

**Supplementary
Submission
No 66b**

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

Name: Mr Lionel Glendenning

Date Received: 27 July 2020

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

Submission No 3.

Re Terms of Reference: (i), (ii), (iii), (iv)

Parramatta 'Powerhouse' 2010-2020 debacle

Response to EIS call by Dept of Planning

Addressing the present circumstances, Brief, Architectural review of the present scheme - the focus of the EIS for the 'Parramatta Powerhouse'.

The Powerhouse move to Parramatta defies logic.

'a riddle,

wrapped in a mystery,

inside an enigma.'

Winston Churchill

After a number of Project Briefs from 'Move' to 'Science Centre' to 'Carriageworks Lite', the current 18 storey - over-scaled - very expensive - on a flood prone site - smaller 'museum' standard - proposal is mired in conflicting cultural confusion and 'cargo-cult' expectations - it is time to carefully re-assess the current Parramatta Powerhouse Brief + design + costs as really meeting the expressed cultural needs of Western Sydney.

Given a well-defined proposal for the **Fleet Street heritage Precinct**, North Parramatta prepared by local community groups and receiving local support given the current impasse on the riverbank site where the demolition of two heritage buildings, a CFMEU 'Green Ban', Parramatta City Council concerns and Riverside Theatre's needs - an indefinite pause in the process to better consider expert cultural and community opinion and available funding (in a Covid-19 pandemic) is surely a prudent policy.

This pause is an opportunity to deliver for the Western Sydney community a sensible accepted result that enhances NSW + Sydney cultural attractions at a lower cost with significant heritage status, (UNESCO World Heritage status pending), and history narratives in built and landscape terms. (Some 850m from the CBD Parramatta and on a light rail stop.)

The attached review, submitted to the Dept of Planning in the EIS public assessment, followed a review by architects and cultural advisors that seriously challenges the current proposal on the riverbank site suggesting retention of Heritage, better scale + cultural + functional and cost responses and the need to consult local Council and community groups, for a more compelling Brief and more appropriate site at the Fleet Street Heritage Precinct.

Lionel Glendenning 27 July 2020

**SUBMISSION TO THE EIS ASSESSMENT FOR THE STATE SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT:
POWERHOUSE PARRAMATTA**

I object to the project. The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the "Powerhouse Parramatta" project, currently on display reveals numerous fatal flaws which, in my opinion, make it a project that is unsuited to both the vision, heritage, and the site.

It is a proposal which has no consideration of **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS** for this site and other less problematic sites - options which would have less costs and greater functionality and no loss of heritage.

The proposal ignores the **SOCIAL IMPACT** of the proposed development. On these two issues and many others discussed below, the EIS should not be approved.

The building is intended to respond to the **Stage 2 Design Brief which describes not so much a museum but more an arts, entertainment, retail, food and events facility.** However, even for this purpose there are functionality as well as design issues which render this building on this flood prone riverbank unsuitable and over scaled for this prime civic site which would be 'over-developed' by the bulk of the two linked buildings which make up the proposed development. The building in effect blocks the Parramatta CBD and the Parramatta citizens from the Parramatta riverbank, destroying the Civic Axis.

One of many flaws with this design is that the building's scale and footprint necessitate the demolition of two heritage buildings, Willow Grove and St Georges Terrace, much loved by the community as evidenced by the voices of opposition to their looming demolition consequent of the selected design of the Parramatta Powerhouse. These two buildings are now the subject of an **CFMEU Green Ban in memory of Jack Munday, testament to community opposition to the destruction of these significant historic elements of Parramatta.**

IT IS A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS TO BUILD A CULTURAL INSTITUTION ON THE DESTRUCTION OF HERITAGE. In this design heritage is being sacrificed to extravagant spatial and area specifications for what is in reality a functions centre with volume and span requirements that the brief does not now need **given the Government's decision on July 4 to keep the Powerhouse Museum AS IS in Ultimo.** Hence there is no imperative in attempting at high cost to build the extraordinary spaces of the original Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo!

SPECIFIC COMMENTS:

Urban Design and Context

- **Civic Axis:** This is narrow at 9m compared to the Parramatta City Council concepts proposing 20+ metres. Conceptually, an attempt to link Parramatta Square to the Riverbank precinct - long term realisation, and a continuing flood way in extreme weather conditions.

