

**Supplementary
Submission
No 149f**

**INQUIRY INTO INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND
GALLERIES**

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The Hon Robert Borsak MLC

Committee Chair

Portfolio Committee No 4 – Legal Affairs

Re Legislative Council Inquiry into Museums and Galleries in NSW

Submission from Kylie Winkworth, museum and heritage expert, May 2018

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

Below is a copy of a paper sent to the Cultural Infrastructure Program Management Office (CIPMO) on 11 August 2017 after the consultations held at the Powerhouse Museum 31 July 2017, in response to the question *'Is there anything else that should be taken into consideration when developing the business case?'* The notes below were written in reply to this question. This paper is based on my long experience in museum planning, touching on the essential research, risk analysis, engagement and costings which are the foundation for a viable and sustainable museum. It would appear from the scant Final Business Case Summary released on 28 April that none of this advice was accepted or is included in the still secret FBC.

Parramatta 'New Museum' Business Case Essentials: Winkworth to CIPMO

1 What is the rationale for a major government museum in Parramatta? What is the case for this museum being entirely funded by the NSW government when other cities in western Sydney have built their own cultural facilities and fund almost all the operational costs? And why has the government decided that it is the PHM that has to be closed and moved to Parramatta? As yet there has been no clear explanation or rationale for the museum in Parramatta, nor an explanation for why the PHM has been selected. Is it because of cultural inequality in western Sydney? Is it to mark the coming of age of Parramatta as Sydney's second city? Is it because Parramatta wants to attract international tourists? Is it the development opportunities on the PHM's site? Or is it a political trophy for the local member and Daily Telegraph? Any museum proposal must be underpinned by a compelling rationale, a 'why is this museum needed?' case, which has so far not been made for the PHM/ Parramatta museum.

2 What are the cultural aspirations of the people of Parramatta? Given that the consultations on the PHM to Parramatta project are thus far very shallow, the business case should be guided by the clear messages and aspirations expressed in Parramatta Council's cultural plan. This is what should shape the ideas, concept and experiences of the new museum.

3 Who is the museum for? Is it for people in Parramatta or for people across western Sydney? Is the museum for Sydneysiders or all the taxpayers of NSW? Is it for interstate and international visitors? Is the museum for schools? Is the museum for young people in western Sydney? Is the museum for the migrant communities of Parramatta and western Sydney? None of the material about the PHM to Parramatta project has explained who new museum is for. This is one of the most basic and important elements that must be clear at the start in any planning for a new museum.

4 The 'business case' must detail how each segment of the target audiences have been consulted and what their feedback is about the kind of museum they want, what experiences they want, what will motivate them to visit, what their needs are in terms of facilities, access and parking, and what

are the barriers to particular audiences visiting the museum. Effective museum consultations are built around open conversations with audience segments, not five question surveys and staged managed meetings designed by spin doctors to address narrow questions.

5 The business case must demonstrate why the **DJs carpark site is the optimum site** for the new museum, addressing the concept and form of the museum, its access, spatial and facility requirements, the audiences, revenue generating opportunities, and how the site context and business environment is appropriate for the type of museum proposed and its target audiences. As noted in earlier papers, the government has so far broken all the basic rules of museum planning 101. The museum site should not have been selected before detailed consultations and agreement on the museum concept and facility requirements, or before even basic questions about the case for the museum have been answered.

6 Given that the government has already ill-advisedly bought the DJS carpark site, the business case must detail the **risks and additional costs of building a museum for the PHM's collections** on the site, with all its specific requirements for relocating 240,000 objects from Ultimo, building new storage, designing appropriate floor loadings, live steam, plant etc above the one in 500 year flood line. The business case should also evaluate if other types of cultural facilities might be more appropriate at this location, such as a gallery and temporary exhibition space, see 2 and 3 above. That is, the business case must demonstrate why the PHM museum is the best service rationale and service delivery choice, weighed against other options such as building Sydney Modern in Parramatta, given the stated priority for Parramatta to have a gallery, and that Sydney already has two major public galleries in the city.

7 Along with a clear summary of the audiences for the new museum, see 3 and 4 above, the business case should detail **how these audiences will travel to the museum**, the modes of travel and approximate costs, and estimated travel times from a variety of locations across the Sydney basin, including travel times and costs for visitors from Gosford, Wollongong, Wollondilly, Campbelltown, Heathcote, Hornsby, Punchbowl etc. And given the obligation to demonstrate the optimum service rationale and service delivery alternatives, the final business case should compare travel times from these locations to the Parramatta museum site, against travel times to the PHM at Ultimo.

