

**Supplementary
Submission
No 142e**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Name: Ms Jennifer Sanders

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The Hon Robert Borsak MLC
Committee Chair,
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4,
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Sydney NSW 2000

30 September 2016

Upper House Inquiry into museums and galleries No. 4

Supplementary Information to: Submission no 142b from Jennifer Sanders, August 2016

The Plan: A Cultural Plan for the 21st century, April 2015, Jennifer Sanders

Terms of reference: 1c), 1d), 1e) and 1f)

Summary:

My submission no 142b to the Inquiry was the synopsis of the paper I prepared in April 2015, **The Plan: A Cultural Plan for the 21st century**, and subsequently presented to various members of the Government and the Opposition as well as a number of key stakeholders for consideration. **The Plan** outlines a number of ways that the Powerhouse Museum – Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, could contribute to the development of culture in Parramatta without requiring the destruction of the Powerhouse in its historic home in Ultimo where it is well situated to flourish as tourism and education grow in the distinctive creative precinct that the Museum has fostered over decades. It also adumbrates how the other NSW cultural and heritage institutions could contribute to a cultural renaissance in collaboration with organisations and communities in Parramatta, Western Sydney and across NSW.

Following the discussions over the first two days of the Inquiry, I am providing complete copies of **The Plan, 2015** for each member of the Committee, particularly so they can consider the proposed **Museum of New South Wales** in detail as a model for how the Government can build culture in Parramatta/Western Sydney in a way which would be consultative, constructive not destructive, cost effective not profligate, visionary not short sighted.

Linked to this is my proposal for the Powerhouse Museum's Castle Hill site, now reopened as the Museums Discovery Centre, to become a **shared museum services centre** for a range of cultural and heritage organisations, as well as strengthening its long standing role as a regional museums access centre. I have outlined how this facility could be further developed under the heading **Museums Access Centre NSW**.

From the various presentations, particularly those from Mr David Borger, Ms Elizabeth Ann McGregor, The North Parramatta Residents Action Group and written submissions such as that from the Western Sydney Heritage Action Group and the Western Sydney Arts and Cultural Lobby, it is clear that the process of consultation in regard to the best way to build culture in Western Sydney has been somewhat limited.

Apparently, not only were the major Sydney cultural institutions not consulted in the preparation of the Deloitte's report, *Building Western Sydney's Cultural Arts Economy, 2015*, nor were the range of history and heritage organisations, such as the National Trust NSW, groups and volunteer run museums in Parramatta and Western Sydney all of whom have much to contribute to the building of the cultural economy of the region.

The non involvement of the state institutions in the report is surprising given that a number of them, including the Powerhouse, have a long history of collaboration and partnership with the cultural and heritage sector in Western Sydney. In the case of the Powerhouse, this is clear in annual reports going back 20 years or so. It is especially important in the case of migration heritage where the Powerhouse's major state-wide role is described in detail in Submission no 157 by John Petersen, former manager of the Migration Heritage Centre. Many of these projects would have provided valuable and useful case studies for Deloitte's report as they

would have given greater depth and a balance to the Report's scope which is limited in my view by not involving the museums and heritage sector in any meaningful way. This also ignores the fact that there is a significant, knowledgeable and active museum and heritage sector to involve which is deeply rooted in place.

In fact, the Western Sydney Arts and Cultural Lobby has no members from the museums, history or heritage sector (if the listing on their media release is up to date), yet it is cited as a key lobbyist/mover/supporter for the plan to move the Powerhouse holus-bolus to Parramatta. The Group's stated desire (26 Feb 2016) that "Western Sydney deserves its own arts education capacity and its own cultural institutions...." is laudable but surely the best and time honoured way to achieve this is to build culture from the community – culture from place.

Indeed, the lack of confidence shown by the key proponents of the Powerhouse move in the cultural richness and potential of Western Sydney and, the nationally, indeed internationally, heritage significant City of Parramatta is dumbfounding. One has only to consider the unique combination of Indigenous and colonial heritage with a long history of migration and settlement and contemporary cultural diversity centred in Parramatta and across the Cumberland Plain, taking in the towns of Richmond and Windsor to Liverpool, Camden and Campbelltown and leading up into the Blue Mountains and beyond to realise that there is an amazingly positive opportunity to establish a not only a 'cultural beacon' in Parramatta, but also to energise and promote distinctive cultural development and tourism on a far wider scale.

A **Museum of New South Wales** founded in Parramatta could anchor and inspire this far-sighted cultural strategy. The Fleet Street Heritage Precinct offers an extraordinary site where such a museum could be sited in the midst of a diverse range of arts and cultural experiences mixed with recreation, commercial and residential whilst preserving the highly significant heritage value of this site – a site unique to Parramatta.

The Powerhouse Museum has the collections and the long record of involvement across NSW, as well as the engagement of migrant communities through the Migration Heritage Centre, to lead this development. This would not be an inferior or non 'tier 1' institution but a leader for all of Western Sydney, indeed all of regional NSW, complementing NSW's major cultural institutions: the Powerhouse Museum, the Art Gallery of NSW, the Australian Museum, the State Library of NSW and the Sydney Opera House. The models for this type of development are well proven and offer excellent opportunities for engaging local philanthropy and business support to build culture from place with the involvement of major cultural institutions and, collaboratively engaging with community museums across NSW.

As I have outlined in **The Plan**, and as other submissions have strongly argued, such as that from Dr Lindsay Sharp, there is enormous scope to serve and involve the people of Western Sydney and beyond with outstanding cultural experiences that excite new and diverse audiences and which, most importantly, are developed in close consultation with the people of Western Sydney and, with **all** the stakeholders who have been lobbying long and hard for greater recognition and support for the cultural heritage of the region.

This is a once in a generation opportunity for the Government to create a fair and equitable museum plan for the 21st century that supports museums and communities in Western Sydney and regional NSW, and landmark museums in Sydney. The Government has been poorly advised to relocate the Powerhouse Museum out of Ultimo, thereby destroying it. The process has been way short of meaningful and properly canvassed consultation with the wider community and stakeholders. It is a thought bubble that is shrouded in secrecy and rhetoric without proper regard for monetary impact, risks and the cultural implications for the people of New South Wales. I implore the Committee to consider this Plan and other options seriously as so far no alternatives have been explored, let alone considered.

I am happy for this Supplementary Information to be made public and to appear before the Inquiry.

Jennifer Sanders

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A Cultural Plan for the 21st century

The Plan

Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences

Collection Groupings

Science & Technology

Social History

Decorative Arts & Design

Phm

Powerhouse Museum of
Science & Technology

@Ultimo education, creativity
& innovation precinct

& Powerhouse Planetarium
& Sydney Observatory
@ Observatory Hill

Mnsw

Museum of New South Wales

@Parramatta/Western Sydney

& Exhibit: Cultural Collections Gallery
& Experimenta: Phm Science Centre

MoDA

Museum of Decorative Arts

@ Sydney CBD
Cultural Precinct

MaCnsw

Museums Access Centre NSW

@Castle Hill

Each Museum will use the shared Collection Storage, Registration and Conservation Services and Museum Services of the renamed Powerhouse Discovery Centre along with the **Australian Museum** and **Sydney Living Museums**.

Synopsis: April 2015

This paper proposes a 21st century **Cultural Plan** which addresses the *Create NSW* policy framework and which has a range of more holistic and long term outcomes that will benefit the people of NSW and, tourists and visitors to the Sydney CBD, Greater Sydney, NSW and, indeed the nation.

The **Plan** addresses the great potential inherent in the focus on Parramatta and the region of Western Sydney by building on its distinctive colonial history and heritage and, the vibrancy of its contemporary and diverse cultures. Furthermore, rather than removing a world renowned museum - the Powerhouse Museum - from its primary urban and cultural position with no net increase to the State's cultural capital, the **Plan** effectively and efficiently adds significantly to New South Wales' cultural offerings by aligning existing collections with precincts, audiences and stakeholders - all in the context of government policy - lower costs - greater efficiency and – within existing establishments.

The **Plan** is to establish 3 new museums as the logical evolution of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS). These 3 museums will each bring strength and focus one of 3 significant State Collections, enabling each museum to have a clear purpose, cohesive theme, strong brand and, exhibitions and programs targeted at defined audiences – educational, tourism, leisure and cultural. This will also allow each museum to harness corporate support and philanthropy from those businesses, organisations and benefactors aligned with each museum's theme.

This **Cultural Plan** recognises that there is a worldwide shift to present ideas and collections in more focussed, audience and stakeholder tailored facilities rather than as broad, all-encompassing experiences. This shift responds to changing demographics; the need to better link people, ideas and collections; the capacities for engagement using new technologies; the benefits of partnerships and collaborations; and, the opportunities to marry heritage and contemporary experiences in ways that foster knowledge of the past so as to better understand the present, and envision the future.

