

**Submission
No 101**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Name: Ms Janet De Boer

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TEXTILE ARTS, LTD. (TAFTA) from
1987-2016**

August 6, 2016

RE: The Upper House Inquiry into the performance and effectiveness of the NSW Government agencies responsible for the organisation, structure and funding of museums

Specifically, per the Terms of reference:

e) The sale of the Powerhouse Museum site in Ultimo and its proposed move to Parramatta; whether there are alternative strategies to support museum development

The Australian Forum for Textile Arts Ltd (TAFTA) has represented and fostered the textile arts in Australia, directly and indirectly, for the past thirty years, during which time I served as TAFTA's CEO and received an Order of Australia Medal in 2004 for services rendered, and in recognition of the textile arts themselves.

In the 1980s I served on the National Policy Committee of the Crafts Council of Australia and was present at the opening of the Powerhouse Museum in 1988. It was my impression that the Powerhouse's rare grandeur made it ideal for its purpose as a major museum. I have been sorry to see that dream steadily eroded and now very threatened.

Although I have always lived in Brisbane, I have been a frequent visitor to the Powerhouse Museum and have prepared several articles on PHM exhibitions for *Textile Fibre Forum* magazine, the quality publication which I created, and managed, for TAFTA for 30 years.

The value of the Powerhouse Museum is perceived by the textile community to reside in:

- 1) The extent of the collection of artifacts, not only those relating to the textile arts although these will be considerable – and including the model storage systems and accessibility of textiles for study
- 2) The access provided to groups for meetings rooms and conferences; also study centres for textiles where groups can learn together and/or from experts
- 3) The quality and reach of exhibitions and events – both those relating to the Textile Arts, and others
- 4) The accessibility of the venue itself, in Ultimo, convenient for significant groups of tourists and interstate visitors – with the positive impact on visitor economy
- 5) The capacity for research and documentation as a way of recording and growing culture

It is in this context that my voice joins the many that already question the relocation decision, announced in November 2014, for the Powerhouse Museum and collection to be moved from the Ultimo site to Parramatta.

The appropriateness, including the logistics of such a move, requires in-depth discussion of many factors, among them:

- 1) The sheer cost involved in moving the museum and the huge number of artifacts in the collection
- 2) The cost of building a new facility and why no feasibility study has been made available
- 3) An analysis, after consultation, of the audience interests of those who live in Parramatta, the suggested new home of the Powerhouse Museum
- 4) Whether sufficient transparency has been observed in terms of an open dialogue with the community as well as site selection for a replacement location for the Powerhouse Museum
- 5) The impact on cultural history, both in valuing and recording it, when a major cultural asset is to vacate a significant site which in itself has great historical value, so developers can overturn that history
- 6) What is a coherent museum plan for NSW for the 21st century? And how does the Powerhouse Museum fit within such a plan?
- 7) How can museum and heritage groups in Parramatta best be consulted as to their vision of the content of a new Parramatta museum?

I have consulted with individuals and groups sharing similar concerns to my own.

I note that The National Trust of Australia (NSW) strongly opposes the sale by the NSW Government of the Powerhouse Museum for redevelopment and would also strongly oppose any demolition of the existing historic structure; the purpose built 1988 extension and extant components that demonstrate the Powerhouse's original use. The Trust supports the establishment of a Parramatta branch of the museum with its own distinctive function and style. **I strongly support the position taken by the National Trust of Australia (NSW)**

Summation:

While I no longer speak formally on behalf of the members of The Australian Forum for Textile Arts, I feel my long association with TAFTA and its members justifies my belief that the majority of TAFTA's members would also support the position taken by the National Trust of Australia (NSW) and would welcome the careful consideration and justification of the most viable and effective options available both for the Powerhouse Museum and the establishing of a cultural centre in Parramatta.

Yours Sincerely,

Janet De Boer, O.A.M.