

**Supplementary
Submission
No 148d**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

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Date received: 14 August 2016

Submission V: Government has decided on a site- the old David Jones car park site next to the Parramatta River- for redevelopment as a cultural hub with MAAS/Powerhouse Museum as the lead, now possibly only tenant. This site is significantly smaller than the Ultimo site (2.23 acres approximately vs. 8.2 acres), is subject to regular flooding and is not appropriate for large object display. Government does not own the site. Access by public transport is challenging, car parking on site minimal, access for museum collections and operations is constrained- especially for large objects. Far better options such as the Female Factory/Cumberland Hospital sites are available. The decision making process has been hidden, all relevant documents suppressed, no transparency achieved. A public inquiry into the appropriateness of this process and the selected site is called for along with release of all relevant suppressed documentation (see my Submission II on FOI released documentation, Reports 7 and 9 in particular).

[Relevant Terms of Reference: (d) (e) (f) (h)]

[Dr LG Sharp Founding Director, Powerhouse Museum, 1978-1988](#)

[PLEASE CALL ME AS A WITNESS FOR THIS AND OTHER SUBMISSIONS](#)

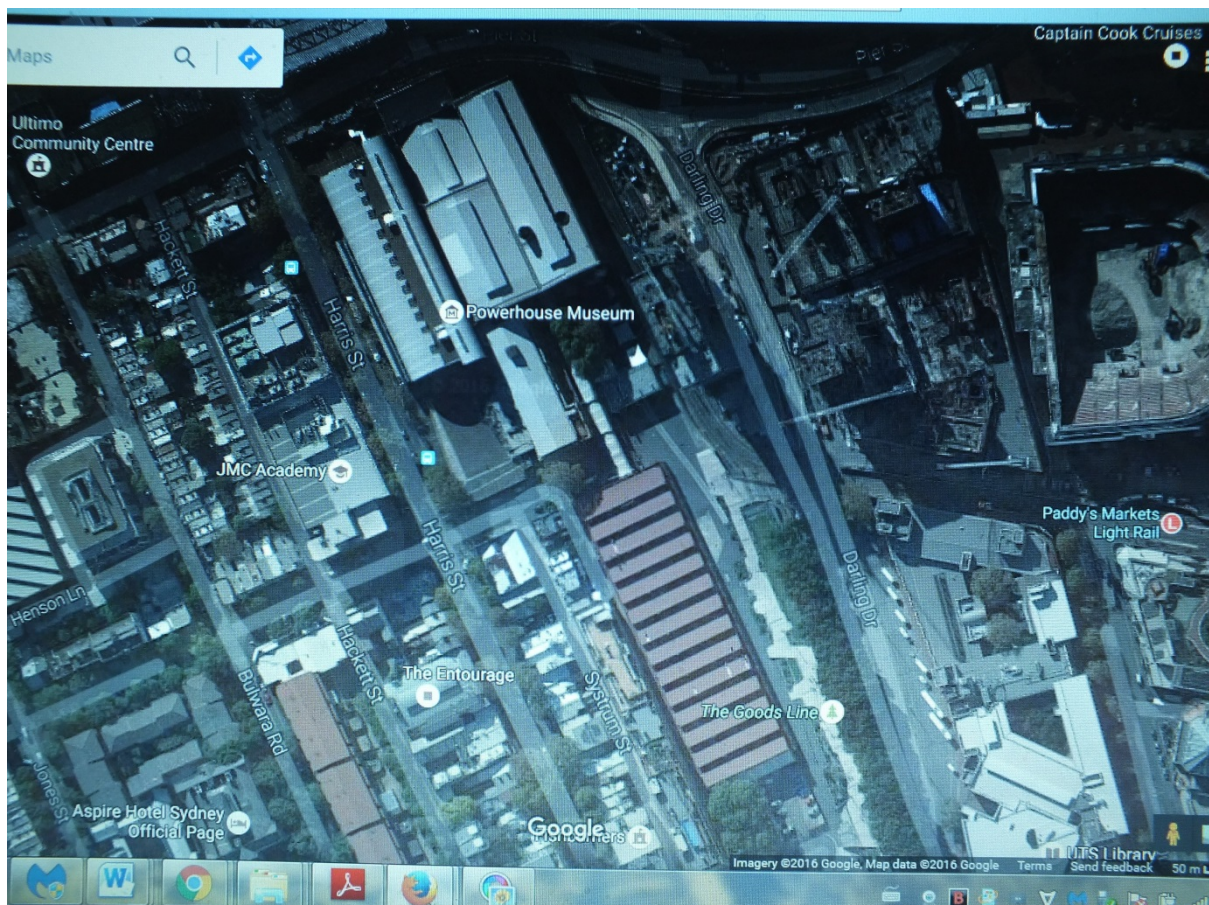
KEY WORDS: site selection process and documentation hidden/not transparent; criteria unknown; much smaller selected car park site fraught with issues; need for independent analysis of this and other, better options; the DJ car park site vastly inferior to the existing site and subject to increasingly severe and repeated flooding.

