

**Supplementary  
Submission  
No 134a**

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

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Supplement to submission no. 134 to the Select Committee on the Government's management of the Powerhouse Museum and other museums and cultural projects in New South Wales.

In my submission to the inquiry (no. 134) I noted that during consultations conducted by Aurecon on behalf of the Parramatta Powerhouse project, the question was asked as to what percentage of the Powerhouse Museum's collections were significant in terms of Parramatta and Western Sydney. At that time the question was taken on notice. Since making the original submission, a response has been provided by the CEO of the Powerhouse Museum.<sup>1</sup>

The response states that "The Powerhouse Museum has at least 5,000 objects from Parramatta and Western Sydney". From a collection of over 500,000 items this therefore represents around 1%. A follow up email<sup>2</sup>, however states that only Parramatta was searched and that if western Sydney was also included this would increase the number substantially.

This raises the question of what (if anything) will be collected by the Powerhouse Museum as a western Sydney based cultural institution and how will this be of relevance to the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences enabling legislation? Many submissions to the inquiry have already noted that the design for the Powerhouse Parramatta is for an arts and performance centre rather than a museum. Arts and performance centres as a general rule do not have permanent collections. It is also abundantly clear that the contemporary museum practice<sup>3</sup> at the Powerhouse in Parramatta can't involve all the Museum's iconic collection objects, so when the re-adapted power station building at Ultimo is bulldozed, the end result for NSW taxpayers is reduced cultural provision even after the new "museum" space opens in 2024.

Create NSW, Museums and Galleries NSW and other state government agencies take the somewhat naïve and simplistic view that cultural infrastructure only refers to the buildings where cultural transmission takes place and specifically excludes the collections themselves. Until there is a more nuanced realisation that cultural infrastructure includes cultural collections, current and future state governments can continue to ignore the public's right to cultural provision that includes access to materials collected in their name and collections built by their taxes.

1. Email communication, Lisa Havilah, 31.5.2020.
2. Email communication, Lisa Havilah, 8.6.2020
3. As noted by Lisa Havilah in the Sydney Morning Herald article 21/06/2020  
<https://www.smh.com.au/culture/art-and-design/powerhouse-push-slammed-as-more-pleasure-palace-than-museum-20200614-p552gy.html>

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