

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

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

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

CORRECTED

At Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney, on Friday 21 August 2020

The Committee met at 9:50.

PRESENT

The Hon. Robert Borsak (Chair)
The Hon. Ben Franklin
The Hon. Rose Jackson
The Hon. Trevor Khan
The Hon. Taylor Martin
The Hon. Walt Secord
Mr David Shoebridge (Deputy Chair)

The CHAIR: Welcome to the second hearing of the select committee Inquiry into the Government's Management of the Powerhouse Museum and Other Museums and Cultural Projects in New South Wales. The inquiry is examining issues surrounding the Government's proposal for the Powerhouse Museum and support for the State's museums and cultural sector more broadly. Before I commence, I would like to acknowledge the Gadigal people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. I would also like to pay respect to the Elders past and present of the Eora nation, and extend that respect to other Aboriginals present. Today we will hear from evidence from a range of witnesses with an interest in the Government's Powerhouse Museum project, including former staff, museums and gallery experts, community campaigners and the former Government architect for the adaptive reuse project.

Before we commence I would like to make some brief comments about the procedures for today's hearing. Today's hearing is being broadcast live via the Parliament's website. A transcript of today's hearing will be placed on the Committee's website when it becomes available. In accordance with broadcasting guidelines, media representatives are reminded that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. It is important to remember that parliamentary privilege does not apply to what witnesses may say outside of their evidence at this hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about any comments you may make to the media or to others after you complete your evidence, as such comments would not be protected by parliamentary privilege if another person decided to take any action under defamation. The guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat. All witnesses have a right to procedural fairness according to the procedural fairness resolution adopted by the House in 2018.

There may be some questions that a witness could only answer if they had more time or had certain documents to hand. In these circumstances, witnesses are advised that they can take a question on notice and provide an answer within 21 days. I remind everyone here today that Committee hearings are not intended to provide a forum for people to make adverse reflections upon others under the protection of parliamentary privilege. I therefore request that witnesses focus on the issues raised by the inquiry terms of reference and avoid naming individuals unnecessarily. Witnesses are advised that any messages may be delivered to the Committee members through the Committee staff. To aid the audibility of the hearing, may I remind both Committee members and witnesses to speak into the microphones. The room is fitted with induction loops compatible with hearing aid systems that have telecoil receivers.

JENNIFER SANDERS, Representative, Powerhouse Museum Alliance, affirmed and examined

LINDSAY SHARP, Representative, Powerhouse Museum Alliance, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: I now welcome our first witnesses. Starting with you, Dr Sharp, would you like to make a short opening statement?

Dr SHARP: First of all, we would like to thank you very much for allowing us to appear today. This is the third time, I think, that we have had the privilege. I do ask for your patience. I had asked for a little longer period because my role today on behalf of those who are appearing is to try to help set a context within which your discussions and your questions might take place. So, I will be slightly longer than most and I apologise for that. A lot has happened behind the scenes since 4 July, when we were all a little bit amazed at the announcement that took place on that day. When a Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences [MAAS] trustee tweets, "Heritage is old fashioned," apart from a wry smile at the unintended part tautology, part oxymoron, one might well conclude that the inebriated are now in charge of the brewery. Whoever chose this person as a trustee clearly failed to understand them or the museum.

As a return witness I have submitted over 30 papers to this upper House inquiry and its predecessor. No-one present can therefore doubt that I care. Oh, dear. Perhaps I had better not use that phrase in present company? Still, I hope no-one here can doubt my professional concern about this set of cultural issues not only for the original Sydney CBD project—with its triumphant 1988 Ultimo Powerhouse Museum opening—but also for the critical need that Parramatta and western Sydney have for enlightened, responsive cultural investments. So as to avoid ad hominem comments I must note that the same anonymous museum board proponent of the Parramatta project has claimed that the Powerhouse Museum Alliance [PMA] have not supported cultural investments in Parramatta and western Sydney. Instead that person has wilfully ignored countless proposals to the contrary. As far as I am aware there has been no detailed rebuttal of my points raised in testimony and submissions to date, as this set of fluid and rebarbative Parramatta riverbank projects proceeded from late 2014 like an inebriated sailor stumbling on a shore run, buying grog and flesh on tick. That is now around \$2 billion worth of tick and counting, as I will show.

As today's testimony from Kylie Winkworth—based on the independent Molino Stewart report—will demonstrate, the current Parramatta Powerhouse project is almost certainly fatally flawed, with a design which, far from protecting staff, visitors and collections, exacerbates those tier one responsibilities while wasting potentially nearly a billion dollars. One of our leading cultural architects, Lionel Glendenning, will be looking at a number of issues relating to our current situation. However, such considerations are not the prime focus of the Powerhouse Museum Alliance, which Jennifer and I represent. Our primary concerns are focused on the Ultimo Powerhouse Museum and its future. My task is to demonstrate just how irresponsible and wasteful the Government's intentions will be. Jennifer's is to show there are far better options and some core facts about our collections, our creativity and the power of linked educational programs.

There will be those ageists who immediately claim we are old fogies with nothing to contribute to a new creative direction, which museums must tread after COVID-19 and two further industrial revolutions now in the making. Anyone who has seen that masterclass of Picasso at age 78 presenting over 20 paintings in under an hour on the same canvas knows that such views are self-serving, prejudiced piffle. Give us an hour and we can show you—with a new, compelling, overarching narrative and themes plus dynamic new engagement technologies—just how misguided such ageist opinions are. Please remember: The current protagonists of the Powerhouse Parramatta project have failed to suggest such a concept or to do much more than propose a vacuous approach of "this goes with that at Sussan", quoting old ideas as new and entirely lacking the team which can make this a reality. This is ignorance on a breathtaking scale.

Creating event spaces to handle many kinds of presentation and immersive experiences really is not challenging. This has been achieved from the ancient Greeks onwards. Creating a coherent intellectual and cultural framework for a new museum or renewal of a great international museum, however, after deep community consultation, is. Creating effective teams to develop and engage publics in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics takes deep experience and sustained team recruitment and training. None of this internal team-building is in evidence after nearly six years. To turn the old adage on its head: Dear museum, don't just do something, sit there and think clearly and creatively. This the current conflicted regime have totally failed to do. Arguably there is more cultural—even intellectual—depth in a large yoghurt tub than in the combined talents of our State's overpaid cohort of cultural apparatchiks.

Imagine a New South Wales cultural plan which defunds writers while wasting tens of millions of future consolidated revenue on unnecessary museum operations in the future and funds a frothy Carriageworks because the previous board failed to oversight it correctly. Fiscal responsibility—what's that? Regional and community equity—what's that? They are all captain's picks and we know who the captain is, while the club chairperson has a cultural tin ear. So, let us turn to the current Ultimo Powerhouse Museum Precinct situation and do some forensic analysis. It can be summarised as follows: The core heritage elements of the Ultimo Powerhouse Museum; Government's departure from the apparent values of the 4 July announcement; current moronic museum activities; the future use of the tram depot or Harwood building site for a grandiose, economically bankrupt flight of fancy; thereby, loss of value—avoidable costs—with wastage potentially totalling \$675 million; cappuccino or candy floss culture; and total projects expenditures definitely in excess of \$2 billion.

I will summarise the situation with the core heritage buildings rather than read this. Fundamentally there are six, which include the boiler hall; the engine house; the switch house; the Harwood tram depot building, which was the reason why the power station was created—it was the first modern intra-urban transport system; and the administrative building, which is just north of the engine house. These are the core heritage buildings but the Government and the Museum are only allowing as heritage the engine house, the boiler hall and the switch house. Three core buildings have been removed in terms of heritage. Plus, the Wran building designed by Lionel Glendenning for the museum and the New South Wales public works department, along with its linking galleria, are now an irreplaceable element of State's built and cultural heritage—especially since it has had 22 million visitors.

Added to that, there are the very large objects. Again I will not read this, but essentially in the engine house we have the only steam history display of industrial revolution power and enginery, including the Boulton and Watt, that takes us from the 1780s up to the 1900s. That is the only one in the world and they are in the totally appropriate spaces. Plus we have the transport displays both in the galleria—the first loco and train—and all of the transport objects in the boiler hall. In its 4 July statement and in other statements by the Premier and the Treasurer, Government let it seem that these facilities and object zones, along with their collection contents and functionality, would be retained and rejuvenated. New evidence from three recent meetings demonstrates this as almost entirely misleading. The museum and Government are intending to demolish the Harwood tram depot building and still move the smaller objects from the secure storage area under that building to a distant facility to be extended at Castle Hill.

Its replacement will be a blatant example of cappuccino culture or candy floss culture—take your pick. Moving these objects is a high risk. It is very expensive and it requires the construction of an entirely new set of facilities in Castle Hill—hundreds of millions of dollars. Total project costs of the above could easily exceed \$200 million and this is on top of the wastage of a purpose-rebuilt facility worth at least \$80 million. That is a very low statement of value—not to mention the purported loss of the Ultimo site's value at \$195 million. It is still the case that Government has lost the income from selling this site; therefore, it is legitimate to add this figure into the calculation.

That is how we get to \$675 million on the current sort of planning. I am happy to take questions later about that. To what end and to what purpose? This appears to be because the Government has some crackpot scheme in mind, not only to demolish the Harwood building and build something else on the site but also to white box the heritage buildings and even demolish the Wran and Galleria buildings. To say this is fiscal irresponsibility on an unprecedented scale is to be kind. I would suggest that the Government has been unanchored to reality and careless with the truth. The Minister's statements on 29 July as a witness at this inquiry were not reassuring. An \$840 million total cost, really? Please let us see the business case figures supporting that. Once again, the Government is farcically involved in constructing a Potemkin village.

There is an old saying: Someone who tells lies at least recognises the truth; someone who tells half-truths has forgotten what truth is. So this whole series of feckless projects has been surrounded not by a body of lies as Churchill said of truth in wartime, but a phalanx of half-truths usually propounded by its boosters, especially the renewed Minister and the extant Premier. What is even more unacceptable to museum professionals is the nonchalance with which the president and board of the museum regard this profoundly non-trivial amateur acceptance of a future operational liability of staggering proportions. If one begins to calculate the additional costs and risks out over whole-of-life operations with three major Sydney sites into and from which objects and personnel will be forced to travel, the numbers will gross up to tens of millions of dollars.

Then there is the loss of essential facilities in the Harwood building which will not be replicated at Castle Hill. To what end and to what purpose? The Minister's whims and captain's pick of the cappuccino or candy floss cultural elites? I will not go through how you prepare a business case or a business case analysis, but I will suggest that the Committee demands that the business cases supporting Castle Hill, Parramatta, and eventually

the Powerhouse Museum cultural precinct, which alone is costing \$5 million, that they be called for. If you do a benefit cost analysis and you have costs of \$2 billion potentially, you cannot justify what they are doing. There can be no doubt that several have flown over the cuckoo's nest recently. What is proposed for the Ultimo site based on the Minister's recent testimony, two meetings with the Government and the PMA, an all-staff meeting at the museum on this Monday and statements made to me by a very senior museum representative is as follows—subject, of course, to the hallucinatory post COVID-19 business case options.

This is factual as far as I can work out based on all of that: The collection will be decanted from Ultimo except for three or four very large objects destroying its international status. The tram depot or Harwood building will be demolished along probably with the Wran building and possibly the Galleria destroying its 120 year cultural heritage. A kind of luvvie cultural centre, the so-called creative industries complex, will be developed where there previously was an international museum. It will house itinerant dancers, singers, filmmakers, and rent-seeking artistes who lack a home base away from their performing venues. We know this because at the meetings it was made plain that this was the intent. It was explained that originally that Mr Baird sought to defray cost by selling the site, now it is the shortage of available CBD land which is the half-truth justification.

The Harwood site will be primarily occupied by a lyric theatre and above a vast number of creative industry apartments, whatever they are. All this could be described as "Don's Party" central: A place made for after-hours tutu-wearing fashionistas. I forgot the fashion. The very senior New South Wales cultural servant opined at last week's meeting that no-one wanted to see trains and old transport things anymore, forgetting that the Air and Space Museum in Washington in 2018 attracted 6.2 million visitors—it is the fifth most popular museum in the world—or that the National Rail Museum in York, England, in 2015-2016 attracted about 800,000 visitors, a part of the Science Museum Group's 5.5 million total. A senior planner has reliably been quoted as referring to the museum's collection as "bric-a-brac". May I hand these copies of the official history of the collections and the museum to the Committee please? I would say to all Committee members that if it was not so ignorant, it would be laughable.

To what benefit? Simply put, it is to play into the fashionable creative industries' cappuccino or candy floss culture: Cappuccino because this plan of robbing Peter to pay Paul destroys a great working international museum for an expensive fantasy, which is like taking a diamond-encrusted platinum spoon to lift out the chocolate covered froth from a gold cup, eat that and then pour the important contents down the drain—all in all, a complete costly, irrational, culturally facile waste—and candy floss because it is like cutting down a 200-year-old red cedar to make the stick around which to form the pretty pink sugar hit with zero food value.

And what will this cost? Well, based on the above and on a recent submission of mine, \$675 million for the destruction of the Powerhouse Museum at Ultimo; at least \$900 million for the new lethal carbuncular buildings in Parramatta; approximately \$450 million for a lyric theatre; almost \$100 million for new displays and display infrastructure in Parramatta. I do not need to continue, do I? Two billion dollars plus. None of the above includes additional whole-of-life consolidated revenue costs which annually will be tens of millions. And none of these extraordinary costs have anything to do with a museum, let alone can be justified by a post COVID-19 benefit-cost analysis at the heart of a fantasist business case developed around October last year for the Parramatta Project—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Dr Sharp—

Dr SHARP: I will stop. Thank you. I will hand over to Ms Sanders.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Top that, Ms Sanders.

Ms SANDERS: Thank you, and thank you to the Committee for your time this morning. Captured in the Powerhouse Museum's collection is the DNA of our lives, of your lives. The artefacts of yesterday and today represent our history, our experiences good and bad, our futures and our aspirations. It is the legacy of generations past for generations of the future. What Dr Sharp has described about the current state of play following the euphoria of the 4 July announcement is serious. The museum is not a plaything of government; a cultural chess piece to be moved at whim. Is this a cancel museum culture attempt?

