

Submission
No 87

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

Organisation: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Board of Trustees

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**SUBMISSION BY THE MUSEUM OF APPLIED ARTS AND SCIENCES
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

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

MAY 2020



**Museum of
Applied Arts
& Sciences**

Acknowledgment of Country

The Museum acknowledges Australia's First Nations Peoples as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and gives respect to the Elders – past and present – and through them to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

MUSEUM OF APPLIED ARTS AND SCIENCES TRUSTEES – FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Trustees are custodians of the Powerhouse Museum, Ultimo; Powerhouse Castle Hill (Museums Discovery Centre); Sydney Observatory; and the Powerhouse Collection of over 500,000 items.

The Trustees hold the vision for the future of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences as 'one Museum, four sites'. The four future sites include Powerhouse Parramatta; Powerhouse Castle Hill [Museums Discovery Centre]; Sydney Observatory, Millers Point; and the Museum's Sydney CBD site. The Sydney CBD site will be located at the Ultimo Creative Industries Precinct or at the Land Titles Building on Macquarie Street East. This decision is pending the outcome of the Ultimo Creative Industries Precinct Final Business Case and the Macquarie Street East Review. Both of these strategic investigations are due to report to Government and the Trust by mid-2020.

POWERHOUSE MUSEUM OVERVIEW

The Powerhouse Museum is Australia's contemporary museum for excellence and innovation in applied arts and sciences. The Powerhouse is uniquely placed to demonstrate how technology, engineering, science and design impact Australia and the world.

Internationally the Powerhouse is acknowledged for the calibre of its collection, scholarship and exhibitions. The Collection spans history, science, technology, design, industry, decorative arts, music, transport and space exploration. It is also home to the material heritage and stories of Australian culture, history and lifestyle, providing a comprehensive insight into this rich and diverse country.

2018 was pivotal year for the Powerhouse with the NSW Government's announcement to invest in the renewal of the Museum across four key projects. The Powerhouse Renewal Program includes: the creation of the new Powerhouse Parramatta; the establishment of new dedicated collections stores at Powerhouse Castle Hill; the Collection Relocation and Digitisation Project and the development of the Ultimo Creative Industries Precinct. During the delivery of the Powerhouse Program, the Sydney Observatory will continue to offer Australia's most accessible telescope domes, digital programs and Space Theatre. Together, the projects that make up the Powerhouse Program mark the largest investment into cultural infrastructure since the Sydney Opera House in 1973.

Powerhouse Parramatta will set a new benchmark in cultural placemaking for Greater Sydney and Australia. The institution will return to its origins through the creation of exhibition spaces that support high visitor numbers, engage communities with new technology and provide opportunities for collaboration and exchange.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The 2019/20 financial year has seen the Powerhouse refocus towards the delivery of Museum produced and presented exhibitions. These have included Apollo 11, Linear and Step Into Paradise exhibitions, and for the first time, the Museum participated in the 2020 Biennale of Sydney – NIRIN. This shift in exhibition programming away from touring exhibitions has resulted in a significant uplift in visitor numbers and an increase in positive media and industry engagement.

In 2018/19, the Museum had:

- over **1.064 million** visitors including 909,509 visits across the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney Observatory and Powerhouse Castle Hill (Museums Discovery Centre) and 154,941 visitors reached through public programs and touring exhibitions in other venues;
- an 11% increase on general admissions;
- 63,911 education visits; and
- more than 2.6 million website visits (2,628,695).

A NEW MUSEUM AND CULTURAL PRECINCT FOR WESTERN SYDNEY

The NSW Government examined a number of options to deliver Powerhouse Parramatta to maximise outcomes for the NSW community and economy. This led to the NSW Government's endorsement in August 2019 of a vision, design and operational principles for Powerhouse Parramatta. Following an international design competition, the architects Moreau Kusunoki (France) and Genton (Australia) were appointed in December 2019. The winning design responds to the endorsed vision and operational principles.

Powerhouse Parramatta will be the first NSW cultural institution to be located in Western Sydney. It will provide unprecedented levels of access to the Powerhouse Collection through a changing exhibition program focused on science and technology. The exhibition program will be supported by cross-generational education program that will set a new benchmark in cultural participation by the diverse and growing communities of Western Sydney.

Western Sydney is Australia's fourth-largest economy and one of its fastest-growing and most culturally diverse regions. Its population is projected to grow by three per cent per annum to 2041 – over double the rate of Greater Sydney and nearly triple the national rate over the same period. The opportunity for Powerhouse Parramatta to harness this growth to contribute to the productivity and liveability of Western Sydney, Greater Sydney, and NSW more broadly is transformational.

The endorsed vision has been embedded into the design competition process, design development and operational principles of Powerhouse Parramatta and marks a significant uplift to service levels for the benefit of the communities of Greater Sydney and NSW. Powerhouse Parramatta will present a constantly changing exhibition program that will significantly increase access to the Museum's Collection of over 500,000 objects. This dynamic program will drive repeat visitation and will contribute to the night-time and visitor economies of Greater Sydney. It is anticipated that Powerhouse Parramatta will attract 2 million visitors in its first year of operation.

