case for the relocation project.

During the inquiry stakeholders argued that the business case was flawed and insufficient and departed from Treasury's own guidelines by failing to consider as part of the cost benefit analysis simply leaving the museum where it is.

The Chair of the committee, the Hon Robert Borsak MLC, said: "For two and a half years, the inquiry has tirelessly pursued the NSW Government's rationale for the 2015 policy decision to relocate the Powerhouse Museum. After much evidence, it seems that the decision to relocate the Powerhouse Museum has been based on poor planning and advice, a flawed business case and insufficient community consultation. Nothing so far has demonstrated the necessity or purpose for relocating this institution, a museum that is loved and internationally acclaimed".

Instead of relocating the museum, the committee called on the NSW Government to focus on restoring the Powerhouse Museum at Ultimo, by providing a significant injection of funding for refurbishment and expansion. The Chair added "The museum can be restored and expanded, and returned to its former glory, probably for a fraction of the cost of the entire proposed relocation. Given it sits in the heart of Sydney, close to the cultural ribbon promoted by the government, one cannot understand why it simply shouldn't stay where it is". The committee also agreed that Western Sydney should benefit from its own museum, which could be a satellite site or a cultural institution that reflects Parramatta's own extraordinary history.

The final report also discusses concerns regarding the leadership, management and culture within the Powerhouse Museum over recent years, and the role and authority of the Board of Trustees. Mr Borsak said: "The recent controversial fashion ball fundraising event, coupled with staffing cuts, declining operations and what may be described as poor leadership and workplace culture, have raised questions about whether the museum is being managed appropriately, and whether the proposed move has overshadowed the effective and ongoing operation of the museum at its current site."



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As a result, the committee has recommended that in the next Parliament, a Select Committee be established to inquire into and report on the governance of the arts and culture sector in New South Wales, with particular reference to the governance and management of the Powerhouse Museum relocation project.

For a full copy of the committee's final report and other inquiry documents please visit the committee's webpage: www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/museumsandgalleries

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For further information please contact Committee Chair, the Hon Robert Borsak MLC, on 9230 2573.