

Submission
No 141

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

Organisation: Newcomen, The International Society for the History of
Engineering and Technology

Date Received: 12 June 2020



NEWCOMEN

The International Society for the History
of Engineering and Technology

12th June 2020

The Hon. Robert Borsak, MLC
Chair, 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

From the President of the Newcomen Society

Newcomen Society Concern Over Removal of Boulton and Watt Engine

The Newcomen Society is the leading learned society in the world dedicated to the history of engineering and technology. Based at the Science Museum in London, England, the Society also has local branches across the UK. The Newcomen Society has an active programme of meetings, workshops, conferences and visits and publishes an academic journal with a global reach.

The firm of Boulton and Watt were pivotal contributors to the industrial revolution which transformed the world. Their iconic status has been recognised by UNESCO. The James Watt papers at the Library of Birmingham relating to the separate condenser have been added to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register just this month, June 2020. This separate condenser features on your engine at the Powerhouse Museum.

Australia is very fortunate to have a tangible artefact from this firm. The Boulton and Watt engine at the Powerhouse Museum is one of the last survivors of a once key technology. The Newcomen Society was concerned to hear plans for moving this engine from display. It is, after all, a house-built engine. The Newcomen Society is the custodian of an early engine in Dartmouth and we would not want to move such a complex historical object from its current location.

Artefacts like your Boulton and Watt engine need to be accessible to the public, require interpretation and support facilities. Having used a collection of steam engines in Manchester to introduce postgraduates to the evolution of technology, I might add the Boulton and Watt engine is best seen in the context of other steam technologies. We would like to register our strong concern over the removal of this engine and express the hope that you will reconsider. We can assure you that our well-travelled Newcomen Society members will be among the first visitors to see the engine as soon as the epidemic permits.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Jonathan Ayles
President, Newcomen society