The Powerhouse Museum, Ultimo presents permanent exhibitions. Some of these exhibitions have been on display since the Museum opened in 1988. As a result, only 10% of the Powerhouse Collection has been displayed at Ultimo during this period. The Sydney Observatory and Powerhouse Castle Hill have shown <1% and 2% of the Collection, respectively, over this same period. The exhibition program model for Powerhouse Parramatta will significantly increase the percentage of the Collection publicly exhibited for the benefit of the communities of NSW through a dynamic changing program. The expansion of the international standard storage facility, Powerhouse Castle Hill, will also increase public exhibition space and accessibility of the Collection.

POWERHOUSE PARRAMATTA ENDORSED VISION

The institution that became the Powerhouse was established in 1881 in the Garden Palace which emerged from a history of 19th Century grand exhibition halls, including the Grand Palais, in Paris. Powerhouse Parramatta will radically return to its origins through the creation of exhibition spaces of extraordinary scale that will enable the delivery of an ambitious, dynamic changing program that provides new levels of access to the Powerhouse Collection.

Powerhouse Parramatta will reflect the communities and cultures of one of Australia's fastest growing regions. It will hold First Nations culture at its core and set a new benchmark in culturally diverse programming. Powerhouse Parramatta will be highly connected through multiple transport links and integrate into the fine grain of the city, presenting a program of new large-scale events for up to 10,000 people that will expand the annual cultural calendar of Sydney.

The NSW Government's endorsed vision for Powerhouse Parramatta will see the museum embedded into an innovation and creative industries precinct providing high levels of opportunity and pathways to employment for young people across Sydney and NSW.

This vision was embedded into the Stage 2 Design Brief and guided the architectural team of Moreau Kusunoki and Genton in the development of their winning concept plan. The winning design team envisage the new Powerhouse as a hyper-platform, a building with many functions and limitless potential. The built form will tread lightly on the site, creating a porous ground plane. The architecture will open up towards the river, providing generous public space and creating an open public precinct. A three-dimensional layer of interstitial space, known in Japan as 'mā' will provide transparent connecting spaces full of natural light.

Seven large-scale exhibition spaces are at the core of the Powerhouse. These immense volumes will act as continual social and cultural amplifiers. The exterior structural frame will hold these spaces, facilitating dynamic programming by providing total interior flexibility. The Powerhouse will transcend scale to exist simultaneously as both intimate and iconic.

Powerhouse Parramatta will provide world-class education, research and community facilities. It will include seven large exhibition spaces of international museum standard for the display of the Powerhouse Collection, local and international exhibitions, and large-scale objects. Exhibition spaces will be highly flexible and adaptable and will support multiple uses and a high turnover of activity. The built-form and public domain spaces will encourage interaction between visitors, architecture and the natural environment. A key feature of the public domain will be its generosity

of open space and its high level of amenity. The public domain will support a museum program that includes cultural and community events (both small and large scale, up to 10,000 people) alongside the provision of space for passive recreation and respite.

The Powerhouse will set an international benchmark in experiential learning through the creation of an immensely scaled 360-degree digital space, unique to Australia. Through a changing program of commissioned works, the 360-degree digital and screen program will provide distinctive experiences immersing students and audiences in science, technology and astronomy.

In a new landmark program for Australia, Powerhouse Parramatta will establish the Powerlab – 40 residential studios and 60 dormitory-style accommodation places for students that will bring together researchers, scientists, artists and students from across regional NSW, Australia and around the world to collaborate and participate in Powerhouse programs. The Powerlab will feature digital studios to support music and screen industries alongside co-working spaces, life-long learning and community spaces. Integrated into the Powerlab will be a research kitchen and library that will support a NSW industry development program including archives and oral histories.

Powerhouse Parramatta will actively participate in the daily life of the city. It will present multiple and concurrent programs and events and be robust and porous enough to operate across the day and into the evening. Through an active evening program, the Powerhouse will significantly contribute to the growth of Sydney's night-time and visitor economies providing experiences that intellectually and emotionally connect communities and drive repeat visitation.

Powerhouse Parramatta will establish a new paradigm for museums through the creation of an institution that is innately flexible. It will be a place designed to constantly evolve in response to the needs of its growing communities. It will become a national and international destination renowned for its distinctive programs driven by original research and inspired by its expansive collections. It will be a place of collaboration, a mirror of its communities forever embedded in the contemporary identity of Greater Sydney and NSW.

A commercial program will be integrated into the operations and utilisation of Powerhouse Parramatta. The commercial program will focus on supporting industry development and the profile of Greater Sydney as an innovative region. The program will include conferences, industry events, product launches, symposium and will significantly contribute to the sustainability and connectivity of the Museum.

Core to the sustainable operations of Powerhouse Parramatta will be a commitment to collaboration and co-investment. This will provide opportunities for programming, jobs creation and product development. Commercial activities will also include a food and beverage retail program that will reflect the diverse cultures of Greater Sydney. Commercial opportunities will also be realised through the Powerlab Co-working spaces, Digital Studios and Powerlab Kitchen.

