

Submission  
No 28

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

**Organisation:** Decorative Arts Society

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It is with disbelief that many in the United Kingdom have, over recent years, followed plans to move the pioneering and internationally-renowned Powerhouse Museum. This move dismays museum professionals and educators, as well as those who have come to admire such an exemplary and thoughtfully created institution.

In 1851, backed by considerable support from Prince Albert, London hosted the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations. This first World's Fair led, the following year, to the creation of the South Kensington Museum (now Victoria and Albert Museum); the Science Museum opposite was founded in 1857. Across the globe similar exhibitions followed, not least the Sydney International Exhibition (1879) and museums were created in their wake from Paris to Vienna to St Petersburg; the Powerhouse Museum is one such. Created diligently within Ultimo's former Tram Depot, the Powerhouse allows the history of artistic and industrial endeavour to be witnessed in a perfect setting. Moreover, the award-winning 1988 conversion by Lionel Glendenning has proved an inspiration for the repurposing of other industrial buildings, including Gae Aulenti's Musée d'Orsay, Paris and for Herzog & de Meuron's Tate Modern, London.

It is a matter of huge concern that recent years have seen the educational value of the Powerhouse collections diminished, as exhibition spaces have been reduced and works of historic significance mothballed. However, with the extraordinarily shortsighted proposal to move out of the building altogether, these carefully selected works telling the story of art and industry will be lost to future generations.

It beggars belief, at a time of world crisis and the inevitable consequent financial pressure, that the New South Wales Government would not pull back from its destructive plans.

May we ask that, once more, you bring in your museum professionals, whose lifetimes of experience have been devoted to presenting the collections for domestic and international benefit. Breaking up this museum is tantamount to 'selling the family silver'; there is no way back.

The Powerhouse enjoys iconic status amongst the world's museums. To remove it from its present setting would inevitably diminish its reputation, and that of the New South Wales Government.