

**Submission
No 65**

INQUIRY INTO REVIEW OF THE HERITAGE ACT 1977

Organisation: Save the Powerhouse

Date Received: 26 June 2021

Ultimo, 25 June, 2021

SUBMISSION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES REVIEW OF THE HERITAGE ACT 1977

As the convenors of “Save the Powerhouse“, a six-year campaign to keep the Powerhouse Museum, renewed & re-resourced, in its Ultimo home, we have a clear interest in preserving local heritage.

The Museum is just one of a number of heritage-significant buildings in Ultimo that, collectively, are the custodians of our area’s vibrant industrial past, including woolsheds, the Quarry Green church and ‘pub”, and rows of Victorian terraced cottages....

The Powerhouse’s vast, 500,000-object collection contains items unique to our precinct and its history.

From 2015, when (then) premier Mike Baird announced his unpopular intention to “move” the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta, the Government persisted with his plan, evidently not understanding that “heritage” is inextricably linked to “place” and context, and cannot be simply dumped elsewhere.

On July 4 last year the Berejiklian Government unexpectedly announced that it had “listened to public protest” and decided that the Powerhouse would “stay in Ultimo”.

Although we are not heritage experts, recent, Powerhouse-related, events since then, have made us aware that a revision of the Heritage Act 1977 is essential to ensure that NSW heritage is adequately protected by a **genuinely independent body**.

a) Ultimo: current flawed state heritage listing

Under recent state heritage listing (04-09-2020) of the “Ultimo Power House” (name not recognised)

- Only the external shell of the old powerhouse building is included.
- The listing fails to include all the internal parts of the building, including the gantry cranes, etc... which is a **regression from local (City of Sydney) listing** (item I2031 - *Powerhouse Museum former warehouse buildings, including interiors*).
- The Sulman award-winning Wran building extension and the Harwood Building (old tram depot) are not listed.
- It fails to recognise that although the building was skilfully converted 4 decades ago into a museum, the Powerhouse Museum’s magnificent collections are not listed.

b) Impending heritage demolition in Parramatta

Locally listed (Parramatta City Council) Willow Grove villa in Parramatta is facing demolition. The local listing was overruled by the “**state significant**” status of the proposed “Powerhouse Parramatta” project.

We believe these unfortunate events are the direct result of the following current legislation failures:

- At present, the Heritage Council of NSW is placed under the immediate authority of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, exposing it directly to political influence.

Heritage is timeless, not the property of the Government of the day.

- Heritage belongs to the people of NSW, yet there is virtually no public consultation on heritage decisions made by Government.

- Recent ad hoc laws (state significant development, etc...) allow heritage protection to be bypassed.

- the 3-tier division of heritage listing (local/state/national) between conflicting authorities is confusing and inefficient .

Patricia JOHNSON & Jean-Pierre ALEXANDRE

Save the Powerhouse

 **Savethepowerhouse**