

**Supplementary  
Submission  
No 149a**

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

**Name:** Mr James Colman

**Date Received:** 27 August 2020

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**ATTENTION The Hon Robert Borsak MLC**  
**Select Committee Chair**  
**NSW Legislative Council**  
**Parliament House**  
**Macquarie Street SYDNEY**

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**15 July 2020**

**SUBMISSION TO SELECT COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO THE GOVERNMENT'S MANAGEMENT OF THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM ...**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 I am a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Architects and a Life Fellow of the Planning Institute of Australia. I am a Past Vice President of the International Society of City and Regional Planners and Past Chair of the Australian Institute of Urban Studies. I was appointed an inaugural member of the Heritage Council of NSW, representing the professions of architecture, planning and landscape architecture. I currently sit as an Expert on two Independent Local Planning Panels. A detailed bio is attached.
- 1.2 This submission reflects my long-standing interests in heritage, local culture, history, urban design and what Richard Florida calls "creative spaces". It follows early consultancy assignments in Western Sydney and a more recent involvement in planning in North Parramatta on behalf of local civic interests. This latter work has led to my taking a special interest in the history and heritage of North Parramatta and, as an extension, in the recent government moves to bring the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta.
- 1.3 I am strongly supportive of the submission to the Committee from the North Parramatta Residents' Action Group (NPRAG).

**2. REASONS FOR SUBMISSION**

- 2.1 I am strongly opposed to relocating the Powerhouse from Ultimo to Parramatta . I am therefore strongly supportive of the recent decision to reverse that proposal.
- 2.2 As perhaps the oldest urban precinct in Australia, Parramatta City deserves its own museum.

- 2.3 That Museum should capitalise on the City's extraordinarily rich collection of Indigenous and European cultural assets and resources - a collection with no counterpart anywhere else in Australia.
- 2.4 I believe that within the area generally known as North Parramatta will be found an opportunity to create a unique riverside 'museum campus' which would focus on Parramatta's pre-and-post colonial history within a wider metro, state and national context.
- 2.5 I therefore believe that the Committee of Inquiry has before it a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to place before governments a strong case for creating a completely new kind of museum in North Parramatta.
- 2.6 It follows that plans to retain and develop the riverside site in the CBD for museum purposes should be permanently abandoned.
- 2.7 It also follows that plans for such a "new" museum in the north be prepared by Australian designers working to a brief developed in consultation with the Parramatta City Council, the local community and the Parramatta Branch of the National Trust. A 2-stage competition is suggested: first- a search for 'ideas'; and second – develop the preferred 'ideas' to detail stage. Ideally the project should offer opportunities for a number of local design firms to develop designs for particular parts of the site within an overall master plan.

### 3. RESPONSE TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

1(a)(ii) – **governance:** must include Parramatta City Council, National Trust (Parramatta Branch), NPRAG, Local Aboriginal Land Council – (amongst others).

**Design briefs** – to be prepared in consultation with the relevant professional organisations, and ICOMOS ; tasks to be briefed would include preliminary site assessment/heritage survey/infrastructure/topography/archaeological sites/landscape/ land use; etc to be followed by pre-feasibility and feasibility studies (suitability of existing assets for conversion to museum use) and final feasibility studies/ to be followed by architectural and urban design studies, etc.

**Cultural and demographic justification** – socio-economic survey – NB multi-cultural Parramatta community – community survey to build on existing data (Cultural Plan, etc) – youth; needs of disadvantaged groups; discussion with interest groups outside Parramatta City, etc.

1(a)(iv) **Site:** Must be flood free - therefore the North Parramatta area would be ideal.

1(a)(v) **Impact on heritage status of Ultimo site:** - studies on the heritage significance of this site can proceed . They should embrace contents, collection, fabric and historical context. **Heritage items at Willow Grove and St George's terrace** should be retained, conserved and adapted for appropriate civic uses. THERE SHOULD BE NO MUSEUM USES ON

THESE SITES. The heritage site(s) in **the Fleet Street Precinct** should be catalogued, classified, evaluated and listed (if appropriate). At an appropriate time the feasibility of designating and listing the precinct as a Heritage Conservation Area should be explored.

1(a)(vi) I am absolutely opposed to **the sale of the Ultimo site**. It should be retained in public ownership in perpetuity, regardless of its use. With regard to the proposed 'standalone Western Sydney Museum' at the Cumberland Hospital site, I am strongly supportive of the proposal as separately presented by NAPRAG.

**4. CONCLUSION**                      **In the light of the above statements I urge to Committee to recommend:-**

- a. **That the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo be retained on its present site**
- b. **That no part of the Powerhouse collection be permanently moved to another venue in Parramatta;**
- c. **that the heritage buildings on the riverside site in the Parramatta CBD be retained and conserved;**
- d. **that the Fleet Street precinct be provisionally designated as a future location for a museum campus and that suitable studies (as listed above) be put in hand to achieve that purpose.**

**SIGNED:**                      **James Colman**                      **FAIA LFPIA**                      **15 July 2020**