

**Supplementary  
Submission  
No 148i**

## **INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES**

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**Submission to g p s c 4 Committee of Inquiry into Museums and Galleries in NSW, prompted by testimony of witnesses proffered in the Parliament on 4 and 5 September: a plea for transparency and for factual data to be supplied by consultants and Government both in writing, and in person as witnesses.**

**Relevant to all terms of reference in regard to the proposed so-called 'move' of the Powerhouse Museum; and the inequality of cultural expenditures between Sydney and regional NSW.**

When called as a witness on 5 September, like all witnesses, I was required to affirm that I would tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. This is the minimum expected of us as citizens in a democratic, Westminster -system of government. In that light, while I have to be careful about the laws of libel, I also have to note that certain witnesses on 5 and 6 September might appear to have been somewhat economical with the truth.

As you know nothing goes to Cabinet which relates to potentially major expenditure which has not gone through at least three if not more stages of business case analysis, often undertaken by Treasury/Finance as well as external consultants.

In the case of the Powerhouse Museum 'move' (now name-changed to 'MAAS move'- because you cannot move the Powerhouse Museum- a failed concept already) Cabinet has already seen two stages of business case statement permitting the so-called 'final' stage to occur around November 2016. The external consultants were KPMG and their last submission for Cabinet was March/April 2016. So, the basic range of cost, scale, divestment options and income are pretty well understood. It is a furphy to imagine that such data is not broadly crystallised by now and is not being massaged into a final draft for pre-Cabinet submission to key senior public servants.

The Director and Project Manager of MAAS quite probably have a good handle on key parameters and, if I was Director, I would make sure my Board had a good handle also if only to ensure there were 'no surprises'. That would, of course, include the previous President and present President of the Board of Trustees of MAAS.

My original Submissions I, VI and VIII look in detail at such scoping issues. It is clear that either the new Museum will be much smaller than the present one (around half size and far smaller volumes); or the cost will way exceed \$1 billion; and that the large objects will not be exhibited just relatively more, smaller objects, such as more toothpicks.

There is no way the DJ Car park site in Parramatta (approx. 2.3 acres) can be 'comparable' as it is only a third of the size of the present Ultimo site (approx. 8.3 acres)..Committee Members saw this for themselves on 24 September. The 43 suppressed reports that evidence these factors are all noted in my Submission II. A recent supplementary submission from Save the Powerhouse Museum team nails these issues in an incontrovertible way. May I suggest that Committee Members take a quick look at these submissions if possible, please?

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Luke Foley, has made it very clear, that for the Labor Party the core issue is the potential cost blowout. I would imagine this critical factor would loom over all considerations by Committee Members of any party or persuasion. If the Committee cannot get access to the key suppressed reports then external consultants are now perhaps the only way to the truth. If called they have to respond to the Committee and give evidence based on publicly funded reports.

I know that adding even more testimony to the large pile already garnered is probably unappealing to Committee Members, yet I beseech you to consider calling at least the KPMG consultants at some point if you want to get at the truth. Preferably you would also call the others I listed in my own supplementary submission of 6/7 October. Cost, scope, display content and scale issues can then be nailed by the Committee.

I also believe you can emerge from all this as leading creative thinkers if you support three things:

**A press of the Pause button**

**A formal independent Review of all documentation/costing linked to widespread community consultation**

**A call for creative options from all parties to be analysed by the Review Committee which then makes recommendations**

**All within an envelope of a definitive support for a new cultural facility in Parramatta/greater western Sydney.**

To date the planning bears a striking resemblance to the picture of the donkey below.

You can help change that to one of efficiency and effectiveness. Quite a comparison to that followed to date which professionals like me, quite frankly, view with derision.

Sadly, some of us feel the 'A' Team are not presently working on the project.

If the Committee does not obtain factual data from reports and/or witnesses it may permit Government to follow a sub-optimal track with sub-optimal options as exemplified below:

Present a misleading version of the 'final' business plan after the Inquiry has ceased taking evidence and you have written your report. Constructed so as to conveniently blur the facts and mislead non-professionals

Release a 'glossy' vision statement for the new museum in Parramatta based on the suppressed AEA Consulting vision statement delivered at the end of 2015- after more than a year of their expensive mentoring of MAAS senior staff. This statement had no commercial import but significant political relevance and might well permit the new project to wriggle out of including the larger engineering and transport objects which form part of the backbone of the Powerhouse Museum displays. As with magicians the audience is misdirected to the right hand while the left hand conducts misleading prestidigitation.

In the same light the 'vision' will gloss over the fact that the new buildings will be less than half the size of the existing Powerhouse Museum. By cynically excising the major objects, the project description will thereby evade comparison with Ultimo in turn permitting a much smaller, vestigial and facile version of the displays to be perpetrated on an unsuspecting public and the cultural and civic leaders of Parramatta and the west. This, in turn, would permit the costs to be somewhat contained within a figure of perhaps 'only' \$700 million, plus escalation and contingency.

Such a glossy 'vision' would be presented as a good faith expression of Government's political undertakings and permit opponents to be painted as elitist, anti-west, uncreative, fuddy-duddies. The key issues of comparability with the Ultimo Powerhouse Museum display spaces, other facilities and exhibits with wastage of over \$450 million of existing infrastructure will be avoided in a burst of superficial reportage. Communities in the west will only be 'consulted' once the main decisions are taken and the architectural competition is underway.

Meanwhile, the existing site will be sold for 'Community uses' which could include some small open space, a massive retail mall like a version of the Queen Victoria Building (using the existing emplaced large objects as available historic 'eye-candy') and about six to eight apartment towers of 50 stories or so- a classic and facile example of 'mixed-use' development hiding behind facadism and heritage mistreatment of the worst kind.

Only if the key suppressed reports and/or the consultants are questioned forensically as Witnesses can the Committee get at the truth of scale, scope, cost, display content, wastage and comparability between the Ultimo Powerhouse Museum and the tiny, spavined, flood-prone, stunted travesty now proposed for Parramatta..

Thank you for reading this submission,

Dr Lindsay Sharp.

Visual analogue of planning to date:

