

**Supplementary
Submission
No 148m**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

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Minister Harwin's comments- on Sydney ABC Breakfast Radio, 19 December 2017 after release of the Upper House Inquiry into Museums and Galleries, Interim Report, on 18 December- appear misleading in many instances; this submission requests that he be recalled to give further evidence in this regard. Dr Lindsay sharp, December 29, 2017.

The Minister responded to questions from the ABC interviewer and to statements made by Committee Chairman Mr Robert Borsak on air on 19 December prior to Mr Harwin's interview. Mr Borsak was covering comments contained in the Interim Report in response to the interviewer's questions. Minister Harwin's comments seem wilfully misleading, repeating so-called 'facts' which apparently were inaccurate, knowingly false and unsupported by data. If this is the case any deliberately misleading falsehoods should be established as such and his veracity in these and other matters should be tested further.

For example:

- 1) The Minister, following the lead of the Premier, said that he had answered almost all of the points made in the Interim Report already although, in actuality, he spent most of his testimonial time at the Inquiry dodging questions, weaving misleading non-answers and hiding behind Cabinet-in-Confidence.
- 2) The Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo did not ask for \$400 million from Premier Baird for a renewal program in late 2014. This petitioner has seen the report Mr Harwin quoted and it was structured so as to be project divisible in discrete parts, the first of which was mainly funded by the sale or lease of air rights permitting approximately \$150 million of works to be undertaken without more than tens of \$millions of Government investment rather than \$400 million. The outcome of this first project as demonstrated by the Plan would have seen a renaissance for the Powerhouse Museum far exceeding in benefits than its nominal cost. Later Government investment was requested subject to performance targets and Treasury business plan approvals. The total figure was not \$400 million since, at the least, the plan demonstrated that over \$100 million would have been garnered by sale or lease of air rights. There was proper utilisation of assets and no wastage thereof.
- 3) In 2014 the Powerhouse Museum Board and Director wanted to retrofit the existing Ultimo facility not move elsewhere as evidenced by the plan noted above- which had almost passed through the Treasury Gateway process before Government called it back in. The then Board and Director, based on initial expert scoping studies, had no doubts whatsoever that the majestic C 19 industrial structures, plus the 1988 additions, could cost- effectively be further adapted to handle advances in technology. As they had been (successfully and cost-effectively) over the previous three decades. Much later, in mid-2017, the Board of Trustees explicitly told Minister Harwin that they wanted 'Four

campuses, one Museum based in Ultimo' (Castle Hill, Parramatta, Sydney Observatory and Ultimo). In his radio comments on 19 December it appears the Minister misleadingly claimed that the Museum- including its Board- believed the existing buildings were not adaptable for an 'innovation and science [facility]' and, *inter alia* by implication, that they had continued to desire a complete transfer to Parramatta. Both aspects are false.

- 4) The present inexperienced senior MAAS staff, however, perhaps at Mr Harwin's behest, apparently continue to denigrate the existing Ultimo facility yet have failed to demonstrate why it cannot be upgraded- like the Louvre in Paris which originally was a c.12/13 fortress- palace, the V and A in London's South Kensington (c. 1909 Cole Building) or London's Science Museum which was completed in the 1920's and upgraded continuously ever since (this petitioner was its Director, 2000-2005). Other diverse examples from around the world include the small houses of C. 15 Maisons Satie Museum in Honfleur, France; the large c. 1914 Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada; the British Museum; the Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Design still in its original 5th Avenue mansion; and many more which could be named. Another example of a vast, 1940s building with infinitely more complex adaptive technological complexity required is the Pentagon in Washington: 600,000 M2 and completed in 1943- 74 years ago. It is completely false to say that older, soundly constructed buildings cannot be upgraded for 'innovation and science' purposes. The existing Ultimo facility can easily and far more cheaply be renewed, than constructing a 'comparable' new facility in Parramatta. The idea that a new science and innovation museum needs a new building to be more 'interactive' – as stated by the Minister on radio-is like saying a fish needs a bicycle. As a matter of record the present buildings and displays in Ultimo held far more substantial interactives upon opening in 1988 (148+) than they do now but this is a matter of senior staff 'planning' (or lack thereof), the destruction of the interactives department and inept advice to previous Boards.
- 5) The Riverbank site in Parramatta could have a sci-tech facility like Dublin's Science Gallery/ Melbourne's new version of this to fit into an adult entertainment zone (please see my recent submission) far more appropriate and market responsive than an ersatz version of the Powerhouse Museum advocated so misleadingly by a Government for a sector which the Minister for the Arts in NSW blandly claims to 'represent' or be 'responsible' for in 'his' portfolio. There is no way the Government can build such a new museum on the presently defined Riverbank site which is 'bigger and better' (Premier/Minister Harwin) than the present buildings at a reasonable cost- especially without demolishing the site's heritage buildings. If they go, so much for 'urban renewal'.
- 6) The Minister keeps repeating that 'the cost to the taxpayer will be far less than claimed by opponents of moving MAAS' [at least \$600-800 million for buildings alone, based on expert testimony to the Inquiry, plus at least the same again for all the other project requirements, especially on a flood-prone site]. For this to be accurate as a statement of cost (not best value) the Ultimo site will most probably be sold to developers with high density development permissions and the Riverside, Parramatta site will become a co-

development of the Museum with commercial 'partners'. Even then it does not take into account the wastage of over \$350 million of fit-for-purpose facilities extant in Ultimo. In essence, therefore, the Minister appears to be dodging facts, weaving misdirections together and essentially misleading the public about actual total project cost, source of funding, developer pandering and wastage of existing facilities. We are informally aware that Government have talked around the backstairs with developers about the Ultimo site- there may even be a now out of date LOA on it. He should be examined further on all this. It lies at the heart of Government's dishonest positioning and mendacious claims in regards to this benighted project.

The Inquiry is therefore requested to consider recalling:

Professor Barney Glover and, separately, Ms Dollar Merrillees

Minister Harwin- separately also- no public servants or political advisory staff in attendance- at the next hearing to be held in 2018 should one eventuate.

Dr Lindsay Sharp,

December 29, 2017.

Note: in her testimony (p. 29, Inquiry transcript, 5 Sept, 2016) to the Inquiry Ms Liz-Anne McGregor noted the figure requested by MAAS for Powerhouse Museum renewal as:

"I think somebody here referred earlier to the PWC report... My understanding of the PWC report, which I learnt later, is that it actually requested *\$200 million* from the Government by the Powerhouse [Museum] to make good or improve or make better fit for purpose the site at Ultimo..."

Ms McGregor was the then Premier's 'Cultural Ambassador (sic) to Western Sydney' and was in a good position to know the facts pertaining to the 2014 MAAS plan and costings.