Establishing these three Museums will build a legacy for future generations that will encourage greater participation in and awareness of Australia's cultural heritage and, foster investigation and innovation to help build a prosperous Australia.

Executive summary for YELLOW REPORT APRIL 2015 - Jennifer Sanders.

Mnsw: MUSEUM OF NEW SOUTH WALES

@ Parramatta/Western Sydney Cultural Precinct

Complemented by **Exhibit: Cultural Collections Exhibition Gallery**

& Experimenta: Powerhouse Museum's science satellite

New South Wales does not have a museum dedicated to the history and cultures of this state. Yet it is the site of Australia's first settlement by convicts and free men and women; its records tell of manifold interactions with Indigenous cultures as exploration and settlement reached across the state; and, its character and qualities have been and continue to be shaped by waves of migration from all corners of the world. In this regard, the history of New South Wales has a unique story to tell.

With **Exhibit: Cultural Collections Exhibition Gallery**: a new cultural centre which will present the best of State, local, regional, national and international touring exhibitions to audiences from Western Sydney, Greater Sydney, interstate and intrastate.

And **Experimenta: Powerhouse Museum's science satellite**: an immersive science experience offering quality formal and informal educational programs.

Museum, Gallery and Science Centre are to be co-located in a new campus to include glass/steel buildings linked to/incorporating heritage sites/buildings such as The Female Factory; Old Kings School.

Phm: POWERHOUSE MUSEUM OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

@ Ultimo education, creativity and innovation precinct

Since 1893, the Museum has been a key contributor to the Ultimo education and research precinct. With the 1988 opening of the Powerhouse Museum in the former Ultimo Powerhouse, the Museum became an award winning major cultural and tourism destination as well as a distinctive educational institution. The 'new' Powerhouse Museum will be realised as a renewal of its Powerhouse site, funded by the development of the Ultimo Tram Depot site.

The **Powerhouse Museum of Science & Technology** is, in Ultimo, ideally placed to foster cross disciplinary approaches to challenges in science and technology through exhibitions and programs showcasing the best in design thinking that builds capacity to innovate – to think outside the square - inspired by stories of current and past successes.

The Museum's proximity to the 3 major universities – UTS, USyd and UNSW - their research centres and business schools; to Sydney's Silicon Valley - the ICT Precinct in

Pyrmont/Ultimo; as well as the Creative Hub flourishing in Surry Hills, Ultimo, Chippendale and Redfern means that the Museum is front and centre to be a window, and explainer for the public to understand and be excited by fast developing areas of creativity and innovation – the Knowledge Economy. Underpinning the whole Museum will be the emphasis on Design Thinking as a way to foster innovation, development and prosperity.

The proposed **Powerhouse Planetarium** will add greatly to the capacity of the Museum to expand people's horizons as well as showcase Australian achievements in space science and technology and, astronomy. It will also be a key commercial stream, capable of offering a range of entertainment and event modes.

MoDA: MUSEUM OF DECORATIVE ARTS

@ Sydney CBD cultural precinct

Australia's first and only dedicated museum of decorative arts and design

Located in the cultural and heritage precinct anchored by Macquarie Street – a renewal of an existing landmark government building for public cultural use: such as Registrar-General's building; No 1 Hospital Road; the Chief Secretary's Building or the Lands Building – in Bridge St sandstone precinct.

The consistent reasoning is that the collection and exhibitions encompassed by the MAAS Decorative Arts and Design holdings are best suited to Sydney's cultural precinct that takes in the Art Gallery of NSW; the Royal Botanic Gardens; the State Library of NSW, Sydney Living Museums; Bridge Street especially the Lands Building and the Chief Secretary's; the Conservatorium of Music; Government House; the Sydney Opera House and the Museum of Contemporary Art. This is the Sydney CBD Cultural Precinct identified in the 2014 *Infrastructure NSW* report.

MoDA will give Sydney and New South Wales a magnificent new cultural locus within which the riches in NSW's outstanding Decorative Arts and Design collection can be revealed and explored and, which will focus on and celebrate the creativity of Sydney and New South Wales.

MaCNSW: Museums Access Centre NSW

@Castle Hill

The existing Discovery Centre has a strengthened role as not only shared accessible NSW's Cultural Collections Storage but also shared Collection Services and, Museum Services whilst offering the public and, especially regional museums and galleries, access to expertise and partnerships.

JSanders April 2015