- The Civic axis goes from south to north and will be a wind tunnel in seasonal weather conditions.
- The 24,830sqm specified in the Stage 2 design Brief is a gross over development on this constrained site which will result in the demolition of Willow Grove, its landscape and St Georges Tce. Furthermore, it has resulted in a building which is over scaled at 18 stories (West building) - an unknown typology for a cultural building because it demands expensive and hard to achieve vertical circulation rather than horizontal movement.
- The location of front door - the Main Entrance to the Building Complex - is unclear. The indicated 'front door' opening into the area labelled 'concierge' is an aperture in the eastern wall of the west building off the civic link between the East and West buildings.
- It is effectively arriving in a side entrance with little entry cover or measures such as air locks to mitigate times of severe weather exposure and wind gusts.
- The multiple open entries - the porous nonsense of the Brief encourages no control of entry whether for 5 or 15,000 people, insecure processes, high management requirements and confusion for orientation flow of visitors and difficulties in egress.

The sense of arrival will be wanting - from both north or south.
Where is the Front Door?

- Bus and taxi set downs and return waiting and drop off are cramped and limited as is private vehicle access and short term drop offs and pick ups. There is no on site parking for visitors to the building
- From the south side the large extended doors on the East building's presentation space 1 simply won't work effectively. On the northern side of presentation space 1, the huge expensive 'operable' wall on the north elevation seems very impractical. It will probably not be possible to maintain seals and integrity over time and the doors will need high maintenance of operability. The operation of the doors may need full management processes - 'the world's most expensive operable doors.'
- **It is a strange design concept that the two over scaled giant function rooms of both the West and East buildings have the world's biggest view of a muddy remnant of an estuarine channel, - much reduced and unsympathetically engineered channel which regularly floods - looking across to a 'block of flats' - ie. focused on nothing in particular. Amazingly, from 4-5metres from the northern edge of these spaces there will probably be no view of the river at all.**
- There is zero street level activation on any elevations - all four elevations lack human scale, sensitive treatment, shelter or a welcome invitation to enter. The shadow diagrams show that the shadows cast by the buildings and adjacent buildings effectively mean the buildings are inhospitable at the human scale.

- The micro-climate around the buildings will be affected by large parts of the surrounding areas being in shadow most of the year - sad in winter - wind tunnels - entry not visible - sunless, soulless, wind swept.
- The paired buildings are an urban design disaster - an alien spaceship has landed - plonked down on a flood prone riverbank.
- The undercroft will be dangerous, dark - a site for vandalism, insecure, a debris trap, public hazard, litter, smell, uninhabitable - a strangely incongruous design contrast with the trick up latticed white overlaid mullion on the boxes above.
- Then there are the trees 'suspended' above the flood way undercroft.

Functionality:

- The much-touted 'transparency' specified in the Brief and evident in the design is not really achievable - such transparency of large areas of north-facing glass is the antithesis of the light and temperature controlled conditions required for museum standard exhibition spaces. In fact, of the total 12,644sqm of Presentation Spaces, only 5,094sqm will meet international standard environmental conditions. This is not a museum.
- The spatial/engineering controls for lighting, blackout, AC, power and access will be difficult to achieve.
- All the glazing, particularly the glazed presentation spaces will have high levels of glare and be over bright. It is anticipated that blinds will be needed and extra AC installed to manage the summer heat gain.
- The East building presentation space 1 will be difficult to manage to maintain high quality standards for most services - it is an expensive building in scale and spans.
- The design is seemingly responding to an ambitious brief with no awareness of cost implications - spans, volumes, weights, services and functional organisations. Apparently, the attempt to match the Powerhouse Museum's functional public spaces has been almost matched but only by leaving out supporting back of house spaces and equipment.
- More specifically, there is provision for only one double loading dock in the West building which would be required to handle waste - wet and dry - food deliveries and deliveries for retail, functions, cinema, residential accommodation, offices, etc - and, fulfil the relatively limited museum functions which will nonetheless require museum standard functionality. This is unacceptable.