The people of New South Wales expect the Powerhouse Museum to reflect their lives—your lives, your narratives—the narratives of a nation. The magic key for all of us are the experiences of the Powerhouse collection as varied as the great objects. The Catalina, an aviation marvel, to the seemingly mundane, a suitcase containing the possessions of a little girl who died of tetanus before vaccinations existed. Her mother could not bear to discard it. These are objects both intensely personal and testament to invention and advances in technology. Ken Burns, the famous American documentary filmmaker—civil war, jazz, baseball, the Vietnam War—was on a visit to Sydney and mentioned his next project, a film on the life of black American boxer Jack Johnson, the first black

heavyweight boxing world champion. Johnson won his title when he defeated Tommy Burns at the long gone open-air stadium at Rushcutters Bay.

Ken was looking for photos of Sydney at the time and I mentioned that the museum's collection was bound to have something in the Tyrrell photo collection—given to the museum by Australian Consolidated Press through Trevor Kennedy, a life fellow and former trustee and himself a generous donor to the museum. When I checked, the museum did indeed have a splendid photographic panorama of the stadium taken by Charles Kerry, of the fight just before it began. At the time of Ken's visit, objects from the museum's collection were on display in Canberra's National Library, the National Maritime Museum, the Museum of Sydney, the Justice and Police Museum, the Broken Hill Art Gallery, the Melbourne Museum and museums in Beijing, Washington, New York and Hay, New South Wales. It is a collection reaching out to the world. I tell this story as a statement of the priceless value—excuse me.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Are you okay, Ms Sanders?

Ms SANDERS: I cannot believe we are having—after 4 July, we thought sanity had prevailed. We thought we had a government that valued our history, our heritage and our culture. Instead we find that, still, insanity is prevailing. I cannot tell you the damage that the past six years have done to this great museum. You will hear this afternoon from Anne Schofield, a long, long supporter of the museum. I can tell you the number of bequests—the people who have donated objects to this museum who would like them back because they cannot see a future in a museum which, as Dr Sharp described, has gone west. It has gone west to Carriageworks. It has gone west to artists and creatives. A museum is about scholarship. It is about narratives. It is about inspiring generations to think about the world so that the world can become a better place. Honestly, I am gobsmacked and embarrassed to be a citizen of a state where a government would destroy, in a most uncivilised manner, a highly regarded, longstanding, amazing institution. I will press on.

The museum was stimulating curiosity about science and technology with its collection decades before science, technology, engineering and mathematics [STEM] education was an issue. As for science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics [STEAM], the museum from its founding in 1880 has been all about the applied arts and the applied sciences. Since the museum's first move to Ultimo in 1893, the museum has been at the core of a sequence of changes, all strengthening the energy and the identity of this Ultimo locale. It is its heart and it is planned to become a nothing—when it is substance, it is scholarship and it is history. The museum must be funded and supported—surpassing its influential role as one of the world's leading museums. It must never again be subject to anything like the past six years of chaotic governance and leadership, misadventure and misdirection.

We have always been prepared to offer frank and fearless advice, even more so now because our goal, which we understood the Government shared and which, certainly, the people expect—people from across the world, not just the people of New South Wales—is the Powerhouse Museum redux. Needless to say, all our advice is predicated on the museum being significantly enhanced. Anything less would be a betrayal of the generations who have endowed and supported the museum since its founding, and especially the donors and benefactors. The Powerhouse Museum is ideally placed to foster transdisciplinary design thinking across the applied arts and sciences, using narratives and exemplars from the collection to encourage open minds, the study of history and curiosity about the world, about cultures and about other disciplines.

At its heart, it is about the power of creative and innovative minds combined with skilled and inventive hands—hand and mind. Its intellectual goldmine is the knowledge base generated by curatorial research and scholarship, which reveals the story behind every object and the links between. Once again, the fate of the Powerhouse Museum is at a crossroads and there is much at stake: the future of one of Australia's great cultural treasures. How many times must it be said that the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo is not a development opportunity? When will logic, reason and common sense prevail? To conclude, Ken Burns recounted on his Sydney visit that Vartan Gregorian, the director of the New York Public Library, once took him down into the packed book stacks—think the Powerhouse Museum's Harwood collection store—where, as Ken recounted, Gregorian flung his arms wide and said, "This is the DNA of our civilisation." Thank you.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Dr Sharp, what makes the Harwood building so significant and so important that it should be preserved?

Dr SHARP: Two reasons: The first is heritage and the second is functionality.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I am not a curator. You will have to explain those two concepts and take us through it.

Dr SHARP: The Harwood building was built at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century. It was linked to the original engine house, which is the northern part of the western major

industrial building, and it took people around Sydney on the tram system. When the whole site was offered by Neville Wran and Gerry Gleeson and Jack Ferguson, we could not believe that we were being given the privilege of working with these huge industrial spaces. The heritage alone made them perfect to have large objects and tell the history, exactly as Ms Sanders has described.

Functionality: My colleagues, when I went around and saw other developments around the world—air and space and so on—could not believe that we could have a workshop, a storage space, a photographic space and so on, literally adjacent to the main display spaces. If you just think about it, anyone who is operating anything wants to have adjacency. If you have got an airport, you want to have planes inside hangars, which are on the airport, so that you can fly the things. So the costs of actually operating that facility are far lower than they would be. Finally, we also realised that no-one was going to offer us, ever again, seven acres of CBD, which is perfectly located near Central. Overall, the Harwood building is absolutely critical to heritage and functionality.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: One of the reasons the Harwood building has historic merit is that it is a New South Wales government project that was completed on time and on budget.

Dr SHARP: As was the Powerhouse Museum.

The CHAIR: One hundred and fifty years ago.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Indeed. It is amazing to think it was built within less than two years at the end of the nineteenth century.

Dr SHARP: It really is extraordinary. I think when people first walked through what was then a set of "ruins", they could not believe how robust those structures were—including the tram depot. It was perfect because you could create a space where storage was underneath and utterly secure and above that were the workshops—the restoration, conservation, photographic. They are adjacent anyway—perfect. It was a building built to last, and so Lionel Glendenning brilliantly recycled it so that we could actually work there for 10 years. We used to hold our fundraising lunches in the middle of the workshop. I cannot tell you how powerful that was.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Sanders, I saw the 4 July announcement and I saw the alliance welcome it. What has happened since?

Ms SANDERS: As I mentioned, our understanding was that the Government recognised the significance and importance of the Powerhouse Museum in its entirety and had committed to it continuing to be a museum on that site, in its home, where it has been since 1893. So to hear, initially in this inquiry, that the Minister was talking about a lyric theatre on the site, and creative precincts, and then the later meetings where these are being discussed—it is like that has gone out the window. A recognition of the importance of that museum, which people from across Australia and the world have—that is why we were able to, along with so many other community groups, garner such wonderful support—apolitical support, I might add.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Do you feel that you have been misled by the 4 July announcement?

Ms SANDERS: Looking back, I can see that it was a very carefully worded media release. I am not sure if the Committee has seen a copy of the media release, but it would be good to look at it. But that careful wording did not seem to be in the spirit of the announcement—that is the thing.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Dr Sharp, do you feel the same way?

Dr SHARP: Absolutely the same and, indeed, that is why I made reference to half-truths. My intuitive feeling when I saw the announcement, the words thereof, was that you could run a coach and horses through it. Really what it said was: We will keep some of the buildings and we will keep four large objects, basically, as window-dressing or furniture. And that is not what a museum is about, as Ms Sanders has so beautifully described.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Ms Sanders, on the Harwood building and the Minister's representations, I was astounded—and I would be interested to know what your views are—when the Minister, in evidence to the inquiry, said of the Harwood building:

Obviously, the Harwood building was designed in the mid-eighties and built in the mid-to-late eighties and has a couple of drawbacks, which are that, in particular, it is not as possible or it is not possible at all for the public to look at the collection in non-museum conditions in the same way they are at the Museums Discovery Centre.

Ms SANDERS: Thank you for raising that, Mr Shoebridge.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There are a couple of concerns about that.

Ms SANDERS: Yes. I think the Minister has been poorly advised.

Dr SHARP: Hear, hear. I think so too.

Ms SANDERS: He has not had people advising him who understand how the museum functions. The Harwood building, as Dr Sharp has described, (a) it dates back to, I think, 1899.

Dr SHARP: Yes.

Ms SANDERS: Two of those long walls are original to the original building. Ownership was transferred to the then Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in 1964 when it was intended that it would become the transport museum, given the way that the museum's collection had expanded, and that was perfect. It was then across the road, down the street—Harwood building, then tram depot, transport museum. So, as Dr Sharp has described, the opportunity to make that part of the entire museum in '88 was heaven-sent and, in fact, we could use the Harwood building for the purpose it still has to make the collection safe, secure and accessible. My role, when I was curator there—and for a long time I was curator of the textiles and dress collection, then international decorative arts—people could say, "May I see?" Okay, appointment made, sign in, take them down, open the drawers, there is the collection—it is that hard.

Dr SHARP: Ms Sanders, can I add something there?

Ms SANDERS: Yes, please do.

Dr SHARP: One of the things about that building is that because it is so open, effectively, you can repurpose it very easily to create a corridor, for example, with display storage down one side which could change. There is a display space of 1,000 square metres at the southern end, opposite the Gehry building, which is available for temporary exhibitions and events and so forth. The idea that it is inflexible and cannot be made to accommodate much larger numbers of visitors to access the collections is simply just nonsense. I am sorry; it is just not true.

Ms SANDERS: Yes. Besides the collection, it also has the museum's institutional archives, collection archives, library, object blue files. We are a museum that researches its collection. Statements of significance are written about every object that is acquired. It is not simply plate, date, colour. It is the significance of that plate or the significance of that car. These are the stories that spread throughout the community to inspire so people come and refer to that collection and the archives and the curators who are, really, the knowledge bank for the museum. Designers—Mark Newson, a great supporter of the museum, he is Australia's pre-eminent designer. The museum holds his best collection and he is deeply concerned about what is proposed for this museum.

Dr SHARP: Can I just add something please? The current program to digitise the collection is, in fact, brilliant, so score one for the Government in funding—

Ms SANDERS: Sorry, I will correct that.

Dr SHARP: However—

Ms SANDERS: That program started—

Dr SHARP: Yes.

Ms SANDERS: In 2005 the museum received a gold medal from the American museums association for its digitisation project. It started way back when. I recall a speech I gave where I talked about 53 million object views of the museum's collection. And recently when I spoke to Mark Newson's PR, because she was assembling a catalogue of where all of Mark's collection was, I gave her the links straight into the museum's records and she said the Powerhouse has the best organised collection and collection records of any of the museums that hold any of Mark's work. So it is great that it is continuing—

Dr SHARP: Hear! Hear!

Ms SANDERS: —but it did not need a project of destruction, and it does not need a project of destruction, to keep that ongoing. That is a normal part of the Powerhouse Museum's work and it is fantastic it is underway but it is now disrupting the museum. It is happening in places where there should be exhibitions. There was an exhibition, *Cyberworlds*, the third iteration of an exhibition about computing, artificial intelligence—Babbage's difference engine, the Enigma machine, the story of Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage, all their robotic arms, digital music taken out, first for a fashion ball and now—

The CHAIR: I remember that, yes—dancing on the tables.

Dr SHARP: Ms Sanders, can I just add something? I think we must try to be fair and that is professionally appropriate. I think the fact that, with all that Ms Sanders has said so correctly, at last, based on the

2005 work and earlier, the museum is digitising its collection is a good thing and I do not want to seem to be politically biased in that regard. However, to destroy a museum to get that done is not the right way to do it, professionally or, indeed, logically. So we are, actually, in strong agreement.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: A lot of this inquiry and a lot of the public discussion is about the bricks-and-mortar physical aspects, both of the buildings and the collection, but one of the things I think you touched upon, Ms Sanders, was the impact upon the staff—

Ms SANDERS: Yes.

Dr SHARP: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —and that expertise. For example, I was reading about how the Lawrence Hargrave computer was found and then identified, making an extraordinary achievement clear. That can only be done with highly skilled, specialised staff. What has been the impact on that aspect of the museum?

Ms SANDERS: In one of my earlier papers for the last session of the inquiry, but also I alluded to it in this paper, there has been a steady and accelerating drain of expertise out of the museum. People who are highly skilled understand not just the knowledge bank but also the nuts and bolts of how you move and handle these important objects—so conservation, registration staff have been so frustrated and disturbed at what is happening that there has been a drain. Those staff that are left who are from a museum profession—because there are many staff coming in now, particularly at a senior level, who have not worked in a museum before. It would be worth the inquiry looking at the management of the museum and their backgrounds.

This is a museum. How many times can we say this? Look up the International Council of Museums' definition of "museums". That is what it is. So there has been a draining of staff. I think I mentioned in one of those papers the last survey that they do—People Matters, the public sector—that the staff at the museum were very concerned about their future. I have been in there—go to a lecture. I have had gallery staff who work the floor in tears about what is happening. This is so unnecessary. The Government was given a bad deal when Baird said on the riverbank, "Let's move the museum". There has been ample time. We have given, and many, many other people in the community, so many options. We have supported Parramatta, we have supported museums across New South Wales.

The Government could be out there, all flags flying. You could have had science centres across western Sydney, across New South Wales. You could have had STEM and STEAM supporting communities. You could have funded those communities whose identity now is shaken by bushfire, flood, drought—all of that. No, suck it in to this ridiculous destruction of a museum.

Dr SHARP: Can I add to that that the remaining staff—I think there were full-time equivalents of 160 roughly?

Ms SANDERS: Yes.

Dr SHARP: —has been reduced from 450 when it opened. So the actual flensing of the staff numbers, just by sheer so-called efficiency dividend, has been huge. This is a real impact. Secondly, it is arguable that the longstanding and very expert staff have not really been consulted in respect of the projects that they are looking at.

