

Select committee on the Government's management of the Powerhouse museum and other museums and cultural projects in NSW

Response to Questions on Notice

QUESTION – Boulton and Watt engine
The CHAIR: Will the Boulton and Watt engine be fired up with live steam like it was before? The Hon. DON HARWIN: I am sorry, I will have to take that question on notice. I have not been briefed on that issue.
ANSWER: Yes

QUESTION – Advice to trustees about Ultimo announcement on 4 July
The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Prior to your voluntary resignation you had been privately advocating for the outcome that was announced on 4 July. You voluntarily resigned. In that relatively short period that decision is made, you are not consulted, you are not told. You are reinstated to the ministry and then told that less than 24 hours later you will be standing up next to the Treasurer and making that announcement. Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That is what he says. The CHAIR: Rose, there is a Santa Claus. Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Just accept it, it was good. The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It is great news, it is fantastic. The Hon. WALT SECORD: When were the trustees advised of the new position? The Hon. DON HARWIN: I would have to take that question on notice.
ANSWER: Friday 3 July 2020.

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QUESTION – Consideration of Willow Grove and St Georges Terrace

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Have you provided designs that will allow the retention of Willow Grove and St Georges Terrace, as the Heritage Council asked?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: One of the shortlisted designs did that and the jury felt that it was a suboptimal outcome.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, this is a requirement for the planning process, not the jury selection. This is a requirement for the planning process. The Heritage Council has said that the planning process should consider any designs that could facilitate the retention of Willow Grove and St Georges Terrace. Why is that not part of the planning process?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Thank you, I will take that on notice.

ANSWER:

The tabled letter from the Heritage Council of NSW was sent in response to Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Environment's (DPIE) request for Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for the New Powerhouse Museum on 20 January 2020.

It is a standard part of the major project approval process for SSDs, for the Secretary to consult with relevant government agencies in determining what assessments and analysis is required for a development to be considered. Standard SEARs are provided to the agency, who are then required to provide advice in relation to their area of expertise on the project and recommend information the proponent is to provide at the environmental impact assessment stage. Advice provided by the Heritage Council about the New Powerhouse Museum SEAR suggested the process consider amendments to the draft SEAR to include built form, heritage and urban design, heritage and archaeology social impact assessment.

An assessment of alternatives was included in the Environmental Impact Statement consistent with the SEARs.

The project has followed the approved design excellence process which resulted in the selection of the design by Moreau Kusunoki which includes the demolition of Willow Grove and St George's Terraces. As part of the design excellence process all competitors were asked to consider heritage items on the site along with other site considerations such as flooding and creating a functional museum program. The jury was unanimous in its selection of the design by Moreau Kusunoki which is consistent with the approved design excellence process for the project.

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QUESTION – Heritage in Parramatta area

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Can I ask one more on this? They also required the proponent to investigate the cumulative impact of the further loss of heritage within the Parramatta area from the point of view of the local community. You have not done that either. Why has not been done?
The Hon. DON HARWIN: I will take that on notice and get an answer for you.

ANSWER:

The Statement of Heritage Impact lodged with the SSD assesses the cumulative impact of the project on heritage within Parramatta and assesses the project as having a minor cumulative impact on heritage within the area.

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QUESTION – Molino Stewart report into flooding at Parramatta site

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There is not much time left but one of the primary and continuing concerns about the construction of the museum at Parramatta is flooding. I think you have just been handed a report from Molino Stewart who are the leading consultants in flood plain risk management and planning. They have particular expertise on flood planning and flood risk issues in the Parramatta central business district and Parramatta River catchment. They are the company that has prepared most of the major flood policies and plans for Parramatta council. These are the experts.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In light of the data that came from the 9 February floods, their report states that the museum site is likely to experience overland flood depths of up to 0.5 metres as frequently as once a year. To put that in context, a flood height at 30 centimetres is considered enough to sweep people away. The major flood experts say once a year it could be inundated up to half a metre and what do you say to that?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Given that I have not had time to read your document I think the only appropriate thing in the circumstances is to take that part of your question on notice. I will say that we have been through this issue many, many times. The museum is being built above the one-in-100 year

