

**Submission  
No 148**

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

**Organisation:** Engineers Australia, Engineering Heritage Australia

**Date Received:** 1 July 2020

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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

Email: [museums@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:museums@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

**RE: Proposed New Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences**

Dear Mr Borsak

Engineers Australia is the body representing over 100,000 professional engineers and, through its peak heritage body, Engineering Heritage Australia, plays a significant role in promoting and preserving Australia's rich cultural heritage by

- recognising the role played by engineering, science and industry in creating the society we have today
- providing expertise to preserve all types of heritage for future generations

We wish to express our deep dissatisfaction with the proposed new Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences at Parramatta.

The proposal is unsatisfactory as a museum in both concept and facilities. It is clearly an entertainment centre, not a technological museum or technology learning centre.

The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences has acquired a unique collection of artefacts reflecting the development of Australia into a modern, advanced society. The collection is valuable in demonstrating fundamental STEM concepts and the continuing development of technology to inspire and educate future generations.

The proposed venue has inadequate facilities to display technological items. The display area is significantly smaller than the Ultimo site and there is no provision for the display of large items or items in operating condition. The vast majority of this priceless collection will be dismantled and hidden away from public view. The Boulton and Watt steam engine is the ultimate example of the fate in store for the collection. In spite of it being an artefact of international significance, it will be dismantled at great risk of damage and, at best, be re-installed as a lifeless, out of context curiosity in the new building. The claim that the collection will be rotated through short-term exhibitions is not credible. The museum no longer has the technical expertise to achieve this, the cost will be

prohibitive, the potential for damage is substantial and the end result will be out of context, lifeless objects.

The current proposal for the Parramatta centre is for a multi-purpose entertainment centre. It should be used for this function.

New South Wales needs a well-resourced science and technology museum and learning centre. The current proposal does not achieve this.

Our advice is to retain the existing Ultimo site as a science and technology museum and learning centre and to provide it with the necessary financial and technical resources.

Yours faithfully,

Mervyn Lindsay BSc(Eng) FIEAust. FIPENZ GradAIDC CPEng NER

Chair, Engineering Heritage Australia