The CHAIR: Can I ask you, Dr Sharp, how many hours have you spent since 2010 advocating against this project?

Dr SHARP: Chair, thank you for asking that. I would say that around about 4,000 hours at least—I mean, it is a full-time job—but it is not only advocating against this particular type of destruction; it is actually trying to come up with other options, as Ms Sanders has said. We are really not political. I have no party. We really, really, really want the Government to win. We want them to do wonderful things; they can. With a fraction of the money they are spending, the whole of New South Wales could benefit. But we are having, I would describe it as irrational and fiscal irresponsibility—I really would. I am happy to justify that. Please, ask me difficult questions; I am happy to do so.

The CHAIR: I think we have come to the end of questioning today, so thank you very much, Dr Sharp and Ms Sanders, for coming.

Dr SHARP: Thank you, it was very nice to be here.

Ms SANDERS: I will just leave here a description of the collection, which puts the fashion collection in context. I would say 1.5 per cent of the collection is about fashion. It also gives a fantastic idea of the scope

and breadth and potential. I also have a list of awards that the museum has won up until 2008, which mentions that one but many, many others—in particular, awards from industries such as the events industry, so it puts the lie to the notion the museum is not fit for purpose. This document was part of the third submission I did and I think all members of Parliament should recall—no doubt, it is top centre of your desk, because we sent this—

The CHAIR: It was for a while on my desk.

Ms SANDERS: —to everybody. You will also know that I earlier tabled a list of all the exhibitions the museum has presented up until 2018, which puts the lie to the various claims that everything is permanent, nothing changes, it is a hopelessly out-of-date—

Dr SHARP: Dinosaur, yes.

Ms SANDERS: —dinosaur, like us, museum. Thank you very much for your time.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Ms Sanders, just for the record, I just checked on the People Matters survey for 2019 for the Powerhouse and it is the worst-performing score I have ever seen for this. The question asked of the staff was: Do you feel that change is managed well in my organisation? Only 20 per cent of the staff thought it was well managed. I have never seen a result like that.

The CHAIR: Twenty per cent.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Twenty per cent.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I have seen worse.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I have never seen anything like it.

Dr SHARP: Thank you.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

PATRICIA JOHNSON, Co-convenor, Save the Powerhouse Campaign, affirmed and examined

JEAN-PIERRE ALEXANDRE, Co-convenor, Save the Powerhouse Campaign, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming. Would either of you or both of you like to start with a short opening statement?

Ms JOHNSON: Yes, we have one. Good morning and thank you for inviting us to come here. We welcome the opportunity to explain to the Select Committee who we are and who we are not and our current position on the Powerhouse Museum. We are Ultimo residents and have owned a house 100 metres from the Powerhouse since 1995. In early 2015, following former New South Wales Premier Mike Baird's decision to move the museum to Parramatta, we organised a well-attended public meeting at which we proposed to spearhead a campaign to keep the Powerhouse in Ultimo, its home since 1893. The campaign now has 160 listed members and runs an interactive Facebook page with 5,200 followers, mainly to stay in touch with Powerhouse sympathisers, gather their opinions and keep them updated with news, government and media reports.

The campaign has grown rapidly over the past five years. To give you an idea, in June this year our posts reached well over 110,000 people. We know from messages, comments and addresses that the Powerhouse has supporters in Australian States, in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, the United States of America and Asia as well as across New South Wales. This includes Parramatta, which, according to government was intended as the direct beneficiary of the Powerhouse relocation, although we know that Parramattans have rejected it. The member for Parramatta recently said that his constituents alone are qualified to object to this project, but we believe that if it has ambitions to build a world-class institution, the New South Wales Government must expect world, not just local, scrutiny.

So much for who we are—we are representatives and spokespeople for all the "ordinary" people who love and respect the Powerhouse, from locals to the hundreds of thousands of pre-pandemic international visitors to Sydney—there were three-quarters of a million of them in 2018-2019. However, we are obviously not museum specialists, unlike the majority of your witnesses today, and for five years we have associated cordially with the Powerhouse Museum Alliance, relying on their expert insights and guidance, and with the North Parramatta Residents Action Group, who are successfully opposing this ludicrous project. On 4 July we felt cautious optimism that the Powerhouse would remain in Ultimo, but this was short lived as we rapidly realised that nothing has changed at all.

Workers are still packing up the collections every day in the Harwood building and large parts of the museum are still leased out to University of Technology Sydney [UTS]. Further, the Government-controlled Heritage NSW has just recommended approval of heritage listing of the so-called "Ultimo Powerhouse", which is unknown at 500 Harris Street, the address of the Powerhouse Museum. This would actually represent a delisting of much of the museum. After a decade of neglect, we believe that urgently-needed maintenance works should be in preparation, yet the Government is instead spending \$5 million on yet another business plan for later this year. This will admittedly include a "do nothing" option for the entire Powerhouse Museum, but in reality we fear it is more likely to recommend dismantling the Powerhouse as we know it, destroying the Harwood building collection facilities and transforming the museum into a fashion hub or a lyric theatre, with only a few very large objects left in place.

Concomitantly, a Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements request is currently in progress for the construction of new storage facilities in Castle Hill, while in Parramatta, the pre-4 July environmental impact statement in place is still progressing, despite more than 1,200 objections received and the fact that it applies to the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum, a project that was cancelled nearly two months ago. We will continue the battle to keep the Powerhouse in Ultimo—intact and refinanced—while supporting Parramattans' desire for the new cultural institution they want on their preferred site, and to prevent destruction of their heritage. Since 2015 Save the Powerhouse has seen a suite of successive Premiers, MAAS directors and CEOs and arts Ministers come and go.

Together, they have wasted almost \$50 million of taxpayers' money in consultancy fees to attempt to justify this unjustifiable project. In contrast, Save the Powerhouse is still alive and well, and determined to fight on. Although, as Premier Gladys Berejiklian said yesterday, "Absolutely no-one can predict what will happen in New South Wales as a result of the current pandemic." Thank you.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Johnson, now that there has been some time for reflection since the 4 July announcement, has the Powerhouse at Ultimo been saved?

Mr ALEXANDRE: No, we do not believe so.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Can you elaborate? Can you explain why you—

Mr ALEXANDRE: As Ms Johnson said in her statement, things are going exactly the same way they were going before 4 July: the collections are still being packed; a large percentage of the exhibition space is rented out; there is a new business case, which we understand would transform the Harwood building or demolish it for a new lyric theatre or something else. We also believe there are plans in the business case to move most of the collections in exhibition, keeping just a few big objects—probably because they are too expensive or difficult to move—the rest becoming a fashion centre or something. So, that was the plan before and it is still going on, and Parramatta is still going on in the same way. Then there is Castle Hill—they are planning for new storage facilities. So, nothing has changed.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Johnson, would you like to add anything? I have spoken to residents and they feel that the Government has actually perpetuated a cruel hoax on the community, claiming that it has saved the Powerhouse Museum but the Government is still going ahead.

Ms JOHNSON: This reflects exactly the way we feel and we know that we really do have a great many people who support the campaign across the country. We have had so many messages and comments saying exactly the same thing—a sick joke, a hoax, they do not intend to do anything. There is a deep cynicism now about anything that the Government says or does. Frankly, they are just not being believed.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You made a comment in your opening statement where you said, "Workers are still packing up the collection".

Ms JOHNSON: Yes, that is true.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What are you referring to? If the museum has been saved, why are they packing of the collection?

Ms JOHNSON: We do not know, but we do know it is happening because we live so close to the Powerhouse that we pass it daily and we can see them.

Mr ALEXANDRE: What we believe is that they are removing all of the collection from the basement of the Harwood building—slowly—they digitise them in the old Powerhouse. Apparently, there is a half a hall dedicated just for that, where there were exhibitions before. When they are digitised, they are put in boxes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Alexandre or Ms Johnson, have they reopened the steam exhibition rooms, those big floors in the—

Mr ALEXANDRE: Partially, yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What do you mean by partially?

Mr ALEXANDRE: They have reopened the steam—

Ms JOHNSON: Steam and turbine.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Yes, the steam and turbine hall—the one on the lower level.

Mr ALEXANDRE: Yes, where there is half a hall which is not open—which is closed—and where we believe, or we were told, the collections are being packed. They have not opened the other side in the Wran building—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Which contains some of the very large objects—

Ms JOHNSON: Yes

Mr ALEXANDRE: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —that is still not open?

Mr ALEXANDRE: It is partially. Where the large Locomotive No. 1 is, that is open. But further towards Harris Street is closed.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In the last hearing I asked the Minister—I referenced one of his earlier statements and I said:

Does that mean you will guarantee that the Boulton and Watt will stay, the Catalina will stay, and the Locomotive No. 1 will stay? Will you give that guarantee?

He said, "That is the intention." I pressed him and said, " Will you give that guarantee?", and he said, "Yes." Do you think that guarantee has been lived up to?

Ms JOHNSON: I was just going to add that we are aware from our expert friends of the huge difficulty that would be involved in moving such large and fragile objects. They would possibly—probably—be irreparably damaged. So, it is logical that the Government might seek a way to legitimately leave them in Ultimo, simply, as Mr Alexandre said, because they cannot move them.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But the concern is you will just get a very small remnant, which will be orphaned from the rest of the collection. Is that your concern?

Ms JOHNSON: Yes.

Mr ALEXANDRE: Yes, there will be a handful of objects—the Catalina, the Boulton and Watt engine, Locomotive No. 1 and a few others—just because they cannot move them; they realise it was too costly or not even possible. And the rest will go. We understand they are still negotiating with museums around New South Wales to give stuff away.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Mr Johnson or Mr Alexandre, in your submission you talked about how, for an organisation such as yours—a community-based organisation that is grassroots, residents largely, but not just residents of Ultimo, other museum supporters—how the current COVID crisis has made it difficult for you to do your work of consultation, community organising and public meetings. I wanted you to draw out a little bit more on that and reflect on that because we have had the 4 July announcement and, there has been, as you say, some disappointment when the reality of that has come forward. How has the coronavirus situation made it difficult for you to do some of the work that you have done? In your submission you proposed pausing any further decisions until you are able to properly engage with the community.

Ms JOHNSON: It has not spoiled everything. We have been able to continue because we are so largely Facebook based. We can communicate through messages, posts—and people, of course, call us and we talk to them. But so much can be done electronically that, although we obviously have not been able to hold the physical meetings we would like to have held, it has not affected our ability to communicate, if you like, with our public. We have still been able to communicate with them and keep their confidence, I think.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: While they are digitising the collection you are digitising your campaign, Ms Johnson. Is that right?

Ms JOHNSON: Sorry?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is an online campaign. That is how you keep your connections.

Ms JOHNSON: We are principally a Facebook campaign so we communicate as I said. In June it was 110,000 people so we have a lot of people we reach and we have not noticed any appreciable decline in contact. They are still expressing their opinions so I feel we have been able to continue. I think that our concern may be, to pick up on what Premier Berejiklian said because I felt that was honest, when she said we simply do not know in New South Wales in the future what is going to happen. We do not. Nobody does.

Mr ALEXANDRE: What we have lost and what was important before was public meetings and gatherings. For example, we wanted to plan a party after July 4 but we could not. Definitely gathering people and letting them talk et cetera, exchanging views, is very important and we have not done that for the last six months.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As people who are users of the museum and visitors to its space, what is your reflection on the recent history of the exhibitions at the museum and the curatorial standards, since 2015 in a way but since this situation has been ongoing. It has been unresolved and there has been so much uncertainty, what has actually happened to the Powerhouse and what is on display there in that time?

Ms JOHNSON: During the past year or so, the place has undeniably been allowed to run down. We all assume that this is deliberate so they can say the place is not drawing people any more, visitors are not coming and there are not any good exhibitions so let us shut it all down. This was a fairly transparent strategy. Very recently—since July 4—there has been a marked improvement. To us—as ordinary representatives—this was so encouraging that when we went past the Powerhouse from July 4, there were kids running all around. It was very heartening to see normal, young parents with their children—grandparents with their grandchildren—come flooding back. They were in the café and they were in the museum so this was very encouraging.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: When they went to online bookings, they literally sold out within the blink of an eye.

Ms JOHNSON: Yes, they did. It did not put them off at all.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So much popularity.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Johnson, in your Save the Powerhouse Campaign submission, you talk about your concerns about the heritage listing process. What were those concerns?

Ms JOHNSON: The heritage?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes.

Ms JOHNSON: There was extraordinary confusion among our followers about the whole heritage question. I mentioned that Heritage NSW had applied for a listing for an institution that did not exist by the name they gave it. That is not the first time. It is the second time it has done that and it applied the first time for the Powerhouse tramways. Now everybody who knows the museum knows that the Powerhouse tramways do not exist. So it was hard to speculate about what it was up to.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: No, speculate what it was up to because I think you do have an idea as to why they gave a name to something that did not exist.

Ms JOHNSON: Our theory—not proven—is that by not mentioning the word museum— If it had mentioned the word museum, the Powerhouse-something museum, it was committed to considering the whole site as a respected and functioning museum and it would be more or less compelled to list the whole site. As long as it did not mention the word museum—and that happened twice—it could do almost anything it wanted.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Do you think there is a bit of a theme developing here? It claims it saved the Powerhouse Museum on July 4—

Ms JOHNSON: Yes, of course it claimed that—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: And then it claimed it has provided heritage protection.

Ms JOHNSON: We are aware of what it has claimed and we and others do not believe it.

Mr ALEXANDRE: The fact is that at the moment the old Powerhouse—the whole building—is locally heritage listed on the City of Sydney heritage list and that is the whole building, including the inside. What it is trying to do is list only the shell, the external wall, which would permit it to gut it out, so it is a de-listing.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I want to take you to the Minister's plan to do a lyric theatre there. Does your organisation believe that it is compatible to build a lyric theatre on the site and still maintain and fall in line with the Premier's claim that the Powerhouse Museum has been saved? Mr Alexandre?

