

**Supplementary
Submission
No 24a**

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

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The previous Arts Minister, Donald Harwin, wanted to establish both a *Decorative Arts museum* (in Macquarie Street) and a *Fashion and Design museum* (in what remains of the Powerhouse Museum). There is no proper process behind these proposals, just as **there has been no proper process around the decision to trash the Powerhouse Museum and to destroy heritage buildings at Parramatta**, a decision pushed by two Premiers and three Arts Ministers despite huge opposition from both experts and the public.

Where is the **research aimed at understanding the potential audiences** and discovering whether each proposed museum could be viable?

Why open **two new museums in the Eastern City**, when the argument for 'moving' the Powerhouse to Parramatta is that the State's treasures should be shared?

Why **stash the Collection in silos**, when the greatest success of the Powerhouse has been to create thoughtful exhibitions using objects from across a very diverse Collection?

Where is the **research into the competition faced by these proposed museums**? The Decorative Arts museum would have to compete with the nearby Art Gallery of NSW, State Library, Sydney Living Museums, Customs House and Museum of Contemporary Art, as well as with art school galleries, commercial galleries and the Chau Chak Wing Museum at the University of Sydney.

Why not learn from experience, especially the **failure of the Museum of Decorative Arts and Gold** managed by MAAS in the Mint building in Macquarie Street in the 1980s?

Perhaps it would be better to combine the themes mooted for the two venues and create a museum of Decorative Arts and Design, or (better still) **allow the Powerhouse at Ultimo to continue holding a wide range of Design exhibitions** across the fields of: agriculture and food, architecture, ceramics, communication, computers, engineering, exploration, footwear, glassware, graphics, hand tools, household appliances, jewellery, machine tools, manufacturing, medical instruments and devices, metalwork, musical instruments, photography, plastics, printing, robotics, scientific instruments, sporting equipment, textiles and clothing, timepieces, toys, vehicles, woodwork, and the latest student work. **This variety attracts a wide audience** and, crucially, it allows for rich exhibition themes that bring out synergies between different types of objects, tell important stories and encourage visitors to think about unexpected ideas.

Why not listen to the people of Parramatta rather than sweeping away heritage buildings and parachuting an unwanted, shrunken museum into a flood-prone location? Why not work with Parramatta's people and heritage to add value to its existing cultural institutions and sites?