

**Supplementary  
Submission  
No 96c**

## **INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES**

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**Dear Member of Parliament,**

I am part of the Powerhouse Museum Alliance, a professional group seeking a review of the absolutely stupid proposal/decision to move the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta.

I worked in the Museum for 20 years from 1988 and have been associated with the broad scope of decorative arts, crafts and design in state, regional, national and international museums and galleries for 40 years. I am aware of the acknowledged value of the Museum to professional researchers, practitioners and educators, as well as to the general public and am very conversant with the informed opinions and experience of colleagues in NSW, across Australia and round the globe.

Consequently, I ask: is any government really prepared to carry on its conscience the destruction of a long-established institution that uniquely integrates decorative arts and design, science and technology and social history, and that reopened in 1988 after a century of operation, in an award-winning re-purposed historic building – culturally embedded in its current location and easily accessible to all visiting the capital city of NSW? Because destroyed it will be if the current plans are carried out. The flood-prone site, away from the city axis; the inadequate budget, now exposed; the secret decision-making without adequate professional advice or business plan; the potential fragmentation of the integrated collection; and the lack of consideration for vital audiences, benefactors and supporters, all contribute to what was a greedy decision-on-the-run.

At the same time, it is clear (from Council minutes, and local protests) that this proposal was dumped on Parramatta, which is the only regional city centre without its own art gallery for its diverse population and which, with government prompting, is controversially proposing over-development on its unique historic and potential museum sites. There are other options appropriate for Parramatta's constituents that do not require a state institution to be fragmented and destroyed. Apart from a Parramatta-centred gallery and museum, a space could be provided to take touring exhibitions from all city and regional institutions, or satellites linked to cohesive state originals.

But the Baird-Berejiklian-Harwin proposal is founded in greed for votes in the west and money from developers in both locations. The Government has had its eyes on these issues in the secret decisions made along the way. Until recently, the Opposition has largely agreed, for similar reasons. And let us not be distracted by the promise of maintaining an unidentified 'cultural presence' in Ultimo! The key characteristic of the Museum is the integration of its collection areas. It is not acceptable to simply: maintain the old brick building (tick heritage); leave a couple of heavy machines (tick technology presence and budget for moving); and offer a possible fashion and architecture hub (tick link with UTS takeover). There is much more to the Museum than this! Don't even mention lyric theatres, the arts minister's special interest, it seems! There are other theatres in the city and in Parramatta with adequate seats for 'Broadway musical' audiences.

And where does the anticipated government 'announcement' leave the well-considered contributions made to, and by, the Upper House Inquiry in to Museums and Galleries, especially as they relate to this museum? Can Ministers and Premiers really bypass such extensive research so glibly? As well, we cannot forget that all significant institutions need adequate recurrent funding for staff and programs; the 'efficiency dividend' has been devastatingly destructive, often trading intelligent engagement with what are now necessary 'bums on seats'.

**I hope you can add your voice to demanding a better decision.**

Yours sincerely,

Grace Cochrane AM

<https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/>