Mr ALEXANDRE: There are probably two points there. The whole building is something like 30 or 40 metres wide—I have not got the figures. But it is definitely not wide enough for a theatre, or you would have to seat the people on a very long row.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I have been to a lyric theatre.

Mr ALEXANDRE: The other point is that if you remove the collections housed in the building, the definition of a museum is a place which collects objects and then showcases them and study them, analyse them et cetera. So if you remove the whole building of the collections to somewhere else, it is no longer a museum. In the same way, Parramatta will not be a museum because it has no room for collection, storage or curation.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What has been interesting is the way the Government has now been returning to the 2014 business case—

Mr ALEXANDRE: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —that only came to light as a result of calls for papers in the upper House. Are you familiar with the 2014 business case?

Mr ALEXANDRE: Not completely.

Ms JOHNSON: Not enough to comment competently on it, no.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It called for the demolition of the Harwood building and the Wran building, you are aware of those features?

Mr ALEXANDRE: Yes.

Ms JOHNSON: Yes, we are aware of that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What do you say to those proposals?

Mr ALEXANDRE: The first thing is that before July 4, for a long time there were calls for clearing the maintenance backlog. The museum has been completely neglected for the best part of 10 years and there was a figure for that of \$50 million that everybody seemed to agree on. All of a sudden the \$50 million disappeared and there was \$350 million from 2014 which reappeared. What we understand is that at the time the museum management was pushing for something that had not been properly analysed and that was rejected at the time.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Rejected then and you say should be rejected going forward, is that your position?

Mr ALEXANDRE: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Ms Johnson, was there any community consultation with that 2014 business plan. Were you ever—

Ms JOHNSON: None whatever. No-one knew anything about it until long afterwards.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Just a quick follow-up question. Has there been so far any communication with you in relation to consultation on the business plan that is currently in development?

Ms JOHNSON: No, none.

Mr ALEXANDRE: No.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Do you get meetings or have you met the Minister for the arts?

Ms JOHNSON: The Minister for the arts?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Do you have regular dialogue—

Ms JOHNSON: We have not met Don Harwin.

Mr ALEXANDRE: No.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You have never met Don Harwin?

Ms JOHNSON: No. We have repeatedly written to him.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: In six years you have never met the Minister for the arts, Don Harwin?

Mr ALEXANDRE: We have never met the Minister.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: He has not been the Minister for six years.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: He is a busy man.

Mr ALEXANDRE: We have never met any of the museum—

Ms JOHNSON: —executives.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Would not a fairer description of that be that in the six years, no New South Wales arts Minister has ever been willing to meet with you?

Ms JOHNSON: Yes, that is correct.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: That is factually correct that you have never met a Minister for the Arts?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: We got that, Walt. Can I ask a question?

The CHAIR: Please, one and only.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Thank you both for being here today. The collection held by the Powerhouse is substantial. Obviously it cannot all be shown—in fact, only a minority of it can be shown.

Ms JOHNSON: Yes.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The new Parramatta facility and the Ultimo facility together would not be able to shown anywhere near the entirety of the collection. Do you have an objection to having a second facility, just conceptually, to show more of the body of work that they have available?

Mr ALEXANDRE: Of course not; that is desirable.

Ms JOHNSON: In answer to your direct question, no, because the more of the collections that can be shown in New South Wales the more it would be an advantage but there are so many complications regarding the new institution at Parramatta that the situation is complicated by those factors.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I totally get that but I am, I guess, looking at it more conceptually. If you look at the Ultimo site one of your fundamental concerns is that you are worried that basically it is going to be downgraded and there will be less of the collection that will be able to be shown there because of the focus that then will be put on Parramatta? Is that right?

Ms JOHNSON: Not entirely because that is one point but the other point is that with the changes you have suggested Ultimo it is no longer the Powerhouse museum which has a very old and honourable history which is revered world-wide, we are talking about. We get regular correspondence from the United Kingdom and the United States of America about this. People respect it for what it is and has always been.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You have repeatedly said in your evidence that a museum is more than just the bits you put on display; it is the collection, the curation, the knowledge and all of that which is at risk.

Mr ALEXANDRE: Yes. What we understand from their planning is to put all the collections in Castle Hill and then have two show places, show rooms in Ultimo and Parramatta. According to a experts it does not work. So each time you want to change the collection, an exhibition, you would have to cart the objects, precious and fragile, up and down Castle Hill, Parramatta, Ultimo. But there are other things in a museum when you put on exhibition you do things to put the objects on, and that is what happens on the ground floor of the Harwood building. If that were to disappear there is nowhere you can make new exhibitions.

The CHAIR: The Minister talked about a cultural industries precinct. Do you understand what he is talking about in relation to that?

Ms JOHNSON: No. I cannot comment on that. I do not understand enough by what he means. Do you?

Mr ALEXANDRE: No. We are ordinary people. We do not understand the jargon.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You are not on an island.

The CHAIR: You are not by yourself.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I refer to an earlier question. I want to get clarification. Have you sought meetings with the Government about the Powerhouse Museum project? Over the past six years you have sought meetings with the Government about the Powerhouse project?

Ms JOHNSON: No.

Mr ALEXANDRE: No.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Have you requested to meet?

Ms JOHNSON: Yes, sorry. We have regularly requested meetings with Premier Berejiklian, the arts Minister and the born again arts Minister, Don Harwin, with officials from the department and we have not ever been given any kind of interview or meeting.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Do I take it again, through us, would you like at this moment to request your first meeting with Don Harwin? Would you still be willing—

Ms JOHNSON: We have not requested a meeting since 4 July.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Would you like to request one now?

Ms JOHNSON: We would be very willing to request a meeting.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think you said earlier "also the leadership of the Powerhouse museum" so there is obviously the political representatives who you have requested to meet, and have not been able to secure a meeting. But the leadership of the museum itself, you have requested meetings with them and have not been able to meet with them either?

Mr ALEXANDRE: We actually had one meeting in 2015 with the communication person, the PR person and that was 2015.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Five years ago.

Mr ALEXANDRE: Yes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As I said, we have established no political representative has met with you and no one from the museum has engaged with you.

Mr ALEXANDRE: No.

The CHAIR: No consultation process whatsoever, that is really what you are saying?

Ms JOHNSON: None.

Mr ALEXANDRE: Yes.

The CHAIR: How deeply have you been involved in this campaign?

Ms JOHNSON: In what sense?

The CHAIR: For how long have you been involved with it?

Ms JOHNSON: We have been fully involved in it for five years. We research almost every day. We write posts almost every day. We communicate with followers almost every day, so it is pretty well full time.

Mr ALEXANDRE: Our first public meeting probably a couple of weeks after the Baird announcement in February or April—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In 2015.

Ms JOHNSON: We are certainly not going away.

The CHAIR: You are not going away.

Mr ALEXANDRE: No. Definitely what we get from our followers on Facebook or on our email is that there is more and more people. The fact that the 4 July was a false announcement made a lot of people very angry.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: On behalf of the Committee I thank you for your passion, care and campaigning on behalf of this cultural institution. I think all of us, even putting to one side our political stripes, could not but recognise your passion and care.

Mr ALEXANDRE: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Almost equalled by many on this Committee.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Almost.

The CHAIR: Thank you for inviting us.

Ms JOHNSON: Thank you for inviting us.

The CHAIR: Your hard work and devotion is, I am sure appreciated.

Ms JOHNSON: We are not going away.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

ANDREW GRANT, private citizen, sworn and examined

IAN DEBENHAM, OAM, private citizen, affirmed and examined

ANDREW SIMPSON, private citizen, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming. Would any or all of you like to start by making a short, two-minute statement—perhaps starting with you, Mr Grant?

Mr GRANT: I would like to. Thank you, Chair. I cannot promise to keep it to two minutes but I will do my best.

The CHAIR: Nobody else has this morning. It will be a first if you can. Feel free to be open and do not be restricted.

Mr GRANT: Thank you, Chair. Firstly, my thanks to the members of the Committee for once again inviting me to give evidence to this vital inquiry. This introductory statement relates to the terms of reference 1 (a) (i), the core visions behind the move, and 1 (a) (v), the impact on the heritage status of the site at Ultimo. It expresses my views about the disparity between the spirit of the Government's commitment on 4 July to retain the Powerhouse Museum at Ultimo and the contrary evidence since that date. The public sentiment following the Government's decision to retain the Powerhouse Museum at Ultimo confirmed a core assumption that any reasonable person would make—that the remaining permanent exhibitions and the character and traditions of the museum would be retained. However, since the announcement on 4 July there has been little to suggest that this promise was made in good faith.

I cite the following evidence that the attitude of the Government, the museum's trust and senior management to the commitment to retain the museum at Ultimo is disingenuous: firstly, the Harwood building, about which I understand the Committee has heard something already this morning. The Harwood building, formerly Stage 1 Power House Museum, is integral to the Powerhouse Museum historically and functionally. It incorporates the first electric tram depot in Sydney, built in 1899, the first structure of what was to become by the 1920s the largest tramway network in the British Commonwealth outside London—a signifier of Sydney's coming of age as a city. The title of the tram depot site was transferred to the museum in 1964 following the end of the initial electric tram era in Sydney. The retention of the Harwood building—the former tram depot—in all its current functions is essential if the museum is to be retained at Ultimo in recognisable form.

These functions include a fully equipped workshop; large object handling and treatment; an exhibition preparation, staging and presentation area; temporary exhibition movements; a photography studio; conservation laboratories; a publicly accessible research library and archives; building maintenance workshops; collection management and other staff accommodation; and of course high-quality storage that is, for the record, publicly accessible. Yet in his evidence given at the inquiry hearing on 29 July the Arts Minister revealed a grossly inadequate understanding of the Harwood building's function as merely storage. He stated that if the Castle Hill site can meet the museum's storage needs there will be no need for the Harwood Building. This would be astoundingly wasteful and short-sighted, yet there are plans to demolish the Harwood Building in favour of a lyric theatre and rehearsal spaces.

The claimed operational problems of the Harwood Building are baseless and designed to discredit what is a unique and envied museum facility in Australia, and very rare internationally. Put simply, the Harwood building was designed and built to function as the mothership of operations at Ultimo. Secondly, a few months ago Goulburn Mulwaree Council requested the long-term loan of the museum's 1837 Maudslay beam engine because of its early history at Goulburn Brewery. The Maudslay engine is second only in significance to the Boulton and Watt beam engine and is a key steam-powered exhibit in the museum's *The Steam Revolution* exhibition. It is critical to the narrative of that exhibition. Even considering the loan of an object in a long-term exhibition is highly irregular. In terms of assessing the intention to retain the remaining permanent exhibitions at Ultimo it is a canary in the coal mine, if you like.

If it were to be removed nothing else would be safe, yet the museum's CEO advised at the first hearing of this inquiry that the loan was still being considered. If the museum's intentions were to retain that exhibition the request would have been politely but swiftly declined. Thirdly, the *Icons* exhibition—opened in 2016 near the museum's entrance—featured some of the finest examples of the museum's rich collection, such as the 1929 Grand Prix Bugatti, the original black box flight recorder and a fifteenth century bronze temple bell. This exhibition was quietly removed on 31 July 2020. This is appalling timing and a breach of good faith with the public, just after

public interest had been elevated by the decision to retain the museum at Ultimo. Guided tours of the museum to see the remaining exhibitions and savour the wonderful building spaces have since been at capacity.

Lastly, the Minister and the museum's CEO announced at this inquiry on 29 July that three very large objects would be retained at Ultimo; namely, the Boulton and Watt engine, Locomotive No. 1 and the Catalina flying boat. The Minister cited their exemplary status as signifiers of:

... periods of extraordinary innovation and creativity ...

Whatever truth lies in that assertion, it is absurd to isolate these three large objects as a group—highly significant as they are—as if they possess a special capacity to illustrate this theme which applies almost universally to the collection as a whole. Of course there are far more plausible explanations of a political, engineering and financial nature that would have driven the Government's decision to retain them at Ultimo while the public and media outcry rose and damning expert opinion rained down. So, the Government has transparently attempted to make a virtue out of a necessity. The real concern here is that the list of objects to be retained at Ultimo is so short—or that there is a list at all. The implication is that nothing else will be retained at Ultimo. What a cruel hoax that would be on an unsuspecting public.

And finally, a word about co-location. Professor Barney Glover has often used the axiom "one museum, four sites" but these four sites are not all museums. Castle Hill is and will remain a display storage facility. Plans to centralise the collection and various museum services there, such as the research library—and the creation of a new museum site at Parramatta—will make its relatively distant location of even more strategic importance to the other sites in terms of operational costs and inefficiencies such as the movements of staff between Ultimo, Parramatta and Castle Hill.

The co-location of the Harwood building and the museum's public spaces has been of inestimable importance to the functioning of the museum since 1988, completely overlooked by Government or simply not understood to date. Object movements require individual risk management which is greatly simplified by close location. In recent years, there have been 40,000 to 50,000 object movements annually between the Harwood building and other museum sites. The distance between Ultimo, Castle Hill and Parramatta will pose enormous operational inefficiencies and unnecessary risks, especially for object movements. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Debenham?

Mr DEBENHAM: Some of my points are going to be pretty similar to some of Andrew's points. My points are just that—points—and so my statement will be considerably shorter. Thank you Committee members for inviting me to give evidence to this inquiry. My introductory statements respond to items 1. (a) (i), (ii) and (iv) of the terms of reference and speak to the core vision and governance of the project and the issue of site flooding at Parramatta. It is my impression that the initial statement made to transfer the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta in its entirety was made without the benefit of due diligence or understanding of the magnitude and complexity of the task. The statement was publicised without the benefit of any due diligence. This has subsequently blighted the continuing operation of the Powerhouse Museum and the development of the proposed Parramatta museum.

