



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S MANAGEMENT OF THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM
AND OTHER MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL PROJECTS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

MEDIA RELEASE

UPPER HOUSE COMMITTEE HANDS DOWN FINDINGS ON \$1.34 BILLION POWERHOUSE PROJECT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

30 September 2022

The NSW Upper House committee examining the Government's management of the Powerhouse Museum and other cultural institutions in New South Wales has today handed down its findings and recommendations, bringing to an end more than two years of close scrutiny of the government's plans for this internationally renowned museum.

The Committee Chair, the Hon Robert Borsak MLC, stated: 'This important inquiry brought to the fore so many compelling reasons why the government should re-think this ill-conceived project. There was a litany of issues that should give any government pause when embarking on an infrastructure project of the magnitude and cost of the one subject to our inquiry process'.

'The pressure generated by our inquiry was not in vain. It forced consideration of issues which might not have otherwise been the subject of attention, including overlooked flood risks. However, it was not enough to stop the removal of Willow Grove from its home in the Parramatta CBD, or to dent the government's resolve to build the Powerhouse facility on a flood prone site,' Mr Borsak added.

Mr Borsak continued: 'On closer inspection, the 4 July decision – ostensibly to keep the Ultimo museum open alongside the future facility at Parramatta – was anything but a win for the museum's supporters. When you look at what is actually being proposed for the renewal at Ultimo, there is no commitment to retain the Ultimo Powerhouse in its recognisable, internationally-renowned form. Where there is currently a thematically coherent science and technology museum with a clear and distinct identity, there will soon be a confused hotchpotch of fashion items displayed alongside a handful of large industrial and transport items. These large items will be stripped of their broader storytelling contexts and installations, thereby diminishing the significance of their collections as a whole. Additionally, a good deal of the site will likely be hived off for non-museum uses in a bid to generate commercial returns.'

Referring to the government's capital budget of \$1.34 billion for the Powerhouse Parramatta, expansion of the Castle Hill Museums Discovery Centre and the renewal of Ultimo, Mr Borsak remarked: 'This dwarfs the level of government funding for museums and galleries in regional New South Wales and

underscores the lack of parity and equity. By contrast, regional museums and galleries are often forced to survive on inadequate and piecemeal funding and with scant support for ongoing operational expenses.'

The committee has handed down four findings and nine recommendations to address unresolved issues with the Powerhouse development and the many challenges regional museums and galleries face within the current funding and policy climate.

Information about the inquiry, including the committee's report, is available on the committee's website: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/listofcommittees/Pages/committee-details.aspx?pk=264>

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