

**Submission
No 40**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Organisation: The Design Institute of Australia (DIA)

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9 August 2016

The Chair
General Purpose Standing Committee no. 4
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

RE: Inquiry into museums and galleries

I refer to the *Inquiry into museums and galleries*. The Design Institute of Australia welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the discussion in respect to the sale of the Powerhouse Museum site in Ultimo; access to the collections of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences; and the transparency of the advice to the government regarding the decision to sell the museum site.

The Design Institute of Australia (DIA) is Australia's professional membership body for designers and design businesses and is committed to promoting design as a core contributor in maintaining the quality of business, society and our environment.

In November 2015 the DIA produced a position paper opposing the decision to relocate the Powerhouse museum. The DIA's position is summarised as follows:

Position of the Design Institute of Australia (DIA)

- The DIA fully supports the establishment of a Parramatta branch of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS), which will bring into public view more of the MAAS collection.
- The DIA opposes the closure and redevelopment of the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo.
- The DIA would like a public consultation process to be instigated that will properly consider the future of the Powerhouse.



- A range of stakeholders should be consulted during this process, including professional designers, who are key contributors to the commercial and cultural wealth of Australia.
- The DIA advocates that the future of the museum's important design and decorative arts collection, and the Powerhouse's relationship with the design industry should be key considerations in this process.

Key issues

Issue 1: Importance for the NSW Design industry

The museum has strong connections to the NSW design industry – an industry that creates enormous value across all sectors of the NSW economy. The Powerhouse promotes design as important for both the cultural and economic benefits it brings to society. For countries looking to gain a competitive advantage in global markets, understanding and promoting the role of design is critical. The Powerhouse, with its *Science + Design* by-line has been effectively promoting the power of design for 30 years. It's also the only museum in Australia that actively collects and records contemporary Australian industrial design.

The DIA has been involved with the museum since its inception. And in return, through exhibitions, research and educational programs, the museum has played a vital role in the development of the NSW design industry. The DIA also collaborated with the museum to produce the first Sydney Design Week in 1997, now one of the longest-running design festivals in the world. The current location is central and accessible to all NSW designers and the wider community.

Issue 2: Importance for Ultimo's creative industries hub

Since 2012, the DIA has been a participant in the NSW Government's industry-led taskforce for the NSW creative industries. NSW's creative industries sector directly employs almost 148,000 people and accounts for A\$1.4 billion of NSW's total services exports annually.¹ Part of the taskforce's recommendations was to develop an innovation, technology and creative hub in Ultimo to drive productivity and growth in the sector.

This precinct leverages the cultural, corporate, government and education organisations already well established in Ultimo — from the ABC, TAFE NSW and the University of Technology to IBM, Google, Fairfax and Network Ten. And right in the centre of this hub is the Powerhouse Museum, with its focus on design, technology and innovation. The decision to relocate the Museum will erode many of the professional and institutional relationships needed for the hub to thrive.

The museum is also central and important to a broader *creative industries* arc stretching from the CBD's southwest to southeast — encompassing Pyrmont, Ultimo, Haymarket, Eveleigh, Waterloo, Surry Hills and Moore Park. Not surprisingly, many design firms and related businesses make their home in this precinct.

¹ NSW Government Department of Industry, *Key Industry Sectors: Arts, culture and creative*, <<http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/business-and-industry-in-nsw/key-industry-sectors/arts-culture-and-creative>>, accessed 4 November 2015.



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Conclusion

The DIA fully supports the establishment of a Parramatta branch of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS), which will bring into public view more of the MAAS collection, but opposes the closure and redevelopment of the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo.

The future of the Powerhouse's important design and decorative arts collection, and the Powerhouse's relationships with the NSW design industry and the innovation sector should be key considerations in a public consultation process to properly consider the future of the museum.

Todd Packer

NSW Councilor, Design Institute of Australia