

Submission  
No 52

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

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The Powerhouse Inquiry Select Committee  
Powerhouse Move to Parramatta Submission

I am opposed to the relocation of The Powerhouse Museum from its current location in Ultimo to Parramatta. Although I live at Rooty Hill in the western suburbs of Sydney and see the need for more cultural social and resources at Parramatta I do not believe that the uprooting of the Powerhouse Museum from Ultimo is the appropriate solution.

Apart from its historical connections to the Ultimo site and the previous technological environment of the inner city harbourside suburbs, the central location of the Powerhouse Museum in its current location within close proximity to Darling Harbour and Central station and the city makes it readily accessible to people from all suburbs in the great metropolis of Sydney whether they be the northern suburbs, the southern suburbs, the eastern suburbs or the western suburbs. With limited direct public transport routes to Parramatta from these other suburbs (other than the western suburbs) accessibility to any new Parramatta Powerhouse Museum would not be as convenient.

Also with the existing Powerhouse Museum being so close to Darling Harbour and the city it is in a far better position to attract the patronage of tourists and those attending conventions and exhibitions at the nearby Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centres (assuming that visitors will return to our city post the Coronavirus pandemic). Tourists and Convention/Exhibition attendees are more likely to avail of a Museum that is in close proximity in their spare time rather than endure the thirty or more minutes of time and related transport logistic difficulties in getting to Parramatta.

At this time there is very little advertising, if any, of the Powerhouse Museum and its wonderful offerings around Darling Harbour or Central Station or the city and direction sign posting is minimal compared to other commercial attractions around the locality. One must ask if this lack of visible prominent advertising is part of the government's ploy to downplay the Powerhouse Museum's existence at the Ultimo location, discourage patronage and hence reduce opposition to its proposed move to Parramatta.

The Powerhouse Museum buildings also provide a pleasant transition and buffer between the ever growing high rise apartments in towers of glass and concrete of the encroaching city environs and the historical residential buildings of suburban Ultimo with their by-gone era charm. The Museum's workshop buildings provide a glimpse of the area's historical industrial past and should be retained as there is so little of our past history that has been retained. On my recent travels to various cities in Europe I have been in awe that buildings and neighbourhoods (not just museums and churches) two to three hundred years old are still standing and inhabited and provide the charm that attracts people to these cities. Yet here in Australia we are in a continual mad rush to demolish anything that is old (not even two hundred years old) and replace it with buildings of no charm and character. We have retained so little of our history in the past and we need to retain what little we have.

And the current Coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the problems of increasing populations without increasing the corresponding infrastructure to support it such as hospitals, care staff and schools. The population density around Haymarket and Ultimo has already increased markedly in recent years with all the high rise apartments and adding quite a few more if the Powerhouse Museum is demolished is only going to exacerbate the problem. Many inner city apartments are too expensive for Australian citizens and are sold to foreign residents only to be sub-let to foreign renters with two to four occupants (if not more) to each bedroom, increasing the

population density even further. The additional apartments to be built on the sites will provide little in addressing the housing needs of Australian workers. Removing a well-loved public facility to advance the interests of overseas interests is not in the best interest of the residents of New South Wales.

I support the need for more cultural facilities at Parramatta and with all the additional items that the Powerhouse Museum has in its storage facilities at Castle Hill I am sure that worthy exhibitions could be housed at a new museum at Parramatta that display the transition of the colony to the great city that Sydney has become and acknowledge the contributions and cultures of the people that have come from all over the world to make Australia what it is today. A new museum yes, but not at the expense of the Powerhouse Museum and all the history that it entails at its current site at Ultimo.

And as for the proposed new Powerhouse Museum “Crate” at Parramatta, again we see the wanton destruction of any semblance of heritage that we may have in the proposed demolition of Willow Grove and St Georges Terrace to make way for the “Crate”.

I worked in Parramatta for many years and found it to be a city without much character and charm on the commercial north side of the railway station with its non-descript collection of 20th and 21st Century commercial buildings with little character. After the lunchtime rush to the eateries the city virtually closed down and the streets resembled a ghost town with few pedestrians in the street and all the office workers encased in their glass and steel offices above. But there was one area of greenery and an oasis with character in the midst of all the concrete and glass and that was the Victorian era Willow Grove. It provided a wonderful glimpse of days gone by with its verandas and lush shaded gardens and pathways. One ponders why it was not given greater public use and access to the public say as a Tourist Information Centre or Community Centre. It is a building that should be retained because it is a fine example of buildings from this period of our city’s history. Likewise St George’s Terrace, although suffering from years of neglect, provides a glimpse of our history and its past architecture and should be preserved and incorporated in any plans for the cultural redevelopment of the area.