It has wasted five years of planning, public servants' time and public money on consultants who have either no museum experience or experience in museums with the complexity and breadth of the collections of the Powerhouse Museum. The New South Wales Government continues to show a total lack of understanding of the requirements of a working museum. This is demonstrated by the ongoing consideration to demolish or repurpose the Harwood building, an essential building for the continued operation of the museum at Ultimo. The centring of some museum functions and personnel at Castle Hill makes a mockery of the years that the Government has decreased the museum's budgets by the so-called efficiency dividend. The proposed Parramatta museum site planning does not appear to take account of expected sea level rises in the future.

AdaptNSW has published a likely scenario that by 2100 the sea level on the New South Wales coast will rise by a minimum range of 0.24 to 0.61 metres to a maximum range of 0.54 to 1.06 metres depending on atmospheric emissions. The proposed Parramatta museum planning does not seem to have embraced the council and community of Parramatta's desires for their world class institution:

This includes recognition of the richness of Aboriginal cultural heritage at the heart of the City's identity and the significant European heritage which is one of the most significant in the nation.

That wording is taken from the City of Parramatta's executive summary of its submission in response to State significant development application for the Powerhouse Museum. The possible limiting of the aviation exhibition at Ultimo to the Catalina greatly reduces the benefit to the visiting public of the museum's aviation collection. The

displayed full-size aircraft, in their diversity, tell a variety of stories of achievement, design, technology, history and Australia's significant place on the world stage.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Dr Simpson?

Dr SIMPSON: Thank you, Chair. As I concur with many of the points that have already been made by the other two witnesses, I will be brief and just express a few general points that I would like to. I would like to open by saying that I am really hopeful that this Committee's work will help to shape a better future for the museums in New South Wales, and that that is a future where there is an articulated State plan for museum provision in the State, where every museum in the State from small volunteer-run outfits in the regions through to the large city based museums will feel connected to that plan and motivated by that plan.

I hope that in the future the research and analysis that underpins that plan does not start and finish with specifically prescribed political outcomes designed by the government of the day. I hope that in the future museum collections themselves will be considered as cultural infrastructure and not just the buildings where they are kept. I also hope that museums do not continue to be one of the lesser priorities of Create NSW in terms of funding support. I hope that in the future arbitrary closures and relocation proposals are nothing more than historic curiosities, and also that the people of Parramatta get the support to the museum they want. After all, they have been asking since 1899. I hope that in the future we do not build new museums, or even art centres for that matter, on flood-prone sites. I hope that in the future the efficiency dividend and other forms of arbitrary financial constriction do not completely choke creativity in the sector.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Mr Debenham, I understand that you have a connection to the Powerhouse Museum.

Mr DEBENHAM: Yes, I do.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Can you elaborate on that? I understand it was quite a senior position. You were a curator, is that right?

Mr DEBENHAM: I was a curator, yes, of transport. Dr Simpson and I were both curators of transport. Andrew focused more on—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: He has got three years on you, does he not? Dr Simpson has 33 years?

Mr DEBENHAM: Thirty-three years and 30 years, yes. I came in just before Dr Simpson and I left just before him. Dr Simpson curated at transport, basically land transport. I focused on aviation with a minor component of maritime history as well considering after I started the National Maritime Museum started up. So that aspect of it fell into the background and I focused on aviation, which was my strength anyway having been a licensed aircraft maintenance engineer before I came to the museum..

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Mr Grant, what is your experience in your activity involving MAAS?

Mr GRANT: I started at the museum in 1980. I was from that year a curator of transport and engineering. In 1988 I was appointed senior curator of transport and I held that position—apart from acting in a more senior management position in the interim—between 1988 and 2012 when I retired.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: To all three gentlemen, do you still have links to staff and activity that occurs at the Ultimo site?

Mr GRANT: Yes, we do. Mr Debenham and I have maintained our affiliation with the museum by doing some voluntary work. We have regular contact with some former colleagues and other volunteers and parts of the collection but mainly through research work that we do. It tends to be contact with existing data and information about the collection.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Okay. I want to take you to the 4 July announcement.

Mr GRANT: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Are you familiar with the announcement?

Mr GRANT: Yes, I am. Not verbatim but with its apparent intent.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: That is where I was going to take you, to the spirit or the intent of the announcement.

Mr GRANT: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Do you feel that the 4 July announcement was, as the Premier, the Treasurer and the restored arts Minister claimed, that it was the saving of the Ultimo site?

Mr GRANT: That is as I understand how the media presented it and understood it and how the public understood it. Indeed, I would like to think that it was what the Government had intended but I cite the wording of the letter that a constituent of the Premier received only one week ago.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Could you assist and read that into *Hansard*, please?

Mr GRANT: I am very happy to, particularly the first sentence of the second paragraph, which says:

The decision to maintain the museum in the historic Power House Building at the Ultimo site, while also building the new flagship Powerhouse Parramatta, delivers many benefits to the people of NSW and the NSW Government is pleased it has been so well received by the community.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Grant, so that we get the full context, would you mind tabling the correspondence?

Mr GRANT: Not in the least.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I just want to make sure there is no privacy issue, in terms of needing to delete the name and address.

Mr GRANT: Yes, perhaps. It is not a concern of mine.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I just raise it in case it is.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: We do not automatically publish it. We will receive it and then assess whether and in what form we publish it.

Mr GRANT: Sure. I would like to add a comment of my own to that.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Please. I thought it stood there as it is, but please elaborate.

Mr GRANT: I believe it does stand as it is. But the heritage council's decision—recently made public—that, effectively, the shell of the former Powerhouse building would be listed on the State Heritage Register is very relevant, it seems, to the wording in the Premier's letter referring to the "historic Powerhouse building". It seems now that a more accurate interpretation of the Government's announcement alludes to the preservation of the bricks and mortar of the former Powerhouse building. It is carefully and cautiously worded to avoid reference to the assembly of buildings that constitutes the Powerhouse Museum proper, which includes the Harwood building and the Wran building facing Harris Street, which are part of the award-winning complex that is known as the Powerhouse Museum.

If I could further draw on Dr Simpson's point about the value in which collections are held and their place in regard to location and buildings, it is important that the Committee is aware that many of my colleagues and myself and others I am not aware of made submissions to the Heritage Council, adamantly advocating for the listing on the State Heritage Register of the in situ exhibitions as well as the entire Powerhouse Museum complex, as it is understood to be, as being inseparable and having their own integrity, which makes the point that collections themselves—as Dr Simpson was saying—need to be recognised for their own heritage significance and sense of place.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Mr Grant, would you characterise that letter from the Premier's office as being a finely tuned legal letter?

Mr GRANT: I am not expert in any way to comment on legal wording.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But you felt compelled to share it with us.

Mr GRANT: Indeed. At a layman level, reflecting on the decision on 4 July and looking at the wording on this letter, I have concluded that it was carefully worded to avoid any reference to the Powerhouse Museum as a whole.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In terms of the application for heritage listing, we heard evidence from Ms Patricia Johnson earlier. She said her view of the way in which the heritage listing was being progressed was that it also expressly and, seemingly, deliberately avoided reference to the word "museum". It was simply about some buildings, isolated from their institutional context.

Mr GRANT: Yes, and—to take your point, Mr Shoebridge—bizarrely referred to the Ultimo Powerhouse as being located at 500 Harris Street, Ultimo, which has only been a current address since the opening of the Powerhouse in 1988 on that site.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Yes. A lot of the discussion in this Committee is about very physical things—bricks and mortar and the like. Could I ask, particularly, the two of you who have been curators at that facility for such a long time how important it is to have co-location of the Harwood building and the exhibition spaces, and how that works as a coherent entity?

Mr GRANT: Certainly. I might ask my colleague Mr Debenham to answer that initially; I have said too much.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Dr Simpson, if you have something to add, please feel free.

Mr DEBENHAM: At the simplest level of operation, the objects that are on open display, especially the large transport objects—the horse-drawn bus, automobiles, Locomotive No. 1 and its three carriages and things like that—all require a weekly level of maintenance. Mr Grant and I, every Tuesday morning before opening, would go in and clean down those objects and give them a good dust. Human beings tend to create dust, with skin flakes and fluff from clothes and things like that. That was a weekly thing, so it is necessary to have staff close by. You might say, well, why not use cleaners for that? Cleaners are okay to clean down the display cases, but when it comes to handling things like automobiles and other objects, although they are generally robust it is very easy to damage paint surfaces if you are using the wrong material to clean down that object.

It takes a level of knowledge and expertise. It is not a non-museum person's role to do that. In the exhibition areas, light globes blow and things like that. You need electricians on hand. We had electricians on hand to be able to replace those light globes. If there are problems with the multimedia presentations that go along with exhibitions, then it is good to have the staff available when they occasionally break down. It is also the operations of photography and things like that—it is also good. Another aspect of it is that curatorial proximity to the museum can be useful in that public service role when you occasionally get visitors into the museum who want to talk to a curator about a particular thing. They might have something that they want to offer to the museum or they want to get some information about an object that they have brought in.

It is very handy to have curators who are au fait with the range of material to go and have a look at that and talk to the person. That, basically, is good public relations for the museum itself. At the early stage of the development of the Powerhouse project, Mr Grant and I and the other curators—registration staff included—were stationed at the Wynns building in Regent Street in Redfern. We always had to go into the museum just for that purpose of sometimes meeting members of the public who would come into the old building and ask for curatorial advice. Andrew holds the record: He could get from the Wynns building in Regent Street, Redfern, to the old building in Harris Street in 17 minutes, and that was all on shanks' pony. It would have taken longer to catch a bus or to catch the train from Redfern to Central and then get to the museum, so we walked.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Just for the record, shanks's pony is walking.

Mr DEBENHAM: So there are quite a few functions that are necessary. If any of the objects on open display are damaged, for example, it is good for a registration person and the curator concerned to go and look at that damage, record the damage, get photography to photograph it and things like that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Debenham, I understand that there are a large number of convenience and proximity factors for the daily running of a museum.

Mr DEBENHAM: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Dr Simpson, I saw you indicating you may want to say something.

Dr SIMPSON: Yes, I would just add to the point that has been made that it is essential in any decent planning for a museum to function correctly to have staff and facilities co-located with collections and exhibition spaces. Otherwise you are going to rack up incredible costs in terms of staff time, moving round from one place to another. The work that staff like curators undertake in a museum is complex because it involves everything from research, conservation, overseeing conservation work, and engaging with the public. So if you have got all those activities co-located in the one area, they are obviously going to be much more efficient and much less costly than they otherwise would be if you separate one part of the ecosystem from the other.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Grant, what about when you are pulling together an exhibition and you need somewhere, I assume, to pull out the objects and have a look and see how they will fit together and then physically take them from wherever they are held in a storage facility and put them onto display? I assume the

greater the distance you have between your storage and your display, a whole series of additional complex issues may arise in terms of transport and it may limit your capacity to move them.

Mr GRANT: Absolutely. There is a complex interaction of disciplines that takes place in the development of a museum exhibition, for argument's sake, or even in a decision that needs to be taken about the treatment of an object. One of the things I did not say in my statement, but which is greatly to the merit of the Harwood Building, is that it has a very substantial capacity to handle the enormous variety of artefacts in the collections of different materials, sometimes mixed media, as it is referred to—in other words, many different types of materials in the same object—and also to employ, in appropriately facilitated laboratories and workshops, the kind of people whose skills can be applied to making decisions about and acting on the decisions of treating and handling and displaying and interpreting those objects.

That is the process that underpins the allusion you made, Mr Shoebridge, to the importance of, in this case, a central location that is proximate to the museum, whatever museum it might be—the museum exhibition spaces, the public spaces of a museum, if you like. There are many, many examples of the practical dividend that the Harwood Building has offered in the past and could continue to offer if it was allowed to continue to exist with the Powerhouse Museum in its current functions and, indeed, expanded functions if the decision was made to do so and if those making the decision were more enlightened about the key relationships between the functions of the Harwood building, the people employed to care for the collection and the diversity of the collection in close relationship.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Just on a very practical level, I assume that there would be some very fragile objects for which you could have a risk assessment that maybe one, two or three people might be able to carefully transport them from, say, the Harwood building into the Powerhouse exhibition space, and you would work out a safe method for transporting a fragile object, but if you have to then transport them from Castle Hill to Parramatta or Castle Hill to Ultimo, that risk profile may fundamentally change and it may mean the item can never be put on public exhibition. Is that too simplistic a view of it?

Mr GRANT: That is correct. Value judgements need to be made and relative decisions need to be taken in terms of risk management. We are all familiar with the concept of risk management in whatever field we operate. With regard to the museum, risk management clearly will function immediately under, of course, the primary concern for the safety of staff. The care of the collection becomes paramount. The nature of movements of objects, the number of steps involved in doing that—for example, from careful hands to a vehicle and then from a vehicle to careful hands to an exhibition location—adds a level of complexity and risk that merely placing an object on a soft-tyred trolley and taking it directly 100 metres, 200 metres to a place of exhibition is much more straightforward and greatly simplifies and reduces the amount of risk involved. It cannot be avoided.

These situations cannot be avoided but steps can be taken to minimise the proportion of times in which risk is considered unacceptable. The retention, for example, of the highly sophisticated storage facility in the basement of the Harwood building would go a long way to minimising the local risks associated with object movements in Ultimo itself.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Earlier Dr Sharp gave an estimate of the cost of moving what is in the Harwood building now. If I remember correctly, his estimate was somewhere in the order of \$200 million. If you can comment on the cost, by all means do, but how would you go about moving so many objects from the current facility to a new storage facility in Castle Hill? What does that mean in practice?

Mr GRANT: I am happy to take this initially. You may wish to add, Mr Debenham. Essentially, it is a highly complex inventory exercise whilst also being an opportunity that the museum has, to its credit, taken to digitise what it can of the collection whilst that opportunity presents itself. There is some debate as to what digitising the collection actually means because you need to define what use you want to make of digital images that are available online to enable a researcher, for example, who is a specialist researcher in one field relating to some type of collection in the museum—a researcher may wish to know much more in detail than somebody who is undertaking a school project may wish to know.

