

**Submission
No 70**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Name: Mrs Manuela Epstein

Date received: 5 August 2016

My submission is in regard to the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta.

This decision was made, unexpectedly, prior to the last State election. Cynics may state that this announcement was made to win votes in Western Sydney. I couldn't possibly comment.

However the announcement was made without any business plan or even a proposed site for the new museum. The cynic would add that, as there was no mention of what was to happen to the existing site in Ultimo, that the move would have the added benefit of selling a valuable piece of land near Darling Harbour to developers. I couldn't possibly comment.

The move does raise some important and yet unanswered questions

- why move the museum when its history belongs to the Ultimo area. It's history of technology and applied science is not linked to the Parramatta district. The area of Western Sydney certainly deserves its own cultural facilities but they should be relevant to the area. Many interesting ideas have been proposed that could be incorporated to the old historical sites that exist in Parramatta already
- there is a subsidiary of the Powerhouse already at Castle Hill that has been recently renovated. Why is that being ignored?
- the financial case for the move has not been made public. In fact estimates of moving the collection are far greater than have been suggested by the government making the sale of the site not enough to finance the project
- the Government has not identified what is to happen to the Ultimo site adding to the attribution of cynical motives for the move. The area is already one of the most densely populated in the country and needs public space not more apartments. If the site is to remain as public space, this makes the financial case even less reasonable as who will buy it to fund the move.
- the museum is centrally located for all of Sydney- north, south, east and west as well as country and interstate visitors. Parramatta may be the geographic centre of Sydney but the trains all come to Central.
- no site has been chosen in Parramatta and the suggested ones are problematic. It would appear that the government is scrambling for a solution of where to put this new museum
- the people of Western Sydney have not been consulted as to what they want. This was a paternalistic decision by Premier Baird without local consultation. Local community associations have vehemently stated that they want their local historical sites preserved and not overwhelmed by the scourge of overdevelopment. Parramatta has a rich history in terms of the founding of the colony and in its vibrant multicultural nature. It deserves its own characteristic cultural centre.

This proposal was made hastily and without adequate financial, cultural, geographic and social considerations. This review of cultural issues in NSW is a way of addressing this matter of the relocation of the Powerhouse but at the same time the more important issue of the cultural needs of the state as a whole.