

**Submission  
No 15**

## **INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES**

**Organisation:** Pymont History Group

**Date received:** 28 July 2016

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## Pymont History Group Submission to the Enquiry into Museums and Galleries.

The Pymont History Group is the successor to the Pymont Ultimo Historical Society, an affiliated body of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Several members live in Jacksons Landing, a successful redevelopment of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, which integrates heritage with high-density residential development. (A scale model is held in MAAS.) We work to ensure that the social and economic traditions and history of our peninsula are preserved.

Apart from public talks, our main activity is the creation and organisation of an on-line archive. This archive collects and will make accessible a wide range of oral history, documentary, photographic and other visual records.

We seek to re-establish a vibrant relationship with our local museum, the iconic Powerhouse.

The catalogue of the Museum of Arts and Applied Sciences lists 474 objects related to Pymont, 3495 related to Ultimo, and 545 related to CSR. Even allowing for overlap, this is a magnificent resource for our endeavours.

We have a particular interest, therefore, in that collection and the building which houses it. Modern museums increasingly emphasise their educational role, and this is especially relevant to the young people of Ultimo and Pymont. The removal of the museum would sever the connections between the industrial and social exhibits on one hand and the people of inner-city Sydney for whom it has the most meaning. It would also inhibit people who use our archive from seeing the material, including the Powerhouse building, to which it refers.

We appeal for a reconsideration of the proposed destruction of the building and the removal of its contents. The outcome of that policy would deny the people of Ultimo and Pymont – and of the inner city as a whole – access to their own industrial and social heritage. It would also make an area of streetscape sameness, a desert bereft of heritage.

Further information:

David Anderson, *A Common Wealth: museums in the learning age*, London 1999.  
Accessible online at [www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk), click on Publications, choose Archive 1999 and Museums and Galleries

Here is a succinct statement by the Museums Association of the United Kingdom, describing the linkage between education and museums in general.

## The education agenda

Education has always been at the heart of museums, with many established specifically to provide educational opportunities for the public and to be centres for research and scholarship...

But in recent years, museums have begun to re-examine what education means for them and there has been a growing emphasis on the importance of all kinds of learning within museums.

This has partly been in response to government policy but has also grown out of recognition in the sector that the

unique educational potential of museums was not being realised.

An influential report, first published in 1997 and revised in 1999 helped to set the agenda. 'A Common Wealth' by David Anderson, Director of Learning at the Victoria & Albert Museum made the case that museums could offer much better services to learners of all kinds, from family groups to pupils and students pursuing courses at all levels. Anderson argued that education needed more resources and needed a higher profile within museums.

Since its publication, many of the ideas in the Anderson report have become mainstream....

Museum decision-makers have moved on from regarding education as peripheral.