

**Submission
No 104**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Name: Mr Carl Andrew

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I am writing to express my deep concern about the proposed relocation of the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta. I wonder if an adequate assessment has been made of the astronomical cost of constructing a new building with the required floor areas and volumes of space to store and display the most renowned and important objects such as the Bolton and Watt beam engine, the Catalina sea plane and other aircraft, the space exploration collection and the locomotive No 1 with its tender and carriages. And, of course, this also applies to the enormous and superb collections of decorative art and design ranging from antiquity to the present day and representing Australian, European and Asian cultural heritage in all media. The decorative arts and design collection is one of the largest and finest in Australia and is second only to that of the National Gallery of Victoria. It has been built over a hundred and thirty years, largely through bequests, donations and corporate sponsorships. I was appointed Assistant Director (Decorative Art) in 1980, eight years before the 1988 opening, and remained with the Museum until 1996. After the Museum's opening my professional activities as Senior Curator – Collection Development focussed on the cultivation of supportive relationships with corporations and private collectors and potential benefactors. I am absolutely certain that, if the proposed relocation is pursued, the development of the collection from these sources will almost entirely cease. A design arts collection must grow constantly in order to retain its vitality as a reflection of, and stimulus to, creative development and as a powerful educational influence in the community. It is an undeniable fact that the private and corporate support for such collection development is focussed in the city's core and inner suburbs where private collectors and enthusiasts live and work. These supporters need to have a close and reciprocal regular interaction with the Museum and its curators in order to become major benefactors through gift and bequest of collections or purchase funds. The examples of the great American and European museums have proved this to be the case. I personally know of three collections (important Australian ceramics, European furniture and Chinese decorative arts) which have been intended as bequests to the Powerhouse Museum by people closely associated with it and which are now being reconsidered. One of these collectors is in the process of revising his will in favour of the National Gallery of Victoria because of the proposed relocation. I do believe that a major museum of local history and multiculturalism and including an exhibition centre should be built in Parramatta. I suggest that it should include four flexible exhibition spaces allocated to the Art Gallery of NSW, the Australian Museum, the Powerhouse Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art for six monthly thematic exhibitions drawn from their vast collections. This centre could provide Western Sydney with a new exhibition opening every six weeks. I am convinced that the Powerhouse Museum will only be able to grow as a museum of national and international importance if it remains as a vital part of Sydney's core business and tourism activities and professional and cultural life in an easily accessible central location. Yours sincerely,
Carl Andrew