

**Submission  
No 44**

## **INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES**

**Organisation:** North Parramatta Residents Action Group Inc.

**Date received:** 11 August 2016

---

# **North Parramatta Residents Action Group Inc.**



**Submission to**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 4**

**Inquiry into museums and galleries**

**8<sup>th</sup> August 2016**

Dear Committee

I would like to thank you on behalf the members and residents of the North Parramatta Residents Action Group for the opportunity to present our views on the inequality in cultural funding across NSW and how we as community feel it should be resolved.

It is a recognised fact that cultural funding is not proportioned evenly per capita across greater Sydney as identified in the Deloitte Report (Building Western Sydney Cultural Arts Economy). <http://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/building-western-sydney-cultural-arts-economy.html>

### **The economic impact of museums and galleries on cultural tourism, and their role in supporting the visitor economy in Sydney and regional New South Wales.**

In 2013/14 it was reported in a Townsville Council discussion paper that more people visited Townsville's public galleries than any other attraction in the region including. Gallery visits totalled more than the 150,000 people who attended the V8 Supercars and the nearly 200,000 who attended North Queensland Cowboys matches.

<http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/arts-worth-more-than-sports-a-townsville-city-council-report-claims/news-story/4b7e753d0a6fee706a3c978f1e99c4e7>

When domestic or international travellers visit a region the first thing that is researched for tourist activities is local museums or galleries, not what sport is on at a stadium. Yet the NSW government is prioritising a billion dollar Stadia roll out over creating a well established cultural industry that will deliver for more sustainable employment and economic benefits for business growth for areas centric to cultural institutions. This is an area that we should never under-estimate in terms of the social and economic contribution it makes to our communities.

In Parramatta we believe the state government is over investing in a 'super-stadium' over a significant strategic vision to expand the cultural and creative framework of the city.

Parramatta is under a super charged rezoning and reimagining of its future place as a city in greater Sydney and the capital of Western Sydney. However a concise and considered approach to a holistic masterplan for the city to reach its full potential is being overlooked. This region has more heritage narratives from indigenous and colonial history than anywhere else in NSW. Stories and themes that don't need to be invented or transplanted from another community. There is existing potential waiting to be tapped into to create a sustainable cultural and tourist industry.

No thought or insight into the best cultural and arts facilities for the unique city of Parramatta has been allowed to be realised. NSW promotes itself as the 'premier state' however is the only state not to have a Museum celebrating its history, and what better place to house this than the cradle of our modern nation and the home of the first government house – Parramatta.

Further a dedicated museum into our migration history both forced (convicts) and free migration could very easily be developed. Parramatta's demographic figures report over 50% of the population was born overseas; the opportunity to continue to tell the evolving narration of migration and engagement of our diverse cultures is totally under appreciated. Its economic impact and opportunity for community cohesion by presenting the populations differences while at the same time comparing our migratory similarities.

We need to have rolled out a collaborative, transparent and meaningful consultation with the community of Parramatta and including arts and cultural bodies engaging in 'cultural conversation' to design the best cultural outcome for Western Sydney. If this had taken place the response to the Powerhouse relocation to Parramatta would be different. If it was an 'option' to designing our own precinct and stories to suit our community's aspirations, it would never have been even considered.

NPRAG have made a public stand to support the Powerhouse Museum to stay in its current location, as we do not support the government's decision to steal a cultural asset from one community when there are so many existing opportunities in Parramatta with more heritage than The Rocks to invest in our social and economic future. We believe the Fleet Street Heritage Precinct could be the first example of indigenous and colonial narratives being celebrated together incorporating themes on forced and continuing free migration, mental health through visual art, performing art and heritage museums.

The Cumberland Hospital Precinct known as the **Fleet Street Heritage Precinct** in North Parramatta is the location where we strongly believe the NSW State Government should be targeting as a cultural destination and new source of tourism income.

The current favoured Parramatta Riverbank site for the proposed MAAS relocation is owned by Parramatta City Council and has identified size and environmental constraints for a world class cultural facility to house the Powerhouse Museum antiquities. It also will destroy plans by the Parramatta City Council to open the river up for public recreation and event use. It is currently highly used for council events but is very restricted by building footprints.

Whereas the 30ha heritage precinct in North Parramatta currently in use by Area Health NSW, known as the Cumberland Hospital East Precinct is owned by various State Government departments, and has unlimited potential to be transformed into an all-encompassing heritage and arts precinct with the World Heritage Worthy Female Factory Precinct within the precinct. ***(Please refer to attached letter to Rob Stokes Minister for Planning invitation to discuss the FSHP Vision)***

After calling for over 12 months for a pause on the UGNSW plans to turn this sacrosanct precinct into a high density housing estate and without support from NSW government for an alternative vision to be discussed NPRAG held the Fleet Street Heritage Precinct Symposium in October 2015. Inviting academic's in planning, heritage, arts and tourism as well as the community to discuss the potential for this precinct. <http://nprag.org/fleet-street-heritage-symposium-12-october/>

We are currently planning our second symposium/forum calling for 'cultural conversation' bringing together heritage & community groups, arts, museum experts from all over Australia and Internationally to discuss a unified approach to the future of Western Sydney's greatest opportunity to create a legacy for future generations.

I have attached a link to drone footage of the precinct we are marketing as **The Fleet Street Heritage Precinct** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8zO5-85pD8&app=desktop>

We extend an invitation to the inquiry committee to tour with local historian tour guide Ms Judith Dunn at the Fleet Street Heritage Precinct to so you can appreciate this phenomenal site and its potential to deliver a long term social and economic future.

Kind Regards

Suzette Meade

**President**