

Submission
No 80

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

Organisation: Western Sydney Business Chamber

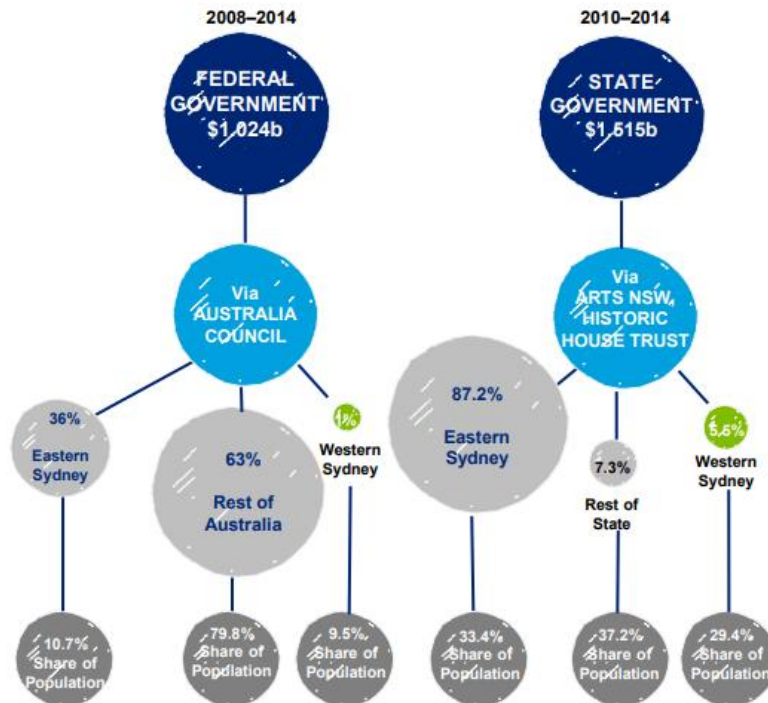
Date Received: 17 May 2020

16 May 2020

Select Committee on the Government's management of the Powerhouse Museum and other museums and cultural projects in New South Wales
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Chair,

The Western Sydney Business Chamber, representing approximately 115 of the region's largest government, business and community organisations, has been a vocal advocate of establishing a new Powerhouse Museum in Parramatta. Having engaged our Membership on this issue, we believe the new Powerhouse Museum is about fairness and equity for the people of Western Sydney in accessing the state's cultural infrastructure and should be supported by the Select Committee and the Members of the NSW Parliament.



The Chamber is strongly of the view that the construction of a reinvigorated Powerhouse Museum on the banks of the Parramatta River begins to address the historic imbalance in cultural arts infrastructure in Western Sydney. A Deloitte report, commissioned by the



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Western Sydney Business Chamber, City of Parramatta, Liverpool City Council and Penrith City Council in 2015, confirms the historic neglect of the region's cultural arts economy. The investigation highlights that 3 in 10 NSW residents live in Western Sydney and yet the region receives only 5.5% of the States Cultural Arts, heritage and events funding. The region also only receives 1% of Commonwealth arts program funding, while having 10% of Australia's population.¹

The people of Western Sydney crave cultural arts activities. Western Sydney residents have an average non-work travel time threshold of 19 – 20 minutes. Eastern Sydney residents have a threshold of 17 – 18 minutes. The location of Sydney's major institutions in the Sydney CBD – Australian Museum, Art Gallery of NSW, Powerhouse Museum and Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney Opera House and the State Library of NSW – are simply further and further out of reach as Sydney's residential population has expanded towards the foot of the Blue Mountains. Establishing Powerhouse Parramatta would be a step towards placing a tier 1 cultural institution within the accessibility of millions of Sydneysiders who reside in the Greater West. The location and distance of these institutions means that they cannot be frequently and easily accessed by Western Sydney residents.

Importantly Western Sydney stands as one of the most diverse areas in Australia, both serving vibrant existing communities and being a first port for many migrants². These communities now do not have access to a world-class facility, providing a strong point of community connection and exhibition. Furthermore, the population growth over the coming 15 years will see areas such as Blacktown, Parramatta and Camden take the bulk of this growth.

The Chamber understands that the current Powerhouse Museum is no longer fit for purpose for a modern 21st-century technology and applied arts museum and would require a substantial investment to bring the facility up to standard. The Chamber supports that the current museum location now reaching the end of its useful life is an opportunity to reconsider its role in Greater Sydney's cultural arts offering and that its Australian and international collection is the most suitable to be interpreted and exhibited in Parramatta.

The Greater Sydney Commission's metropolitan strategy for Greater Sydney sees the development of three cities – Eastern Harbour City, Central River City and the Western Parkland City. A key ingredient to the success of the Central River and Western Parkland Cities will be the development of stronger cultural infrastructure and programmes. The current and future residents of these two cities should not be expected to be deprived of access to the artistic and historic collections that their taxes have and are paying for

¹ Deloitte, Building Western Sydney's Cultural Arts Economy – a key to Sydney's success, p. 15.

<https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/building-western-sydney-cultural-arts-economy.html>

² <https://blog.id.com.au/2015/population/demographic-trends/western-sydney-diverse-and-growing-rapidly/>



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because they happen to live in Sydney's newer suburbs. We are advised that Powerhouse Parramatta will be the largest museum in NSW at almost 30,000 sqm with 18,000 sqm of exhibition and public spaces. This represents a significant and unique investment in Western Sydney's cultural infrastructure and will be a game-changer for the visitor economy of Sydney's central city.

The Chamber is disappointed that some Members of the NSW Parliament would seek to obstruct the redress of this deficit, by establishing a refreshed Powerhouse Museum in Western Sydney, and have instead offered vague proposals of a "regional' museum or "performance space". The Chamber recommends that the Select Committee endorse the plan to create Powerhouse Parramatta and work collaboratively with the people of Western Sydney to ensure it is a world-class facility.

Yours sincerely

David Borger OAM

Executive Director

Western Sydney Business Chamber