

**Submission
No 170**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Name: Ms Lindsey Foster

Date received: 1 September 2016

Hello,

I write to you with regard to the proposed closure and relocation of the Powerhouse museum. I realise you have a great deal to consider as you conduct this inquiry and that you have many stakeholders involved in the process. While my personal view may not have the impact of the larger organisations presenting to you, I feel my experience is reflective of many in my position and that you would be well advised to think of families like mine as you make these important decisions.

My family and I live together in regional NSW where it's a rather long but manageable day trip to the city. We travel down several times a year for concerts or other opportunities that aren't offered in our town, and as teachers my husband and I both arrange school excursions to the city for various reasons. We are Sydney's bread and butter sort of tourist... we have our favourite activities, restaurants and hotels, we make quite a number of trips a year, and we often bring our students or visiting relatives to the city as well. We love coming down to Sydney and enjoying what it has to offer. One of the regular features of our visits has been the Powerhouse museum.

We have been MAAS members for a number of years, though admittedly in this time of uncertainty we have let it lapse. It provides a base for our adventures, education and stimulation, interesting exhibits in an extraordinary building, and engaging exhibits that have drawn us to Sydney. If we are taking public transport, it's an easy day trip on the Bathurst Bullet. If we're driving, our membership gives us access to parking near the museum as well as the darling harbour precinct and more. Overseas visitors have been amazed by the building and the collections it holds.

It's an incredibly special place, and yet now it's under threat. There will be groups presenting to you who speak of the incredible cost of relocating it and the false economy of selling off a precious resource like this. They will tell you about the lack of space and the fact that proposed sites will only house a small portion of the collection. They will tell you that the Powerhouse building is inextricably linked to the collections it holds and the history it represents. They will tell you that a much better plan would be to build a new museum in Parramatta that is actually an organic product of Parramatta or is representative of new collections, a State museum, or any number of things that would be better suited. And they're right on all counts.

What they can't tell you is how it affects me (or your other constituents like me).

It may seem logical that I'd be in favour of moving the museum to Parramatta, after all it's a little bit closer to where I live. The reality is, the move would essentially cut my ties with the museum. Yes it's marginally closer, but my train fare is the same, and once I'm on the way the last half hour into the city is a small portion of my trip. And in gaining that small sliver of time, I lose a lot of the experience my family and I have grown to love about visiting the MAAS. We have our favourite spots to get lunch while we're visiting. We go for a walk along Darling Harbour and have an ice cream together. The members area at the Powerhouse gave us a secret clubhouse in the city where we could rest and recharge for the rest of our day. Sometimes we spend the night in the city and attend a musical or a concert. The Powerhouse isn't just a museum, it's a link to the rest of the city and it draws families like ours in to spend money in the area.

The links it holds to other educational opportunities are also unable to be matched in Parramatta. As teachers, we can spend a limited amount of time and money on excursions so we make the most out of them. Having the Powerhouse where it is allows us to link their space exhibit to the observatory which also links to early NSW history. The science of global warming taught in their exhibits can link to a rare visit to the coast and learning about oceans, sea levels, and sensitive ecosystems. The permanent locomotive no. 1 exhibit can offer a link between early transport and technology and a visit to the Rocks to see early Australian settlement. Uprooting such an essential collection from its home city would weaken many of these opportunities.

I implore you to listen and consider carefully the arguments put forward as you consider these important decisions. Please think of the history that is set to be artificially uprooted and replanted. This is not respectful of the arts and museums you are here to uphold. If the Powerhouse is sold and its soul dismantled and relocated, those responsible for the decision will be held accountable for years to come. Please don't add your respectable names as an endorsement to this farce. Let your legacy be one that stood up for the rightful protection of a cultural and educational resource that will benefit Sydney and her visitors for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and attention, and all the best in your difficult decisions.

Lindsey Foster