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister please turn to page 28 of that report where the primary conclusion states that that is a woefully inadequate assessment for this site. It states: "The site itself is at risk of flooding from floods more frequent than the 20 year average recurrent interval and flooding as frequent as the one year average recurrent interval overland flows in Phillip Street and Dirrabarri Lane." They say that the analysis under the one-in-100 years is a dangerous basis to proceed.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I do not want in any way to intervene in what I am sure is a good quality company and the work they have done.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: They are the experts.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I think the only fair thing for me to do in the circumstances is to take the question on notice

ANSWER:

The project meets City of Parramatta Development Control Plan in relation to flooding as well as the NSW Floodplain Development Manual, and is consistent with other buildings developed in the Parramatta CBD.

There will be ample time available (in the order of hours) during a flood for people to be moved to higher levels, if required.

There is no intention to use the undercroft as an evacuation point.

There is also sufficient back-up power supply for the building that is located approximately 5 metres above the ground floor to maintain building operations.

Keeping people and the Powerhouse Collection protected from flooding has been a key consideration throughout the development of the project design.

Flood modelling has been undertaken by Arup in accordance with the NSW Floodplain Development Manual to quantify risks from flooding.

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Arup is an independent firm of designers, planners, engineers, architects, consultants and technical specialists, working across every aspect of today's built environment.

To protect the building from flooding, the ground floor has been designed to be 500mm above the 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (one-in-100 year) flood level which equates to 7.5m above sea level.

Infrastructure NSW is considering all matters raised during the exhibition period and will respond in the Response to Submissions Report.

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QUESTION – Public safety conclusion in Molino Stewart report into flooding at Parramatta site

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: No, this is one I want to put to your directly. These flood consultants say that there is as little as 45 minutes' notice of a major flood event in Parramatta and that the only safe way to ensure that the public in the museum can be protected is if they shelter in place. Their conclusions say unambiguously that there are no plans—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Is this a question?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There are no safe places to shelter in place in this museum.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: David apparently wants to use the rest of his time by making a political statement rather than to actually ask questions.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And that it is dangerous to proceed. I cannot understand how you are proposing such a dangerous project.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Is this a question?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I do not think it is, Trevor.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, will you respond to that public safety conclusion in this report?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Yes, I would be very happy to respond on notice

ANSWER:

The buildings and main entrances are designed above the recommended flood level. The Riverfront area and foreshore has been designed to accommodate flooding.

The Environmental Impact Statement recommends two key flood mitigation measures to be further developed before Powerhouse Parramatta commences operations. These measures are consistent with the mitigation measures undertaken by other developments along the river:

- **Emergency response:** As required for any building on the banks of the Parramatta River, a detailed Emergency Response Plan will be developed to outline flood evacuation procedures for the areas that are designed to be floodable, namely the undercroft and the public space along the riverfront and foreshore. This would include an early warning system and using rainfall forecasts to determine if the undercroft space should be open for use. This would form part of a daily operating procedure.
- **Public areas:** Landscaped and public spaces in the Riverfront area would use materials, finishes and plants that are resilient to flooding and allow for low-cost and simple maintenance in the event they are impacted by flooding

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QUESTION – Consultant spend

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Since mid 2017 approximately \$19.6 million has been spent on consultants— infrastructure NSW, Create NSW and the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Trust—for the development of Powerhouse Parramatta. This includes costs associated with the purchase of the site, the development of the Powerhouse Parramatta Business Case, running the international design competition and conducting the collection, digitalisation and relocation, developing the design, navigating the statutory planning and conducting a substantial program of community consultation. Given the complexity of this project, the risks and community concerns are expressed, it has been important to obtain strategic advice on different options. As with all complex infrastructure projects consultants are engaged to provide the specialist advice needed to define and progress the project. This includes architectural design, engineering, acoustics, cost estimation, urban and statutory planning, economics and communications. The procurement of these consultants was consistent with government procurement processes—\$19.6 million.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But Minister you have only given us the figures since 2017. It may not be a decade, as Walt suggests, but this was first announced in February 2015.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: It is going to be a decade.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Can we have the full list from February 2015 onwards?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I am happy to take the question on notice.