8 The business case must commission an independent, robust and publicly available **risk assessment of moving the PHM collections**. This risk assessment must be prepared by senior museum people expert in the collections most at risk in the move, particularly the power, transport, science and technology collections. The risk assessment should detail the processes and steps in moving the collections, including how specific significant objects will be extracted from the PHM, the risks at each step in the process, and how the risks will be addressed. The risk assessment paper should detail the costs in moving the collections and building new storage facilities with at least equal environmental conditions and appropriate storage. The risk assessment must weigh up the issues around reduced staff and public access to the PHM collections since they are not all likely to be accommodated on the confined DJs carpark site. The risk assessment must detail and explain how and why moving 240,000 objects from accessible and fit for purpose exhibition areas and storage at Ultimo is value for money for NSW taxpayers, and if there is any service delivery rationale or value for money proposition in moving the collections. Finally the risk assessment must explain the MAAS staff resources and expertise required to plan and manage each step in the move of the collections, and demonstrate which skills and people from the reduced PHM staff will be required to undertake the massive project and how long it will take. This goes to the question of whether the museum has

the capacity to implement this element of the move of the museum. I note that the PHM's collections are not owned by the NSW government but are held in trust for current and future generations. The collections have been substantially endowed by the generosity of generations of families and donors. It is therefore imperative that all the information relating to the risk assessment of moving the collections and the cost is made available to the public. That is the least obligation owed to donors of the PHM's collections.

9 The business case must include independent research on the **economic loss of closing the PHM**, including valuing the PHM's contribution to Ultimo/ Darling Harbour, tourism and the international conference business at Darling Harbour. It should also detail the costs of writing off the high quality buildings, storage, exhibition and museum infrastructure at Ultimo, and replacing this infrastructure with new facilities of equivalent size, volume and quality at Parramatta and Castle Hill. This goes to the value for money question around moving the museum.

10 The business case must explore the **opportunity cost of moving the PHM 23ks west for a likely cost of \$1.2b for no net cultural gain**. Indeed the result will be a smaller, less accessible museum with inferior facilities. The business case should consider whether there are more effective value for money, service delivery options, if the goal of the project is to redress inequalities in cultural funding for western Sydney and regional NSW, see 1 above. Given Parramatta is only 25 minutes from the city centre this community is not at such cultural disadvantage as many other areas of western Sydney and regional NSW, including communities such as Wollongong, Gosford, Campbelltown, Penrith, Bowral, Maitland, Coffs Harbour and Tweed Heads, none of which have professionally managed museums, and none of these communities have received museum infrastructure funding from the NSW government. The business case should consider whether a partnership model with local government for a network of regional museums would deliver better value for taxpayers and communities across NSW, be more equitable, and improve access to the PHM's collections for communities across NSW. It is about \$10-\$12m to build a regional museum with a temporary exhibition space which would enable cities across NSW to host travelling exhibitions and showcase parts of the state's collections. If \$1.2b was spent on museum infrastructure across NSW it would build a lot of museums and create new tourism infrastructure and opportunities across the state.

11 The business case should detail the **recurrent budget for the Parramatta museum** and assumptions about revenue generation and visitor numbers. In my view the Parramatta museum must be free, given cost of living pressures on families in western Sydney. The business case should detail all staff positions and salary levels and explain how many new positions will be created and how many staff will be from western Sydney. If the service delivery rationale for the museum – see 1 above, is to employ curators and designers from western Sydney, the business case should evaluate alternate museum models and consider if a new museum establishment would generate greater benefits for cultural skills, capacity and employment in western Sydney than moving the PHM's existing staff.

12 Finally I must emphasise that **the business case must be put on public exhibition for comment**, along with the building designs. The proposed museum will be paid for by NSW taxpayers, so the service delivery rationale and value for money proposition must be publicly explained and substantiated.

There is no case for developing a museum in secret. Indeed it runs counter to everything a museum stands for. A museum is an intergenerational commitment and so must be conceived and planned with great care, deep consultation and transparency. A museum is a community cultural institution

founded on public trust. To my knowledge, no museum project, small or large, has ever been planned in secrecy away from public input and comment at each stage in the project's development. I suggest you look at the transparency around the move of the Museum of London for a few ideas about how to move a museum and bring the community along. The museum took pains to explain to its public why the museum needed to move, why the adjacent Smithfield markets site was the best location, and how this site would improve the museum's facilities, services and the experience for visitors. They offered the museum's supporters and audiences the chance to comment and vote on a suite of building design options and they have undertaken deep consultation with a range of audiences and stakeholders about what people want to see in the new museum. The contrast with the PHM to Parramatta project could not be starker.