

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

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**SUBMISSION TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S MANAGEMENT OF THE
POWERHOUSE MUSEUM AND OTHER MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL PROJECTS
IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**THE DARLING HARBOUR GOODS LINE
IN THE CONTEXT OF SYDNEY'S TRANSPORT NETWORKS**

1.0 By 1900, Sydney had become a city transformed by public transport. Ferries, omnibuses, trains and trams each played a part in bringing about this transformation. To the city's south and south-west, the precincts of Redfern-Eveleigh and Ultimo-Pyrmont were prone to industrialisation by their proximity to the centre of a growing heavy rail network.

1.1 The development of Sydney's transport networks was a compromise influenced by the restrictions of physical geography, changing economic and social needs, the available technology and political influence, all against a background of an absence of long-term planning. All these factors contributed to the establishment, operation and decline of the railway link between Sydney rail yard and Darling Harbour.

1.2 The Ultimo Power House opened in 1899 to generate the electricity required for the city's new tramway system, which initially linked the working class suburbs of Ultimo and Pyrmont with the Central railway terminal and busy Circular Quay.

1.3 The technological developments of steam-powered locomotives and electric-powered trams, both relying on the consumption of coal, were central to the purpose, location, design and operation of the Ultimo Power House.

2.0 A railway extension to Darling Harbour had been built in the early 1850s, initially to bring spoil from the railway excavations in Sydney yard to dump in the swampy land that would one day be reclaimed for a sprawling railway yard.

2.1 The stone facing of the original tunnel under George Street at Railway Square remains intact today and is the oldest engineering structure on the NSW railways. The Darling Harbour railway corridor remains a highly significant transport route from the city's industrial past.

3.0 Sydney's first tramway, commencing in 1861, was a short-lived impractical horse drawn service along Pitt Street that was mainly intended for goods traffic between Sydney railway station and Circular Quay.

3.1 The goods yard adjacent to Sydney (then "Redfern") Station became overcrowded and by the 1870s, incoming goods were being conveyed to the new railway terminal at Darling Harbour. By the early 1890s, all goods traffic was being despatched from Darling Harbour, by now the largest and busiest rail yard in the country.

4.0 As Darling Harbour replaced Sydney yard as the railway goods handling depot, the immense Eveleigh railway workshops were being designed and built. The locomotive workshops would later house and maintain the many 19 class steam locomotives that were the workhorses of Darling Harbour yard.

4.1 Access to Darling Harbour was gained from Eveleigh via a tunnel under Sydney yard and down a crescent-shaped, brick lined cutting, the Darling Harbour "dive", which followed the same alignment as that surveyed in the early 1950s, now the oldest in the NSW railway network.

4.2 This alignment – with the track still in place today - follows the original as far as the Harwood Building. From there the track deviates into the Museum’s courtyard, as a result of work undertaken in 1993 by the then State Rail Authority to ensure that the Museum did not lose its link to the rail network and to maintain the historical association between Darling Harbour and Sydney rail yard.

4.3 From 1993 until 2006, when the Museum lost control of the Government’s decision-making for the future of the rail corridor, the Museum was able to bring full size rail exhibits and trains down the “dive” and along the “Powerhouse Siding” (as it was referred to by the SRA) for display or to pick up passengers for steam and diesel heritage rail tours (see image following).

4.4 The design for the “The Goods Line” acknowledges the history of the historically highly significant rail corridor, but ironically did not explore the possibility of retaining it in operation. There has never been more reason or opportunity to explore this idea today, possibly on the basis of a light rail shuttle service linking the Museum, the ABC, UTS and present-day Darling Harbour with Redfern, Eveleigh and, now, the new Tech Central project development at Central. Bi-directional signalling incorporated into the train movements in Sydney yard in the 1990s would facilitate such a service.

4.5 The current revival of the former rail corridor to Darling Harbour using “The Goods Line” as a pedestrian thoroughfare is only a half-measure. *Comparisons with New York’s High Line elevated rail corridor seek to aggrandise what The Goods Line achieves as an urban walkway, ironically without any consideration of reinstating actual train movements.* A light rail shuttle would make concrete the historical importance of the rail corridor while at the same time would provide a practical service for workers, commuters and tourists.

4.6 Future movements of the Museum’s irreplaceable rail-borne exhibits displayed in the Boiler House should be carried out wherever possible by rail. This would minimise risk of torsional damage, particularly to timber-framed rolling stock, such as the 1891 Governor’s carriage, that can be encountered in road movements. A central intent of the Museum’s desire to maintain the rail link to Sydney yard (and in fact the entire NSW rail network) since the early 1980s was to facilitate the replacement of historic rail exhibits.

4.7 The Museum’s siding enables rolling stock like the Museum’s locomotive 3830 to be brought into the Boiler House and positioned over the purpose-built inspection pit, without lifting 3830 off the tracks at any point. These tracks are still intact beside and under the concrete slabs of “The Goods Line”.

4.8 The exciting plans for the 'Tech Hub', a key part of the redevelopment of Central Station, add impetus to the argument that the rail corridor could and should be activated with a light rail shuttle to service the growing relationships between the educational / IT precincts at Ultimo, Central and Redfern / Eveleigh. Taking some pressure off the choked road systems in these precincts would be reason enough to seriously consider such a proposal.

5.0 In summary, there are strong historical, accessibility and operational arguments to reinstate the Darling Harbour rail corridor *as a working rail siding*, delivering visitors to the Museum at a destination point in the Museum’s courtyard, allowing rail exhibits to be brought into and removed from the Museum and permitting the arrival and departure of heritage trains on special occasions. The possibility should also be explored of linking a revived Powerhouse Museum siding with the current light rail network that passes the Museum as it turns out of Hay Street, Haymarket, subject to surveying the gradients required to negotiate the respective RLs.



Powerhouse Museum locomotive 3830 in steam prior to departure from the former Grace Bros courtyard after display during the school holidays of September-October 1998. Access to the Museum was available via the still-intact tracks of the Darling Harbour goods line. Two classes of schoolgirls look on in fascination. (Photo: Geoff Friend)

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