- There is very limited back of house of which is necessary for preparation, storage, pre-assembly, secure unpacking, separation of deliveries and waste management. The expected primary museum building functionality supporting secure object movement, exhibition construction and installation, provision for associated materials and equipment are inadequately provided for with no specified spaces for museum functions and activities.
- The goods lift provisions are insufficient and there is no dedicated movement system for museum functions. The movement of larger museum objects in and out of either building has apparently not been addressed in the design as any provisions or allowances for such movements are inadequate.
- Essentially there is no back of house. The presentation spaces will have to be subdivided and partitioned to provide for a range of back of house requirements from backstage for performances and events to catering preparation and serveries. The optimistic 2 million visitor projection will, if even only partly achieved, put significant strain on the safe and secure functionality of the paired buildings.
- The detailed planning is poor - cloaking is minimal - 6,000 people per day is touted; toilets are inadequate and poorly located.
- Circulation through both buildings is sub-optimal with a minimal lift system which will be overloaded and is operationally not viable. The buildings need more passenger lifts and separate operations for public and accommodation servicing.
- The escalator system is unclear - and the stairs appear inadequate for the number of people anticipated to be in the buildings.
- Generally, all the spaces are large open spaces with thin service and structural parallel slivers which are then overloaded with under sized support elements - lifts, stairs, toilets etc in a confusing maze of unresolved, disorganised planning.

Operationally, the design is inefficient, under-serviced, overloaded and extravagant.

A redesign to a cogent brief could result in a more efficient and useful solution at 4-6 storeys and a project cost of 30% less. This is more a function centre than a cultural building and certainly not a museum.

Alternatively, a revised brief to reflect community concerns and aspirations for Parramatta-led cultural development, could result in sensitive interventions of the flood free Fleet St Heritage Precinct for 50% of the current budget with no loss of heritage and a marked improvement of delivery time as the FSHP already exists.

Lionel Glendenning

22 July 2020

BRIEF RESUME

Lionel Glendenning

Life Fellow, Powerhouse Museum

Qualifications

AA STC Hons 1964

B Arch Hons 1, UNSW 1966

M Arch (Harvard), 1969 Inaugural Menzies Scholar to

Harvard GSD

Dip. Environ Studies

Macq U, 1973

Professional History

Architect, NSW Government Architect Office 1958-88

Principal Architect Public Buildings, NSW Government

Architect's Office 1984 - 1988

Edwards Madigan Torzillo Briggs

Pty Ltd, Managing Director, 1988 - 1994

HBO+EMTB Director Design

1994 - 2012

Design tutor:

UNSW, Syd Uni, UTS.

Professional Associations

APEC Registered Architect

Royal Australian Institute of Architects,

Associate

Registered Architect, NSW,

Vic, Qld, ACT, WA, Tas

Height of Buildings Committee, Sydney, (1984 - 87?) (PWDNSW)

Heritage Council of NSW, (1987-88) (PWDNSW) (sub)

Urban Design Advisory Committee (1986-

88) (PWDNSW)

Retired 2012

Academic Awards

W E Kemp Prize 1963

RAIA Prize 1966

Byera Hadley Testimonial Prize 1966

Joseph Auto-Hot Pty Ltd Prize 1968

Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship 1967

Inaugural Robert Gordon Menzies Scholar, to Harvard University Graduate

School of Design 1968

Architecture Awards:

Claymore Public School, RAIA NSW Merit Award 1980

Bicentennial Park, Homebush Bay, RAIA NSW Merit Award 1988

Powerhouse Museum:

RAIA NSW Architectural Awards 1988

Sir John Sulman Award for Public Buildings, RAIA NSW 1988, Government

Architect's Office, Lionel Glendenning, principal architect

ACROD Award for barrier free

circulation, 1988

RAIA National Architectural Awards 1988

President's Award for the recycling or new use of a building

Sir Zelman Cowen Award: finalist

RAIA Belle Award for Interiors

IMAX Theatre, Darling Harbour, RAIA NSW Merit Award 1997; Metal Building

Association Merit Award, 1997; Australian Construction Achievement Award

1998

Caves Beachside NSW North Coast: Urban

Development Institute of Australia Awards 2010, NSW Winner: NSW Regions and ACT