

**Submission  
No 177**

## **INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES**

**Name:** Dr Cassi Plate

**Date received:** 10 April 2018

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Dear NSW politician,

I remain staunchly opposed to the proposed dismantling of the iconic Powerhouse Museum. It is outrageous that a great museum, built and endowed by the people of NSW, which opened just 30 years ago, is being stripped of its property and facilities, and evicted from its purpose built premises. All of the papers relating to this act of cultural vandalism are secret. No credible business case can justify the \$1.2b cost of 'moving' the PHM just 23ks west to Parramatta for no net increase in cultural facilities.

I am appalled that the dismantling of this great and important cultural and scientific museum is also supported by the Labor opposition.

All arguments in favour of the move come to nothing when you consider that its current, central location makes it available to people visiting from across Sydney, from the northern and southern coasts and elsewhere from regional NSW, interstate and the world. A second museum could more easily be built in Parramatta, allowing more of the PHM's massive collections to be out on view.

If this plan proceeds it will mean the break-up of Australia's only museum of applied arts and sciences established in 1880, and redeveloped in 1988 in a Sulman award winning museum, with state of the art facilities that are the envy of comparable museums around the world.

A great museum cannot be developed in secrecy or haste. I support the calls on the NSW Government to release all the papers about the planned closure of the Powerhouse, the transfer of its assets and property, the costs and risks of moving the collections, the community consultations and planning for the Parramatta Museum. That is the minimum due to the people of NSW, who own the museum, and the thousands of donors and benefactors who have endowed its collections.

The community does not accept the proposition that the government can't afford to open a new museum in Parramatta without closing the PHM in Ultimo. Would the UK government close the V&A to open a new museum at Olympic Park, or close Tate Britain to open Tate Modern?

The Powerhouse Museum has been run into the ground by the NSW government. Uncertainty around the museum's future has seen a dramatic collapse in donations to the collection, declining sponsorship, a flight of expert staff, and a deficit last year of \$10m. There has been a profound breach of trust with the museum's visitors, donors and supporters. Longstanding benefactors have changed their wills. The government has put the endowment of generations of donors to the museum at risk, thereby threatening the lifeblood of any museum – community confidence and philanthropy. The Powerhouse Museum is an endowment from the people of NSW. It is not the government's a tradeable asset. The least we expect of a civilised government is to pass our endowment intact to the next generation.

Otherwise, will we wake up tomorrow and find out that it was all about selling off yet more valuable civic space to private developers?

Yours sincerely,

Dr Cassi Plate