POWERHOUSE PARRAMATTA FINAL BUSINESS CASE 2020

The NSW Government has examined a number of options to deliver Powerhouse Parramatta to maximise outcomes for the NSW community and economy. This led to the NSW Government's endorsement of a vision, design and operational principles for Powerhouse Parramatta in August 2019. The 2020 Final Business Case considers the endorsed vision for Powerhouse Parramatta and compares the uplift in service to deliver a world-class museum, innovation and creative industries precinct in Parramatta, relative to a museum of equivalent scale and service level to the current Powerhouse Museum, Ultimo at Parramatta. Contemporary evidence has been gathered for the 2020 Final Business Case to develop an integrated view of the service need, operational model and financial and economic costs and benefits to undertake this comparison. The Powerhouse Parramatta 2020 Final Business Case is currently under consideration by the NSW Government.

POWERHOUSE CASTLE HILL

The Powerhouse has had a presence at Castle Hill since the 1940s. The site was originally acquired with the purpose of undertaking research into the use of essential oils from Australian native species. This use ceased in 1979, and since this time the site has been utilised as a storage and display space for the Powerhouse Collection.

As part of the renewal of the Powerhouse a new collection storage facility is being developed that will increase the current storage capacity of Castle Hill. Alongside storage, this facility will accommodate up to 50 Powerhouse staff and activate the site through enhanced curatorial, restoration and exhibition production activities. It will be able to host a larger number of visitors to the site to view and engage with the Collection. It will also include spaces that will support education programs, tours, events, gatherings and meetings of the local community.

POWERHOUSE COLLECTION RELOCATION AND DIGITISATION PROGRAM

The Powerhouse Program includes one of the largest collection digitisation projects in Australia, which will see 338,000 objects from the Powerhouse Collection photographed and made available to communities, researchers and industry across NSW and internationally. The Project will also see all of the Powerhouse Collection objects located in Ultimo relocated to Castle Hill.

Of an estimated total collection of 500,000, approximately 338,000 items are held at the Ultimo site, including approximately 332,000 in storage in the Harwood Basement and approximately 6,000 on display in the Powerhouse Museum, Ultimo.

To ensure optimal and efficient management of the relocation process, the Collection housed at Ultimo has been classified by significance, specific material, handling or processing requirements of individual objects, including size, material type, collection management requirements, legislative or security requirements. The Powerhouse Collection items currently located at Ultimo include 32 very large objects that require specialist resources, equipment and skills for movement.

A risk assessment and management plan is being developed for the relocation of all very large objects, as well as high significance objects. Specific risk management and mitigation strategies will be identified for all other objects during the assessment stage of the project. Planning and conduct of the relocation of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property will be undertaken in line with the *MAAS Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocol, 2016*.

The Collection Relocation and Digitisation Program is governed by a Project Control Group that includes industry members with significant experience. The Project Control Group reports to the Project Steering Committee which oversees the full Powerhouse Program including Powerhouse Parramatta, Powerhouse Castle Hill and the Ultimo Creative Industries Precinct.

REGIONAL AND WESTERN SYDNEY PROGRAMS

The Powerhouse delivers a wide range of educational workshops, programs and events that engage with Greater Sydney and Regional NSW audiences.

Delivered in partnership with Western Sydney University, City of Parramatta and The Australian Institute of Architects NSW Chapter, the Making the City talk series commenced in March 2019 at 1PSQ, a campus of the University of Western Sydney in Parramatta. Speakers including Sarah Lynn Rees, Jess Austin, Donald Bates, Linda Kennedy and Louise Crabtree who discussed the current state of architecture and place making through the themes of cultural anchors, resilience, disruption, identity and equity.

The Powerhouse's ongoing Regional programs engage with museum and gallery stakeholders across the NSW, providing museological workshops in areas such as curation, editing and publishing, programming, conservation, photography and documentation. In November 2018, the Powerhouse, in partnership with Regional Arts NSW and Museums and Galleries NSW, held a Regional Stakeholders forum. This forum consisted of talks, hands-on workshops, demonstrations and tours focused on increasing outreach, professional development, and networking opportunities for the NSW regional arts sector.

The Powerhouse will establish partnerships with museums and galleries across NSW to develop exhibitions collaboratively and increase community access to the Powerhouse Collection while the museum is closed.

Through Powerhouse Parramatta, regional NSW school students will significantly benefit from the establishment of the Academy, a world first residency initiative. The Academy will accommodate up to 60 students from across regional NSW to stay at Powerhouse Parramatta, at any one time. This program will enable regional students to immerse themselves in the Powerhouse's education and industry programs focused on science and technology.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The Powerhouse is a leader in Australia in the delivery of curriculum focused education programs. In 2018/19 education programs drew attendances of:

- 63,911 education and digital learning programs;
- 47,281 educator led and teacher professional development programs; and
- 12,446 ticketed programs.

To date, in the 2019/20 financial year attendances have increased 34% on the previous year.