So how much information is captured in digitising will greatly increase or decrease the actual cost of the process that you are alluding to but, essentially, it is a museum practice that objects are inspected by conservators before they are moved from A to B for any purpose, whether they are going on loan or whether they are going from one museum site to another or whether they are going on exhibition. That is a sound practice that has its obvious benefit in terms of maintaining close information about and well-documented information about the condition of objects in the collection and how and when damage may have occurred, if indeed it does. So that process, multiplied by hundreds of thousands of objects, I am not in a position to put a cost figure on. Dr Sharp

may have done so but it is a complex, time-consuming exercise and it requires training and expertise on behalf of those who undertake that process.

Mr DEBENHAM: It may be necessary in some cases because of the fragility of, say, some technical objects like mass balance or something like that to actually dismantle it to a degree and to repackage parts. So that has to be plotted and planned, mapped out and necessary documentation carried out so that it can be put back together again in the same way as it came apart so that there is not a faulty relocation of the components. And as Mr Grant just said, that has to be done by someone with great expertise in handling those and making the decisions about the correct handling. Also, the packing of the objects has to be undertaken as well. It is time-consuming. It is expensive in terms of the materials required, whether it is bubble wrap, not wood for metals or protector foam. That is a little bit more in line with good conservation practice. All that packing takes time. It is expensive.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Could I test a conclusion on you? If you have hundreds of thousands of objects, each carrying an individual risk, I would have thought that we can, with mathematical certainty, guarantee that there will be damage to the collection from the move.

Mr DEBENHAM: Of course, yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: If you can, can you give an indication of whether that should be a realistic concern or is it just a marginal concern? How should we be rating that risk?

Mr DEBENHAM: No, it is a huge risk. It does play with your mind that if you agree that an object can go out on loan, for example, of all the potential risks, even something like it is loaded on a truck and the truck is involved in a prang on the highway—something like that—it does affect a curatorial mind because our whole modus operandi is the protection of those objects to make sure that they survive into the long term in as original condition as is possible.

Mr GRANT: And with the underlying knowledge that the fabric or the material of which these objects are made cannot merely be replaced and the object repaired and ever achieve the condition that was evident prior to the mishap.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am not entirely sure the comparison is valid—I recall the transport of the items that were looted from the Parthenon to the British Museum. In the course of that transport, I think one of the ships went down and a whole series of priceless artefacts were lost in that transport. It is known in history that—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I do not think they will take them up the Parramatta River. I think we are okay.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But it is probably road transport and each road transport carries that risk of crash, does it not?

Mr DEBENHAM: It does.

Mr GRANT: Yes, indeed.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Do not give them ideas about the river.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Mr Grant, I wanted to ask, you made a comment in your opening statement that you thought the supposed limitations on the use of the Harwood building were baseless. I want to draw you out a little bit on that. Why do you think the limitations that have been suggested in relation to that building are without foundation?

Mr GRANT: I am aware that comments were made in the, I think it was a business case the museum put forward to Government in 2014, that included the claim that there were leaks in the Harwood building that were problematic. From my own experience, if there were ever leaks in the Harwood building—and I can vaguely recall it may have arisen on one or two occasions over my many years working in the building—they were never problematic to the point of causing concern about the functional capacity of the building going on well into the future. That is one example. Another example is that I understand that Government and the museum management are currently of the view that access to the basement of the Harwood building—to the collection there—for researchers or for the public is hampered by the nature of the store being a deep store, so-called.

Mr Debenham and I have, on many occasions, taken individuals and we have conducted—admittedly—parties of limited numbers of the public through the store in the basement, and there are no practical problems if the appropriate steps are taken to do just that and continue to do that if the store was fully utilised. I wonder if

there is not, therefore, another motive to overstate problems that, as I have said in my opening statement, I believe are baseless about the continuing function of what is still an excellent facility in any museum terms, even today.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Thank you for that. I think it is useful to spell it out.

Mr GRANT: Sure.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think Dr Simpson and Mr Debenham both made reference to the impact of the efficiency dividend on the operation of the museum—over a number of years, I suppose. Again, I wondered if you could provide us with a little bit more detail and examples of how the application of that dividend—and other arbitrary financial constraints, but particularly that one—have hampered the full utilisation of the museum. Mr Grant, of course, if you had anything to add, too.

Dr SIMPSON: Just one example that has already come up in evidence in this discussion—I think a previous witness stated that in 2010 the Powerhouse stopped collecting social history objects. Therefore, in terms of the State not having a plan about how it collects, what it collects and why it collects various objects, who is collecting social history of relevance to New South Wales since 2010? I do not know. Is there any museum, for example, collecting crockery and tableware from the *Ruby Princess* as a way of being able to tell future stories about the New South Wales experience of the pandemic we are going through at the moment? We do not know and I think that sort of shows up. Essentially, the efficiency dividends really pare a museum back to its very basic processes; it does not allow the museum to invest time and energy into experimental museology, into new research programs—it pares it straight back to the very sort of basic functions.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In terms of that loss functionality, the chase that has been on for the past two years to find the suit that was worn by the extraordinarily famous runner at the Sydney Olympics—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Cathy Freeman.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You do not remember Cathy Freeman?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: You do not remember Cathy Freeman's name?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It had fallen out of my brain. I do remember Cathy Freeman, but it had fallen out of my brain. That suit was lost and it took a large amount of expertise and hunting around to find it again—the suit she wore at the Olympics. That is the kind of work that—

Dr SIMPSON: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Mr Grant and Mr Debenham, with your combined experience of 63 years curatorial experience, would you have concerns loaning artefacts to an overseas museum, or an exhibition to an overseas museum, if you discovered that it was built on a flood plain?

Mr DEBENHAM: You would have to know a little bit more about it in how the building of the museum—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I think there might be some museums near the Thames that might fit with your view—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But if you take that into consideration, if you had something that was very precious to Australian history—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Or in Rome, indeed.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: —you would undertake due diligence to make sure—

Mr GRANT: Yes.

Mr DEBENHAM: It would be an immediate concern and you would have to look deeper into the situation of how the museum itself managed that problem of being on a flood plain and if it had any effect in the time that that loan was going to be in that particular museum. You would have to see whether any of the adverse environmental effects were going to have on the object that you were thinking about putting out on loan. A lot of research goes into it before you ultimately make the decision to lend it.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What do you make of the—there has been correspondence between Goulburn Mulwaree Council and the Powerhouse Museum about relocating the steam engine back to Goulburn.

Mr GRANT: Yes.

Mr DEBENHAM: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Mr Grant, do you know anything about that?

Mr GRANT: I mentioned in my introductory statement about the 1837 Maudslay beam engine, which is under consideration for loan to Goulburn Mulwaree Council. I understand its intended location is the Goulburn Waterworks site, which is a very historic site. Logically, because the engine that is part of the engine house and assembly of historic structures at that site is on a riverbank site, that in itself poses the possibility of river flooding, which is very to your point, Mr Secord. It is a very relevant consideration prior to whatever decision the museum reaches about whether to lend the Maudslay beam engine to that site. The possible flooding of the river is a case in point, in terms of a loan object of great value and utterly irreplaceable, such as the Maudslay engine is.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But do you actually believe that the Government is genuine with this engagement with Goulburn? Is this, in fact, a realistic proposal or is the Government simply stringing on the council?

Mr GRANT: If we are to take the director—the CEO—at her word, she has indicated that the museum has yet to reach a decision about whether to agree to the loan request or not. Given that we have recently been surprised, since 4 July particularly, by the direction that things have taken on the issues, I have not dismissed the possibility that the loan may be agreed to.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Could I ask you about the risk profile when you are moving objects? What is the risk profile for moving a steam engine built in the first third of the nineteenth century? What are we talking about in terms of the risk profile to the object?

Mr GRANT: It is an extremely delicate exercise to move an artefact such as the Maudslay beam engine. Mr Debenham is best placed—probably better than anyone else, in a sense—to comment about the assembly of the engine and its component parts, because he was a research assistant on its reconstruction 40 years ago and I am sure his memory has not left him on that. As far as the choice of how one might go about it, one of the first steps that has to be taken is to—and I do not even want to talk about this, in a sense because it is so inadvisable for a range of reasons that I am hesitant to describe how you would go about something that I would strongly advise against doing. It is a bit like telling a child not to play with matches. If the child insists, do you try to minimise the damage? As far as the Maudslay is concerned, perhaps I will allow—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I think the answer on the child is no, just for the record.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But I want to hear the answer.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But what is the answer on the engine?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I want to hear the answer on the engine.

Mr GRANT: I would—purely on the basis that the engine is an exhibit in a permanent exhibition—as I have indicated in my introductory statement, any such loan request would be declined without consideration. If consideration was seriously given to it, the risk profile would reach peaks in terms of its handling from its current site in the museum to its location on road transport—presumably a load loader of some kind—whether or not it was disassembled, which I will allow Mr Debenham to comment on, and it would have to be at least partially disassembled, which carries its own risks, and how it would be packed and handled, how the cast components would be protected from vibratory damage, whether you would carry out, and you probably would carry out scans of the components to ensure that you knew whether there were unseen cracks in any of the components before you moved the engine, as a conservation measure. Am I helping here?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Yes.

Mr GRANT: You would go through a process of photography of all the parts. You would do a condition assessment of the parts, not just the engine as a whole. You would interrogate in great detail the conditions in which the engine was to be displayed. They themselves could nullify any chance of such a loan being approved, because the engine is currently in climate-controlled conditions, which would have to be at least matched where it was going. Its physical risk, the risk of security, would have to be assessed so as to ensure that it was not damaged in any way, by being vandalised or mishandled. Perhaps I will allow Mr Debenham to continue with anything I have missed.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: One last thing: Would you go so far as to describe it as it would be virtually a military exercise to move it?

Mr GRANT: Yes.

Mr DEBENHAM: Yes, yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Would you agree with that, Mr Debenham?

Mr DEBENHAM: Yes, it would be. I would just stop the whole thing, because it is almost 200 years old. It is cast iron and it is extremely fragile. You would have to have a special truck with air suspension to be able to take the bumps out of the road, because there is a risk of shattering the components. You would take the beam out of it, because that is a big heavy weight up high. There would probably be some smaller components you would take out and there is always the risk of disturbing some of the components, because these engines were shipped as a sort of kit of parts. They were put together by engineers on site, so there is the level of getting all the different components to relate to one another properly.

The cylinder has to be a certain distance away from the beam, so that the piston does not endeavour to go down through the bottom of the cylinder, for example. That then sits on the vacuum chamber that is created to give the necessary suction. That is also made out of cast iron, so if that is in any way damaged or removed from its position then it has to be relocated, realigned. There is a heck of a lot of work to do and, quite frankly, I would have said at an inquiry like this that no, it is too valuable an object because of its historical relationship. Henry Maudslay was the father, if you will, of mass production in an engineering sense. One of his apprentices was Joseph Whitworth, who created the Whitworth thread system. It is internationally famous and to put it at any risk at all is just not conscionable. As I say, curators tend to get rather worried about things like this.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: It has been put to me, by members of the Goulburn community, that the Government is just stringing on the community down there.

Mr DEBENHAM: Yes, well, no—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Mr Grant, could I ask you a question?

Mr GRANT: —I think there is really good reason to not do it.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is it on this same point?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It is not, but—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Can I just ask for a conclusion on it?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, you cannot because the Government has not had any time for questions at all and we have four minutes left. I respectfully submit that.

The CHAIR: Yes, please.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Mr Grant, can I go to your opening statement, where you talked about the three major items?

Mr GRANT: Yes.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It was confirmed that they would be kept at the Ultimo site. I am paraphrasing you, but you said that the implication that these items will be retained means potentially that nothing else will. I guess I just want to push gently back on that assertion and say that now I have looked at the letter that the Premier sent and it says, for example, that the establishment of two world-class facilities will provide more opportunities for the public to engage with the Powerhouse Museum's extraordinary collection. To me, the implication there is that the collection will be displayed in both museums. I would ask if I have misunderstood that or if you were actually suggesting that the Ultimo site would only house those three items?

Mr GRANT: I regard that, in response to your comment, Mr Franklin, and third paragraph from which you have just quoted in the Premier's letter as being very open to interpretation. The reason I say that is that much effort is being put into emphasising the future role of the Castle Hill site in terms of access to the collection. It is a very valid point, particularly in the virtual and digital age in which we live and in which our children are being educated, that museums as a generalisation have much to offer in terms of providing the opportunity for the public to engage with real objects and that it is quite reasonable to assert that the Castle Hill site, in its full development—and that is yet to be, of course—but when it is more fully developed, it will offer wonderful opportunities to expose the public to the collection in a display storage mode.

The two world-class facilities, which are mentioned in that paragraph by the Premier, are obviously Ultimo and Parramatta. But my interpretation of that is that it is a generalisation that they will provide more opportunities for the public to engage et cetera in the Powerhouse Museum's extraordinary collection. To me that could be interpreted in a variety of ways, not necessarily that that means that the exhibitions that we have been discussing this morning that are currently part of the fabric of the museum, I would maintain, will need to be maintained in order for that statement to be valid.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Sure. So your position is clearly and apparently that you would like the Ultimo site to continue to be an operational museum with more than just those three large items obviously, a significant amount of the collection be on display.

Mr GRANT: Absolutely and properly funded and redeveloped so that it can continue to offer new perspectives on the vast array of themes that have been explored since 1988 and which should continue to be explored and inspire people—particularly young people—about the directions that some of the newer technologies that we are looking at today may take them in terms of their careers, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Mr Grant, do you see the construction of a lyric theatre there compatible with what you have just said?

Mr GRANT: Not at all. I have no objection the construction of a lyric theatre but certainly not on that site. I do not see it as complementing in any way what is already serving a very current and future need on the site in the Harwood Building.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You spoke at some length about the risks of moving that 1837 steam engine. Would it be unfair to characterise that proposal to move the steam engine as just plain reckless?

Mr GRANT: From a curatorial point of view, yes. I think it is reckless and wasteful.

Mr DEBENHAM: I would agree with that.

The CHAIR: I think we have come to the end of our questioning. Thank you for coming today.

