

**Supplementary  
Submission  
No 74b**

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

**Name:** Ms Jennifer Sanders

**Date Received:** 25 May 2020

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Submission to the Select Committee on the Government's management of the Powerhouse Museum and other museums and cultural projects in New South Wales.

25 May 2020

The Hon Robert Borsak MLC

Chair

Re Terms of Reference: Item 1 (a) (v) the impact on the heritage status of the site at Ultimo.

Dear Mr Borsak,

In two of my submissions to this Inquiry, I have made reference to a paper I gave to Australia ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites) on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019.

My colleague Kylie Winkworth and I were invited to each present a paper about the Powerhouse Museum and the Government's plan to 'move' the Powerhouse to a flood prone site in Parramatta. The title of the event was *'Policy, Power and the Cultural and Heritage of the Powerhouse Museum'*.

My paper is titled *'The Powerhouse Museum: Its Place in the World, Our Nation, New South Wales, Our Neighbourhood and, Our Hearts and Minds'* OR *'The Powerhouse Museum: A Tale of two Destructions: Conflagration followed 137 years later by Expropriation and Demolition'*.

I would respectfully request that this paper be a submission in its own right to the Inquiry as it goes to the heart of the heritage impact of the consequential destruction of the 140 year old Powerhouse Museum should the Government's plan proceed despite all expert, reasonable and impassioned advice against this 'move' and, for cultural development for Parramatta and across NSW.

Last November, on behalf of the Powerhouse Museum Alliance, Kylie Winkworth and I delivered letters from the Alliance along with a copy of this paper to every member of the NSW Parliament. These letters asked Members to either reconsider their support for the move, or to support the public's calls for the move to be abandoned, depending on their affiliation.

As the Inquiry members would be aware, there has been strongly voiced public opposition to this 'move' of the Powerhouse Museum from the moment of former Premier Baird's announcement in Nov 2014. This opposition is gathering steam as international and national voices join the citizens of NSW who are opposed to this destruction of a much loved museum - its character and extraordinary collection shaped and endowed by the people of NSW over generations - a museum and collection which are held in trust for the citizens of NSW.

The Powerhouse Museum is not owned by the NSW Government although it was the vision of Sir Henry Parkes, former premier of NSW and Father of Federation, which set up the Museum in response to the representations of Trustees of the Australian Museum. The establishment of the Powerhouse Museum was an important step in nation-building and a recognition of the need for NSW to take a bigger role in the world by establishing a museum to collect and represent the world's manufactures, fostering industry in Australia.

As an illustration of the Museum's national role, during World War 1, Australia's sixth Governor-General Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, who is recognised as a major figure in the early years of the Commonwealth, was in frequent correspondence with Richard T Baker, the second curator (director) of the Technological Museum at Ultimo. He was also a regular visitor to the Museum.

The basis for their friendship was that as well as having a successful military and political career, Munro Ferguson was a forester and keenly interested in the development of the Australian timber industry which had potential as a trade commodity, especially after WW1. Munro Ferguson designed furniture to show the qualities of Australian timbers and Baker acquired and exhibited this furniture in the Museum. Despite the challenges of the World War 1 period, Munro Ferguson worked closely with Baker to promote Australia's timbers and had a leading role in bringing a French delegation to the Museum. He was very aware of the wholesale destruction of France's timber and the two men saw the possibility of a new market for Australia's native timbers. This was one of the defining themes of Munro Ferguson's term of office and is a new perspective on the role of the Governor-General.

The Powerhouse Museum is a nationally significant Australian cultural institution which deserves our protection and advocacy against what are, in essence, plans for its destruction. Most disturbingly, these plans were partly based on misleading and ignorant claims of a need for substantial funding, a superficial, false and grandiose bid as detailed in my submissions to the last Inquiry regarding the MAAS 24 Oct 2014 Final Business Case for the Renewal of the Powerhouse Museum formulated by long departed inexperienced, ill-informed and ignorant senior executives.

While it is acknowledged there are supporters for the move, in general, these supporters are unaware of the fact that the Powerhouse Museum will not magically reappear on the flood prone riverbank at Parramatta. Nor are they necessarily aware, as it is now revealed, that the Parramatta 'Powerhouse' will in large part be a building for large scale events, immersive experiences, food and beverage and commercial activities with only 5,200sqm of museum standard environmentally controlled exhibition spaces.

Supporters for the 'move' are also seemingly unaware of the strong opposition from the Parramatta community to this plan – a community, which has for years, has developed and promoted aspirations and plans for cultural development founded on the contemporary cultural diversity of their region coupled with the area's significant Indigenous and colonial history, especially its convict history. The NSW Government and the City of Parramatta should show belief in the people of Parramatta and support their calls for their culture and heritage to be celebrated and promoted to Australia and the world.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jennifer Sanders

Att: J. Sanders, 'The Powerhouse Museum: Its Place in the World, Our Nation, New South Wales, Our Neighbourhood and, Our Hearts and Minds' OR 'The Powerhouse Museum: A Tale of two Destructions: Conflagration followed 137 years later by Expropriation and Demolition'. Presented at A.ICOMOS 2019 Sydney talk Series No 6 'Policy, Power and the Cultural and Heritage Values of the Powerhouse Museum', J.Sanders and K.Winkworth, 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2019.

I am happy for my submission to be published with my name attached

I am happy to appear as a witness before the Inquiry

**Credentials:**

I write as the former Deputy Director, Collections and Outreach, Powerhouse Museum from 2001 to February 2009. I began my career at the Museum in 1978 as museum assistant, curator then senior curator, decorative arts and design. I was a key member of the Powerhouse Museum redevelopment team before taking up senior executive positions in 1988 - Assistant Director, Associate Director then Deputy Director. All these roles always had responsibility for the Collection, Registration and Conservation and for periods, Exhibitions, Education, Library, Sydney Observatory, Museums Discovery Centre, Regional Services and the Migration Heritage Centre NSW.

I was a member of the National Cultural Heritage Committee from 1999 – 2008, From 2007 - 2012, I was a member of the External Advisory Panel, Design Research Institute, RMIT University, Melbourne. I am now a heritage and museum consultant. In 2001 I was awarded the Centenary of Federation Medal. I am a member of ICOM, TICCIH, AMaGA and the National Trust.

**Australia ICOMOS Inc.** is the national committee of ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites), an international non-government organisation primarily concerned with the philosophy, terminology, methodology and techniques of cultural heritage conservation.

ICOMOS has national committees in some 100 countries with the headquarters in France. Members in these countries are formed into national committees and have the right to participate in the ICOMOS General Assemblies held every three years.

Australia ICOMOS has over 600 members, including a wide range of professionals such as planners, historians, educators, curators, anthropologists, archaeologists, architects, interpretation specialists, conservators, engineers, site/asset managers and qualified tradespeople working in heritage conservation.