Commentary:

A key reason for selection of the original Powerhouse Museum site in Ultimo, in 1979, was the sheer scale of the buildings and their robust, exemplary heritage qualities. The size of the site was another key factor- it sprawled over approximately 8.2 plus acres, with access to rail lines, close to Central Station and many bus routes while the provision of nearby off street parking in commercial structures was anticipated. Another reason was proximity to the original and then current 1893 Museum site (200m along Harris Street), the central city location - so important for this major NSW cultural asset- and the emerging education and creative precinct anchored by UTS and Sydney Technical College.

In 2016 the access is even better due to pedestrian improvements and the Light Rail and this is supported by the enormous renewal redevelopments in a super-charged Darling Harbour, an increase in residential units close by and the emergence of the innovation hub energised by UTS and stretching south and west into Alexandria. The new UTS Gehry Business School building lays to the south of the Powerhouse Museum's Stage I building and cries out for something to happen over the Harwood/Stage I building perhaps using the air-rights.

The current Powerhouse Museum complex has buildings and museological assets worth over \$450 million (see Submission I accompanying this) and could be upgraded at a fraction of the cost of a comparable building in Parramatta. That 'moving' the Powerhouse Museum is a fantasy has already been conceded by Government and MAAS Trustees and senior staff. Thus it is already a failed notion, reflecting an unknowing corrupted motivation by Government and a facile thought bubble on the part of the Premier, his cultural ambassador and the Minister.



Powerhouse Museum site 3/8/16 GOOGLE note the large, saw-tooth, red roof of Stage 1/ Harwood Building/Collections store. In total site is approx. 8.25 acres/2.2 hectares +



Frank Gehry designed building for UTS Ultimo just south of the Powerhouse Museum's Harwood Building/Stage I

The selected new site in Parramatta has many constraints: far smaller and inaccessible for large objects, visitors and operational requirements alike- the present DJ's car park site is only a quarter size of the existing Ultimo site, 2.23 acres vs. 8.2 acres (approximately).



David Jones car park selected site at 2.23 acres approximately- only 25% of current Ultimo site (approx.).

These deeply significant restrictions are ironic in the context of Infrastructure NSW's earlier report (2014 State Infrastructure Strategy Update, p121) which stated that the main reason for moving the Powerhouse Museum was because the Ultimo site is too constricted stating dismissively that:

"The Powerhouse Museum is site constrained and located remotely from other key cultural institutions"

While this last statement is entirely inaccurate in regard to the present Ultimo site it is completely accurate in the case of the David Jones car park site on the banks of the Parramatta River.

In addition this site is not owned by Government so there will be a cost either as capital or capitalised rent (see Submission I).

It is also less accessible to international and state-wide tourists, with severe construction constraints and significantly increased costs owing to flood mitigation and no long term guarantees this will be successful. All of these issues have been hidden by Government in the 43 (approximately) suppressed reports, documents and minutes noted in Submission II. Only by suppressing the documents can Government and MAAS avoid proper scrutiny of this profoundly sub-optimal project 'planning' and scandalous concealment of risk, cost blow-out and disastrous site selection procedures. If Government and MAAS Trustees disagree with these statements let them release all the relevant documents.

Repeatedly flooded, this site will get progressively worse with climate change events:

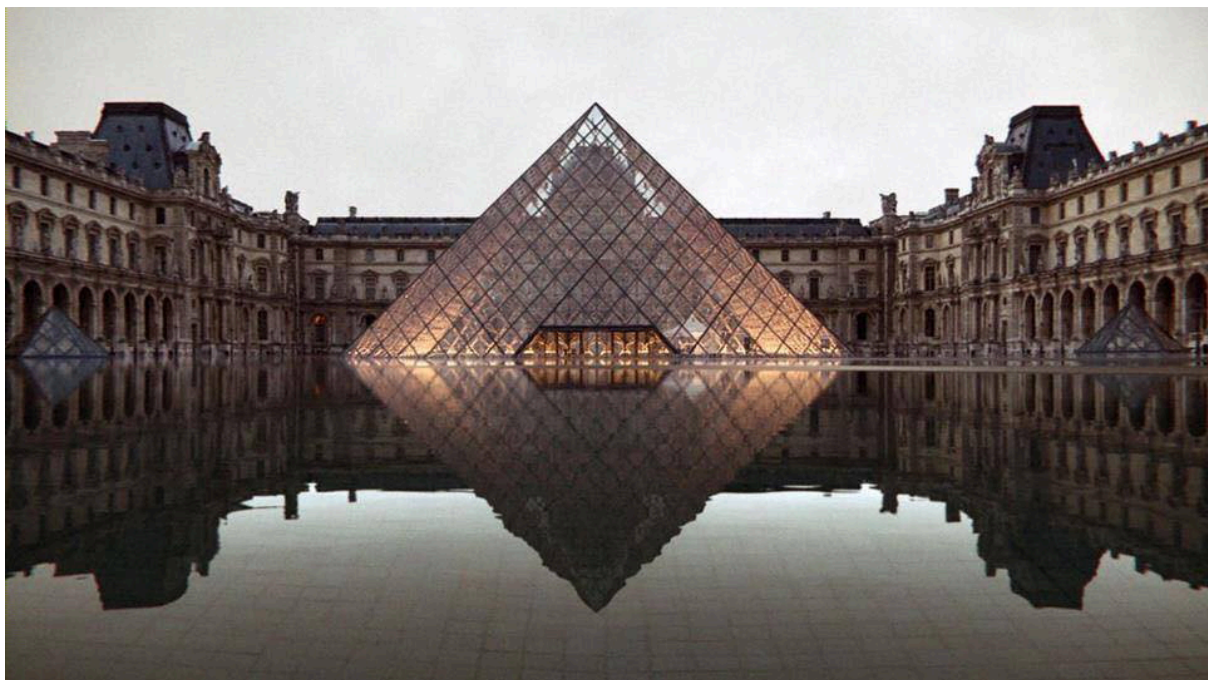


As to the flooding there are comparators from other major cities where planning is now taking place to try to remove entirely collection storage risks associated with climate change.

In addition, attempts by both Federal and State governments and others to decentralise core city activities to suburban locations have invariably failed e.g. Commonwealth Bank move to Homebush and the return to city / Darling Harbour of entities from Orange, Bathurst and Albury-Wodonga where growth stalled as they became economically unsustainable.

Paris is the best example since so many of the great international museums in the Gallic capital lie close to the Seine. A long term, massively invested plan is under development to create a new centralised storage facility for all these museums, near to Paris but removed from any risk of future flooding, so well above a thousand year flood risk profile. Similar consideration is beginning in London although the Thames Barrier helps reduce present risks. Over a century this may well not be sufficient. In 2016 it is illogical to plan a new museum which houses its collections on a site like the one illustrated above.

The following photograph shows the recent 2016 flooding in Paris which explains without words why the authorities are planning to move collection storage off many museum sites:



Louvre courtyard under water- French authorities are planning to move collection storage off site

In recent 'site-launch' illustrations around April 2016 (just eye-candy in reality) no thought has been given to flood amelioration:



Indicative Render of Parramatta site selected for new 'MAAS' facility. Note lack of flood mitigation. This is just visual piffle and reflects abysmally on the amateur 'planning' to date.

Soon after the announcement of the Parramatta site selection Parramatta Councillors objected:

'Museum should not be built on the riverbank' | Daily Telegraph

www.dailytelegraph.com.au/.../parramatta/...old-david-jones-carpark...parramatta.../6...

Powerhouse Museum should not be moved to old David Jones car park, say Parramatta Councillors. January 15, 2016 3:00pm. Kylie Adoranti. Powerhouse ..."

Conveniently, Parramatta Council was thereafter disbanded as a consequence of the Council Amalgamation process. The Administrator, chosen by Government, is now adjudicating the sale of the site to Government, it appears, with no local opinions or objections being considered.

Conclusion:

The proposed site for the new 'MAAS'/Powerhouse Museum relocation, after destruction of \$460 million asset value in Ultimo, is profoundly sub-optimal. Much smaller, regularly flooded at an increasing frequency, with site-criteria and all relevant reports suppressed, public accountability zero, no widespread consultation of local Communities and costing apparently haphazard.

Recommendation: That an independent Committee be resourced and empowered to research and analyse the process used to select this site and all relevant documents. That this Committee also look at other, much more appropriate sites and cultural options after full Regional consultation has taken place, reporting back within five months of inception.



World class, unique spaces for the integrated transport display in Ultimo under threat at the cost of huge asset and financial wastage, to be replaced by flood prone cramped spaces in Parramatta? Planning? What planning?

It is recommended that there be independent analysis of this and other, better options.