Mr GRANT: Thank you.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Luncheon adjournment)

DAVID MILLER, Science and technology historian, affirmed and examined

DES GRIFFIN, Private citizen, affirmed and examined

KYLIE WINKWORTH, Museum and heritage consultant, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Would anyone like to give a short presentation to open?

Ms WINKWORTH: I would like to thank the committee for the time it is giving to these museum policy and infrastructure issues and for the broad terms of reference which implicitly recognise the connection between decisions on the fate of the Powerhouse Museum, a new museum at Parramatta which is universally supported—I want to say upfront—and the opportunity cost of what seems to be a winner takes all museum policy. Museums matter and that is why we are here. Decisions on museum development and infrastructure are an intergenerational commitment. A museum is a promise and a legacy from one generation to the next. We expect that legacy or inheritance to be preserved by the next generation which is why the Government's plan to uproot the Powerhouse Museum from its historic context has caused such deep concern.

Decisions on museum projects carry substantial funding obligations for decades into the future and they are a huge community and cultural commitment, a pledge of trust if you like. Once made these decisions are difficult and painful to unwind so getting the planning right is vital. This is why the Powerhouse Museum Alliance has worked so hard for the last five and a half years to present other museum policy infrastructure and funding options to the two museum inquiries that you have chaired and in our representations to Government. This is why we have consistently argued that the Government should prepare a fair and equitable museum plan for New South Wales—one that supports museums, collections and communities in western Sydney and regional New South Wales and landmark museums in Sydney.

I hope that this inquiry can support this aim and that your deliberations will help the Government to identify the major museum policy needs and opportunities for New South Wales because we can do better. We can do more within the same envelope of funding. In many ways this inquiry has unfinished business from the last inquiry, not just because of the continuing saga of the Powerhouse Museum and the new museum for Parramatta is still highly contentious, but also there are larger issues of fairness and equity for museums and communities across New South Wales.

The New South Wales Government has made a very large funding commitment of at least \$1 billion to build a new museum in Parramatta. The Premier has argued that this is important for western Sydney which represents 30 per cent of the population of New South Wales. There is another 30 per cent of the population living in regional New South Wales and I look forward to the Deputy Premier John Barilaro announcing a \$1 billion museum infrastructure fund for regional New South Wales on the same grounds because fairness matters.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Dr Griffin?

Dr GRIFFIN: Thank you and I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the committee which—as Ms Winkworth has said—is very important. I endorse everything that Ms Winkworth has said. I think the most important thing I could add is that for the last 35 or so years I have been studying museums around the world, focusing especially on issues of management and leadership and governance and questions such as what is it that contributes to a museum being highly successful? Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Professor Miller?

Professor MILLER: Thank you to the committee for allowing me to appear here today. I come here as a little bit of an outsider compared with many of the other witnesses. My field is the history of science and technology. It is a field that throws light on the origins of current scientific and technological developments and the consequences they have for industry, the environment and how we live our lives. I greatly admire the work of museum curators in collecting, preserving, describing, juxtaposing and telling educative stories about the objects under their care. Thanks to them, locally the Powerhouse at Ultimo has become a great museum of the history of material culture informing the contemporary world.

My submission to this inquiry was prompted by the then intended move of the Ultimo museum and the prospect of damage in transport to the Boulton and Watt steam engine or its disappearance into storage as I have done a lot of work on James Watt. We are told now that the Boulton and Watt will not be moved or put into storage and neither will the Catalina Flying Boat nor Locomotive No. 1. This is good news but I remain greatly concerned about the future integrity of the broader context in which these very large objects are currently displayed and which gives them their meaning. Both exhibitions, *The Steam Revolution* and transport exhibition, and

buildings, notably the supporting spaces of the Harwood building, appear to be under threat. This carefully constructed and curated context has been the continually updated work of decades, and gives a deeper meaning to those large objects by using them, and numerous other items on display in the museum, to tell stories about technological transformation that are not just historically interesting but are of immediate contemporary relevance.

They can teach us and our children about the nature of technological innovation, about the social economic and environmental changes that drive it and flow from it. The digital world of images, electronic communication and instant information is not separate from the analogue world of power, objects and physical movement but rather integral to it. Each supports and educates us about the other. In my experience the digitally obsessed young are readily captivated by the analogue world. There is a danger that the so-called contemporary museum at Parramatta and a so-called heritage museum at Ultimo will be treated in practise as entirely separable ventures. In my view this is myopic. Though they might have different emphases and different starting points, both need ongoing investment to connect understandings of the past, the present and possible futures. Our ability to produce and communicate those ideas effectively depends on a museum that is well resourced and cleverly curated.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Winkworth, thank you for your efforts over the past 5½ years. I refer to your comments about a \$1 billion fund for rural and regional areas. I think that is a sterling suggestion.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Do you commit a future Labor Government to do that?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: We will be making important announcements—

The CHAIR: Order! You will have the Government outbidding you now.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I do take your observation that the Government claims to be spending \$1 billion on the Parramatta site. What would you spend \$1 billion in rural and regional areas on? Would you do a single museum? What would you do?

Ms WINKWORTH: As a museum lover, and recognising the educational and tourism potential of museums, I think every community in New South Wales has a right to a well-constructed, purpose-designed, fit-for-purpose museum where they can show the treasures of their community. This morning you heard from Jennifer Sanders talk about the Powerhouse holding the DNA of our history and its heritage. When we look at community museums in regional New South Wales, they hold the DNA of their community. These museums are the oldest and most numerous cultural institutions in New South Wales and they are the most unrecognised and neglected.

I think when the Minister gave evidence at the budget estimates last year he talked about the funds available for volunteer-managed museums. I calculated that of the \$64,000 that were available for the volunteer-managed museums it worked out at about \$229 each. That is why I say there is unfinished business for this Committee. I thank you again for the broad terms of reference and I hope the Committee will advance in its thinking about ways to help museums in regional New South Wales because he answer is not volunteer training, the answer is resourcing museums so that they can look after their collections.

We need paid collections officers in every region of New South Wales. We have still have vast swathes of New South Wales, including major cities like Wollongong where there is not a single professional museum officer engaged to support the community in its collections and that is having a terrible effect because it is not recognising the asset value of collections. So we are not investing the infrastructure so the collections are looked after. We are not investing in the people who can animate those collections and leverage their education and tourism opportunities. There has been a failure, I think, of government policy to recognise the importance of heritage tourism and of heritage destinations and attractions to our tourism industry.

In 2018 heritage and cultural tourism was worth \$14 billion to the New South Wales economy, and that is extraordinary. The highest spending visitors to New South Wales are cultural and heritage tourists and these are the ones that their top interest is visiting history, heritage museums, monuments and sites. Yet when you look at where the Government's cultural infrastructure investments have been it does not reflect that interest and opportunity. This is why we are so delighted to support the work that the North Parramatta Resident Action Group has been doing to make the case for the Fleet Street precinct in Parramatta as the obvious site for Parramatta's new museum, particularly since we know the Minister himself has said he supports world-heritage designation for that site.

We know that world heritage designation is the number one driver of cultural tourism. People put world heritage sites on their bucket list. I meant, tourism comes back. What will take people to Parramatta? I do not think it is going to be a science museum, I think they will say "There's a museum that's World Heritage Listed. Its telling unique stories that I can't see anywhere else." Every major city in the world has a science museum but the

opportunity for Parramatta and, indeed, for all our museums across regional New South Wales, is to tell those distinctive stories. As I have previously argued here, the stories of Parramatta are the stories of the nation. More than ever we need those stories to be told about the enduring culture of the Dharug people who lived in western Sydney for thousands of years, about the extraordinarily important and complex first contact encounters, about Parramatta as a thriving and successful multicultural community and the success of Parramatta as a multicultural community since 1788. They are the big obvious museum opportunities.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Your submissions, evidence and public comments relate to concerns about the flood site at Parramatta. Other than putting the museum on stilts, would you recommend that the Fleet Street site or the female factory be its location?

Ms WINKWORTH: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I would like that to be very clear in the evidence.

Ms WINKWORTH: The Fleet Street site for a whole range of reasons, including the flood risk, is the obvious location for a new museum. This goes back to the faulty process that the Government followed in first selecting the museum site on completely opaque grounds. Because as soon as we heard the Phillip Street site had been selected it was obvious it was going to be too small and flood prone. And those flood risks cannot be mitigated or designed around.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So it is not too late to move—

Ms WINKWORTH: No, no.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Why is it not too late.

Ms WINKWORTH: Because, as I said, do not get these choices wrong because we expect museums to be forever. I know people think it has been five years, not a single cultural job created in Parramatta or western Sydney—that is true—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: No, they spent \$50 million on consultants.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: They are not cultural jobs.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: It is not too late.

Ms WINKWORTH: It is not too late.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Are you familiar with the process that this Committee makes recommendations—

Ms WINKWORTH: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: If one of the recommendations was that you go from the Phillip Street site to the female factory site, the Fleet Street site, so to speak. Would you be comfortable with a recommendation to that effect?

Ms WINKWORTH: I would be cheering in the streets.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is never too late to stop doing something stupid, is it?

Ms WINKWORTH: Well put.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I refer to the flooding. I know that Molino Stewart will appear later. From a curator's museum professional perspective what do you take away from that July flood study?

Ms WINKWORTH: I think the Molino Stewart report comprehensively demonstrates the grave risks that the development poses on that site—grave and insoluble risks. As I argued in my submissions, the problem is that a flood issue has always been approached as a building design problem and not as an issue about risks to visitors and the collections and that is where it becomes really serious. There has always been a preoccupation with the riverine flooding when the larger risk is about the overland flooding because the Phillip Street site is actually sited on what is, in many respects, a stormwater channel from the central business district to the river. That has created the dilemma that all those pedestrian pathways around the site, in the event of a serious overland flood, are going to be a torrent of water. That has created the dilemma that all those pedestrian pathways around the site, in the event of a serious overland flood, are going to be a torrent of water.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And if I understand the report correctly, what it says is that when you get one of these floods the site will be effectively isolated and then the lower floor will be inundated. And so, people

will have to be somehow taken to safety on the site but when the power is down and there are no ramps, that may be an impossible challenge.

Ms WINKWORTH: Certainly the environmental impact statement [EIS] has not answered those questions, as Molino Stewart have carefully deconstructed. It is my belief that those issues about the safety of visitors on the site and about their safe evacuation and management within the building are not able to be solved with the current design that is there. It is simply that the development is too big and too intense. There has been a failure to recognise the particular obligations we have to museum visitors and the intensity of use that this development is projecting—two million visitors a year, which would be an average of 5,449 every day, 364 days a year—and the difficulty and challenges of managing those visitors within two buildings that are inherently, as they are designed, unable to provide safe evacuation routes either from the riverbank and undercroft or to the upper levels of the development.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And indeed some of the proposed evacuation routes take people, in the event of a flood, down to the river.

Ms WINKWORTH: That is correct. It is counterintuitive.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That is a polite description.

Ms WINKWORTH: And that is why our concern is that people will be stuck there in the undercroft as the waters rise and they will not be able to get out, because you are looking at the river rising and you are thinking, "I am not going to go down towards the river in a huge storm to get out of this nice, dry shelter," which might be dry for a little while.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And Molino Stewart—it would be fair to say you chose them because of their expertise in understanding the flooding risks in Parramatta CBD. Is that right?

Ms WINKWORTH: Yes. They are the leading experts on the Parramatta River catchment and river hydrology in that area. It was my surprise, in fact, that they were not engaged by the EIS to do their flood modelling. I was very pleased they were available to give us some expert advice. Throughout the whole process since this site has been selected, it is my belief that there has been a misunderstanding—not wilful, necessarily—of what the risks represent. I think Steven Molino and Dr John Macintosh will be able to unpick those risks for you. But what struck me in the conversations that I have had with both of them is if the museum floor is set at the level of a one in 100 flood—and Steve Molino has shown that that is too low for this type of development—then that is not a safe level. If we are looking, as I said, at buying a lottery ticket with a risk of winning of one in 100, we would all go, "That's a really good chance, isn't it—one in 100 for a lottery win?" Well, yes.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Mr Griffin, in your submission you talked about the current proposed Parramatta site being too small. I wondered if that was just in relation to—too small to hold the very large objects, as was originally proposed to be moved there, or now that those objects are not being moved from the Ultimo site, whether you still think that footprint of the proposed new museum in its current location at Parramatta is just not big enough for a museum at the sort of scale that the Government has described it?

Dr GRIFFIN: Thank you. I would go with the latter alternative. My understanding is that the proposal in essence says that the larger space is multipurpose as well as quite small. This relates also to the situation of regional museums, which I think would be best developed as a kind of network. If that means you are going to circulate exhibitions, you need quite considerable space which is up to the highest standards for showing of exhibitions. It just seems to me that the proposal does not really fit with the assertion that it is iconic and world-class—whatever those terms actually mean. I am not sure what they mean. There is no prospect whatsoever of any museum at Parramatta being world-class if we think that is putting it in the same category as, say, major science and technology museums overseas or even in Australia.

Nevertheless, it is reasonable to expect that the museum should be to the highest standards and it should be able to serve the population and the visitors—tourists—in a number of different ways. Quite apart from the compelling issues of the flood, I am blown if I can see how that would be possible.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Are you familiar with the alternative site that has been proposed around the Parramatta Female Factory?

Dr GRIFFIN: I am not, but I would understand from what Ms Winkworth has said that it is certainly a preferable alternative. I am certainly aware of the assertions that, in the event of a flood, there is 15 minutes for the population to get out of the place.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Not a lot of time.

Dr GRIFFIN: No.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Professor Miller, you mentioned a little bit in your opening statement about how retaining the large objects at the Ultimo site devoid of the context of the broader exhibitions that currently exist around them will very much diminish the capacity of those objects to tell a story. I just wanted to draw you out a little bit on that. I do think that is one of the newer propositions we have had in this Committee inquiry, which is the suggestion that those objects will be retained at Ultimo but very little to no commitment around anything else being retained outside them. In fact, the suggestion that they could just be sitting in the foyer of a lyric theatre or something like that—I wanted to get a little bit of your sense as to how that would diminish the story and the value of those objects if that were to be the outcome.