ANSWER:

In 2015 the NSW Government committed \$10 million over two years (2015-16 and 2016-17) to commence planning for the establishment of the Parramatta Cultural Precinct and the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum from Ultimo to Parramatta.

Since mid-2017, approximately \$19.6 million has been spent on consultants by Create NSW, MAAS and Infrastructure NSW for the development of Powerhouse Parramatta. This includes costs associated with the purchase of the site, the development of the Powerhouse Parramatta Business Case, running the International Design Competition, conducting the Collection Digitisation and Relocation, developing the design, carrying out the statutory planning process, and conducting a substantial program of community consultation.

Given the complexity of this project, the risks, and community concerns expressed, it has been important to obtain strategic advice on different options. As with all complex infrastructure projects, consultants are engaged to provide the specialist advice needed to define and progress the project. This includes architectural design, engineering, acoustics, cost estimation, urban and statutory planning, economics and communications. The procurement of these consultants was consistent with Government procurement processes.

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Questions taken from hearing with Ms Foy, Ms Havilah & Professor Glover

QUESTION – Museum Standards

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Ms Havilah, one of the critiques of the proposal for the Parramatta site is that it will have significantly less exhibition space that meets museum standards of climate control. The analysis that has been provided to my office is that the Parramatta facility will have just 5,200 square metres of that, whereas the current Powerhouse Museum at Ultimo has 21,800 square metres of museum-standard climate-controlled exhibition space. Why is there such a radical reduction in this important environment at Parramatta?

Ms HAVILAH: I am not sure where you got those figures from, but they are incorrect. There will actually be 18,000 square metres of exhibition and public space in Parramatta. The overall museum will be 30,000 square metres. All of the exhibition spaces will be climate controlled to international standard and the whole of the museum has actually been engineered to be able to present the Powerhouse collection.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In terms of the 19,800 square metres that was in the initial plans for the Parramatta facility, is it your evidence that all of that—all of the public exhibition spaces—will be engineered to a standard that has them at the museum standard for climate-controlled exhibitions?

Ms HAVILAH: All of the exhibition spaces at Powerhouse Parramatta will be designed to international museum standard, including climate control. I am happy to take it on notice so I can give you those accurate detailed figures.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And the comparison between the two, if you would, Ms Havilah.

Ms HAVILAH: Absolutely, yes.

ANSWER:

Powerhouse Parramatta is designed for the exhibition of the Powerhouse Collection and loaned collections and exhibitions, it will be the largest museum in NSW at almost 30,000 square metres with 18,000 square metres of public and exhibition space.

Powerhouse Parramatta is larger than the current Powerhouse Ultimo which has 15,080 square meters of public and exhibition space.

Powerhouse Parramatta will be a world class, fit-for-purpose and state-of-the-art museum meeting international environmental standards. Since opening in 1988, the air conditioning standards at Powerhouse Ultimo has enabled the exhibition of the Powerhouse Collection and loaned items.

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QUESTION – When did work on the Ultimo business case begin?

Ms HAVILAH: The business case, which was in development, has not been submitted to Government, as Ms Foy said. So it was not considered; no options have been presented to Government. It was a separate decision.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Foy, the 4 July announcement—when did work on the business case begin?

Ms FOY: The business case has been in development for some time at the moment. I am happy to refer to my staff and see if I can get the original date that it started, or take that on notice.

ANSWER:

Work on the Ultimo Creative Industries Final Business Case commenced in April 2018.

QUESTION – Ultimo consultation

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Any master plan for this site would be assisted by engagement with the community and engagement with a variety of very, very well informed key stakeholders. I have not heard any commitment from you, Ms Foy, or from you, Ms Havilah, to have a formal public consultation about the master plan and I find that unfortunate.

Ms FOY: Perhaps how we are understanding the master planning process may be different. The definition of that might be different between us but I am happy to come to you with more detail and, if possible, just get some detail on what that is.

ANSWER:

MAAS will undertake internal and external consultation appropriate for a Final Business Case including what constitutes a world-class museum and what opportunities arise from the retention of Powerhouse Ultimo. Consultation will include both public and targeted engagement with stakeholders such as the City of Sydney, relevant NSW Government agencies, previous Trustees, donors, local community groups, government, business, and education providers.