

**Submission  
No 19**

**INQUIRY INTO GOVERNMENT'S MANAGEMENT OF THE  
POWERHOUSE MUSEUM AND OTHER MUSEUMS AND  
CULTURAL PROJECTS IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Blacktown City Council

**Date Received:** 28 April 2020

---



23 April 2020

The Hon Robert Borsak MLC  
NSW Legislative Council  
Chair, Select Committee on the Government's management  
of the Powerhouse Museum and other museums and cultural projects  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Borsak

**Blacktown City Council submission**

I write to present the perspective of Blacktown City on your 'Inquiry into the Government's management of the Powerhouse Museum and other museums and cultural projects in New South Wales'.

Blacktown City Council is recognised as a leader of community arts practice in Australia and a leader in the commissioning and presentation of community engaged contemporary arts. Our relationship with communities, audiences and artists is informed by decades of local knowledge.

Our work also extends to cultural planning, public art, managing a city art collection and developing the capacity of local artists and creative practitioners. We support artists and communities through innovative projects, developed over multiple years, that directly respond to the realities of our fast-changing city.

We therefore believe we are well-equipped to comment on the matters referred in your Terms of reference:

- a) We support the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum from Ultimo. However, we believe the Government has limited its scope and that there are numerous suitable locations within western Sydney, including Blacktown.
- b) We believe there is inequity in the funding and support for all museums and cultural projects in NSW, particularly between the eastern and western regions of Sydney. We would support a model based on local government area population size.

Supporting information on these points as well as our demonstrated capacity and expertise in delivering cultural initiatives is set out in the following pages.

If you would like to discuss this matter or if require further information, please contact our Manager Arts and Cultural Development, \_\_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_

Yours sincerely

Tony Bleasdale, OAM  
Mayor

**Mayor of Blacktown City**

Councillor Tony Bleasdale, OAM

Phone: 02 9839 6504 - Email: [mayor@blacktown.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mayor@blacktown.nsw.gov.au)

Correspondence: PO Box 63 - Blacktown NSW 2148

Facebook: Mayor of Blacktown City

## **We support the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum to western Sydney and equity in funding and support for all museums and cultural projects in NSW**

---

Blacktown City Council supports the relocation and development of the Powerhouse Museum to western Sydney and the NSW Government's support in cultural infrastructure in the area. The move will show a strong commitment to investing in communities, programs and artists of the region.

Both the NSW and Australian governments have a model of investment in which there is a deficit of arts and culture support for Blacktown City and greater western Sydney.

Western Sydney deserves its own cultural institutions, supported by government in the same way as those institutions in the east:

- Western Sydney represents nearly 30% of the NSW population, but it receives a mere 5.5% of the NSW Government arts budget compared with eastern Sydney which receives 87%.
- Less than 1% of the Australian Government's arts funding goes to the 10% of Australia's population that western Sydney represents. Deloitte captured these figures in a 2015 report, showing that an almost identical number of people in eastern Sydney is allocated 36% of the arts funding.

We need suburban centres that are catalysed by an equitable distribution of government jobs, cultural facilities and private investment.

Western Sydney deserves its own cultural institutions, supported by government in the same way as those institutions in eastern Sydney.

Importantly, there is no NSW or Australian government cultural infrastructure investment in the Blacktown City area.

There is an increased pressure on local government to provide a range of cultural infrastructure and operations. Blacktown City Council supports all cultural infrastructure costs in Blacktown; that is, without government financial support.

Council supports the following recommendation of Museums & Galleries of NSW:

- There be legislated support for the gallery and museum sector – the creation of a funding stream similar to the Public Library Funding Strategy which provides funding to Libraries based on local government area population size.

## **Blacktown City Council has demonstrated capacity and expertise in delivering cultural initiatives**

---

Since establishing the first local government Community Arts Officer position in Australia in 1978, and boosted by the opening of The Leo Kelly Blacktown Arts Centre in 2001, Blacktown City remains committed to developing and creating some of the most dynamic and culturally diverse artwork in the country.

Our diverse population makes us stand out as a vibrant and distinctive community, drawn from nearly every country in the world. We are a global community of artists and community leaders.

The network of western Sydney arts and cultural organisations shares resources and tailors specific needs for highly diverse communities.

Western Sydney cultural organisations provide a great deal of support to First Nations, vulnerable, at risk, refugee and emerging communities, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Each year over 300,000 people attend our community events.

### **Blacktown City demographics**

---

Located 35 kilometres west of Sydney and spread across 247 square kilometres, Blacktown is one of the fastest growing cities in Australia. It is an important contributor to the greater Sydney region, with substantial economic and population growth expected over the next 15 years.

Blacktown City is home to 395,000 people, supports 100,000 jobs and a \$16.7 billion economy. Blacktown will soon grow to 540,000 residents, 180,000 jobs and an economy of \$30 billion. Blacktown is just one City within western Sydney, a region which is home to 2 million people, expected to grow to more than 3 million.

Blacktown City has 1 of the top 10 fastest growing employment areas in greater western Sydney, our economy sustains 123,000 jobs of which 44% are occupied by local residents.

Blacktown has a population from 188 nations who speak 182 languages. We have suburbs with some of the lowest Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) indices in Sydney. We have 11% of our housing stock as social and community housing. We are also a youthful city, with one of the highest proportions of 16 to 24 year olds and an average age of 33 years, which is below the Sydney average of 36 years and 45.4% of our population are couples with children. We are also a diverse city: 40% of Blacktown representing 188 nationalities, 46% speak a language other than English.