Professor MILLER: I would be happy to address that question, particularly in relation to the Boulton and Watt, which I know quite a bit about. I suppose the first thing to say is that the objects do not speak for themselves. They have to be interpreted and they have to be interpreted in relation to other things. The reason that the Boulton and Watt is so interesting and is such a magnificent object is that it is close to the beginning of a process of technological evolution in which steam technology transformed—in fact, created—modern societies in terms of its support of industry and its support of things like sewerage, electrical generation and so on. The important stories to tell, it seems to me, necessarily involve saying, "Well, here's the Boulton and Watt which was in the beginning of these things. Here's the Maudslay. Here are massive engines that were subsequently developed that were used to generate electricity and to drive modern societies." It really is the case that if the large objects were stripped of this larger context, it becomes very, very difficult to appreciate them, let alone tell stories to a public audience about them.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: If any other witnesses wanted to comment on that, I think that would be useful. Just in terms of the reality of the proposition that is being put forward by the Government, that is the direction it is heading, where those objects would be retained at Ultimo but potentially very little else. I wondered if the consequence of that not only for those objects—as to whether or not you could even describe a facility at Ultimo with those objects sort of on their own as anything like a museum?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Winkworth, could you offer an observation from your experience?

Ms WINKWORTH: Certainly. It is a very good question. Powerhouse Museum Alliance has identified the significance of the steam engines and *The Steam Revolution* installation in the engine house. The Bolton and Watt and the Locomotive No. 1, and then the transport installation, transport space and flight in the boiler hall, are integral to the heritage significance of the Powerhouse Museum. We have argued that the core of those installations should be recognised as part of the significance of the museum through heritage listing. What is important about the whole conception of the Powerhouse Museum, which the whole investment case was based around a spatially and conceptually appropriate place to display those collections, so that the Powerhouse becomes, in a way, a museum about itself. The power story in the Powerhouse.

There is no other museum in the world that presents that kind of narrative about the evolution of steam technology in such an extraordinary set of spaces starting with the very foundations of steam technology right in the Galleria, purpose designed to hold the Bolton and Watt and Locomotive No. 1. Those two foundational technologies of motive power and steam transport trains are in conversation with each other. They are two foundation objects and then you flow through to *The Steam Revolution* exhibition and what is there in the Powerhouse is a whole narrative about the evolution and application of steam technologies, as Professor Miller has been saying. It is unique and very important, which is why we have been so concerned about the thought that the Maudslay would be pulled out of that installation because next to the Bolton of Watt it is the most significant beam engine in the Powerhouse collection.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It has an extraordinary Australian story to it too.

Ms WINKWORTH: It does.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Was it not brought out here as the first steam engine and then used for the Goulburn Brewery?

Ms WINKWORTH: It was 1837. It is the earliest Providence steam engine that we know has worked in Australia. Part of the important history of steam technology in Australia is how forward-looking Australia was in its embrace of new technology. That is a message that we want to see shared and communicated because we were never a culture that cowered in fear about embracing electric cars as has been recently suggested. Australia was a culture that was founded on innovation and the embrace of new technology. It is those technologies that have powered the economy and development of all of New South Wales, especially important in regional New South Wales.

The CHAIR: Ms Winkworth, you mentioned in your statement about the Molino Stewart report that you commissioned. Why did you as a private citizen commission that report?

Ms WINKWORTH: We felt that the risk to visitors and the collections had been underestimated and not appreciated by those in charge of the selection and development of that site. After your previous inquiry, we had heard from Dr John Macintosh and then particularly with the import of the 9 February flood we felt that these issues had not been properly assessed and considered. I felt that the way that the flood issue had been dealt with in the business case papers, which your Committee secured the release of those. I felt that that had missed the real point about risk for visitors and the collection. As I said, all the way through the flood issue has been seen as a building/design issue not as a matter of risk to visitors and the collection. That is why I thought we needed to have some independent advice on this because I am not a flood expert. I am only just grasping what those issues are and that is why I thought they needed to be an expert report to assist us and to assist your Committee in understanding these issues.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But Ms Winkworth, you have had a role as a trustee of the Powerhouse Museum and you have had that role for seven years or so. You have experience in trying to do risk assessment on a board level, is that right?

Ms WINKWORTH: Yes, I was a member of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences trust for eight years. Unfortunately, the trustees of the museum have been disempowered in this whole process. They do not have a guiding role in this development and they have been carried along because this is a development that has been set by the Government not by the trustees. The trustees do not have agency in the fate of the museum and the decision to locate the museum on that site.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: If you were a trustee and you had this Molino Stewart report in front of you, I would have thought you would have had sleepless nights about the prospect.

The CHAIR: If you read some of the paragraphs on page 14, for example, the second paragraph on the left:

The second problem this presents is that it directs the overland flows along designated pedestrian connections between the river and Phillip Street ... It is quite reasonable to expect that during inclement weather, museum patrons, or more likely, members of the public could take shelter in the undercroft areas. However, as shown in Figure 9, there are two problems in leaving these shelters once flooding commences. The first is that it is necessary to walk down towards the river before being able to walk up to flood free ground.

How you do that when it is flooding, I do not really know. It is more like swim.

The second is that the routes up are designed as overland flow paths. People sheltering within these spaces may not appreciate just how high and how quickly the river can rise and they become entrapments in which people drown or they drown trying to leave them.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: If you are a trustee, Ms Winkworth, and you had this report in front of you, do you think you could in good conscience, let alone in exercise of your duty of care proceed with the proposed Parramatta development?

Ms WINKWORTH: No, I do not. It is an important question that you have asked. We have all seen the searing footage of what happened in Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley with that supercell storm. Nobody would have thought that Toowoomba would flood like that and yet it did. These things are happening now. I think it was Howard Collins, the head of Sydney transport, who said at one point about the extreme weather events that we are getting these one in 100-year weather events every year. And yet we learn from Molino Stewart that climate change, for a building that is designed for a life of 100 years, has not been factored into the flood modelling or the level at which the floor is set.

My nightmare as a museum person is that if this goes ahead there could be some dreadful storm event and people are seriously injured if not killed. I would hate to think of an inquiry then being set up to understand why was this museum built on this site. They would be going through the archives looking at these reports and thinking, "They should have listened." We cannot say now that we do not understand these risks.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In summary, what this part of the report says is that the proposed escape routes in the case of a flood involve navigating your way up the overland flood routes which will have a cascade of water coming down them. And further, that in terms of the undercroft space, there literally will not be an escape route because it is directed towards the river. People will be trapped inside with nowhere to go and they may drown. That is my layperson summary, is that how you understand it?

Ms WINKWORTH: Absolutely. Exactly.

The CHAIR: Dr Griffin, is the Parramatta development actually a museum or is it an entertainment centre?

Dr GRIFFIN: I think that is an important question, Chairman. If the space was sufficiently large, there possibly would be nothing wrong with trying to have it serve as a multipurpose building. As I have said, it is not sufficiently large. The point is that it is being promoted as the Parramatta Museum or the Powerhouse Museum at Parramatta, and that is clearly not what it is. It is being misrepresented. I would like to go to the larger issue, just quickly. One of the major problems with this whole exercise is that the people you would expect to be expert in the whole project or set of projects—the staff of the museum—do not, as Ms Winkworth said, have agency in the proposal. They are simply being told, "This is what you will have; get on and run it." There is a major issue—not confined to museums, but generally—that centralised control does not work. If you want things to work, the people who are going to make it work have to have a major say in the way it is set up and the way it is run.

That does not mean to say that everything they say is agreed to, but they must have a major say; otherwise, it will fall over. If you go to the successful museums or the successful organisations anywhere, they are those where the staff are involved and the leaders are critically involved. Indeed, there are instances where organisations seemed about to fail and in the end the board of directors or whatever said, "Look, unless you can come up with some solution, the organisation is going to fail," and the staff in the organisation find the solution. Here we have got the staff and, indeed, as Ms Winkworth said, the trustees not involved. Indeed, on the board as it is currently constituted, so far as I can understand, there is no-one with any expertise in any matter, in any branch or any discipline or any field of knowledge that bears upon the museum and its development, which is extraordinary.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Winkworth, during your eight years on the board of trustees, can you remember an occasion or a time where there would be such a disempowerment of a board? We had board president Professor Barney Glover here, and he was informed, I think, less than 48 hours before the announcement.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: This is the 4 July announcement?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes, the 4 July announcement. Can you think of an occasion, when you were on the board, that you were ambushed or surprised by something like that?

Ms WINKWORTH: No, I cannot, and particularly not something that so directly affects the fate of the museum. In fact, when I was on the board there was an ill-conceived attempt to merge the Australian Museum and the Powerhouse Museum. Our chair, Dr Nick Pappas—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I remember it distinctly.

Ms WINKWORTH: Oh, you remember? Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I have to declare an interest: I was around at the time.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You were more than around.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But the board stood up to the Minister and the Premier.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes. I want to hear Ms Winkworth's version of events.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: They said they would never agree to your proposal to move to Parramatta. Is that right?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Winkworth, leave out names—I am not making light of this, but your board at the time stood up to the Premier.

Ms WINKWORTH: Yes. It is a very important point because boards—and Dr Griffin will perhaps talk more about the role of governance and independent trusts—are established to have custody of museums over and above the day-to-day politics and the political cycle of elected governments. They have custody of the museum's assets, its collection and its building so that they can be passed on to the next generation. I am sorry to say there has been a very unfortunate collapse of understanding of what that trust and governance, when you are a statutory trust, should mean. I credit Dr Nick Pappas and the then chair of the Australian Museum that we fought very strongly to make the case for why the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences should be maintained independently. There was another episode in Western Australia, I think, where they tried to merge two boards.

What is very disturbing about what is happening in New South Wales at the moment is the tendency of the Government to ignore the statutory enabling legislation of the museum. We have a case at the moment where the Government has effectively merged the Historic Houses Trust—Sydney Living Museums—and the State Records Authority into one organisation, even though they have separate legislation. Then we have Minister Stokes, if I am allowed to say him, creating a new parks super-agency and ignoring the enabling

legislation that was created to protect those distinctive parks, with their own particular remit. I think it is unhealthy. If the Government thinks legislation should be changed, then they should take it to Parliament and make the case. What is important, I think, is that these issues are getting more ventilation. It is good there is an inquiry that is happening into the merger of the Historic Houses Trust and the archives authority—the merger of which will be a disaster for both organisations, I predict. But at least it is getting a hearing.

But I must say I have been very disappointed, when I read the submissions to that inquiry, that the chairs of those trusts have not recognised the distinctive remit that each body has and defended the independence of those two organisations.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Can I take you to the Powerhouse alliance that you are actively involved in. Since the 4 July announcement, have you had meetings or dialogue or briefings from the Minister on what the Government is planning to do?

Ms WINKWORTH: We have had lunch with the Minister.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: How did that go?

Ms WINKWORTH: It was frank and very useful. The Powerhouse Museum Alliance has always been willing to offer advice to all parties in government—Labor, Liberal and the National Party too.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I read your emails.

Ms WINKWORTH: We are very ready to help the Government find a way out of this dilemma. The Minister has said it was not his making; he has inherited what was a stupid decision that has rolled on like a snowball and now, with difficulty, has to—

The CHAIR: Excuse me, did he recently say this?

Ms WINKWORTH: Did he not say that to your inquiry at the last hearing?

The CHAIR: Not quite in that context.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes, I do not remember him using the word "stupid".

Ms WINKWORTH: Sorry, no, he did not say it was stupid. Thank you for the correction.

The CHAIR: That actually was not the part I was referring to, but thank you for highlighting that. The inference is that he has somehow picked this up as a new project. Is that what you are saying?

Ms WINKWORTH: It was not Minister Harwin's decision to move the museum to Parramatta. He inherited this when he came in as Minister in 2017.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But then he got behind it.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: As you did, originally.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But I saw the light and recanted.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The record proves that. I think it is very clear that he is implementing someone else's decision.

Ms WINKWORTH: Yes. The Powerhouse Museum Alliance is keen to help the Government find a way out of this policy and planning and infrastructure mess in a way that does deliver a great new museum to Parramatta.

The CHAIR: As is this Committee. We have made recommendations to that effect.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Winkworth, everyone accepts your bona fides. In fact, you personally funded a study on the flood concerns, so no-one is disputing that you are working positively and that, now there is going to be two museums, you want to see the best possible museum at both locations. Would that be correct?

Ms WINKWORTH: Definitely.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Dr Griffin, I wanted to pick up on a really interesting comment that you made about the fact that you felt that regional museums should be linked in some kind of network. I would love you to extrapolate on that and give us a little more detail about what your views are in that space.

Dr GRIFFIN: Thank you. For reasons I have never fully understood, art museums have developed in many, almost all, States and in networks, and those networks have allowed not just the showing of our own collections, and I think of the museum recently opened in Lismore and the one in the valley nearby—

my geography is not very good so I cannot remember what it is, but anyway—not only the museum's own collections but also travelling exhibitions. So an exhibition may be developed by a regional art museum in Bendigo, let us say, and that then tours to other museums in different locations. And although there has been a lot of debate, sometimes acrimonious, about travelling exhibitions, for the most part the criticisms have been ill-founded.

The circulation of exhibitions allows people in many different places to view items, and very often really outstanding items and even outstanding interpretations, that they would not see were the regional museum in a particular location to only focus on its own collections. In addition, of course, as a network, the staff in those regional museums would be able to share expertise, discuss problems, discuss solutions and so on and so forth. And, indeed, there is a regional museums association in New South Wales, I believe—I am not familiar with it now—but, of course, it has not really managed to develop very far because support for regional museums has been poor.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Do you think that this network should be overseen by a body like, for example, Museums & Galleries of NSW, or do you think that it should be more organic in that these museums should be encouraged to, potentially, but should have a more informal network between themselves where they can have these sorts of travelling exhibitions?

Dr GRIFFIN: I think the latter. I think there is an extraordinary tendency for governments, perhaps in the belief that they have substantial expertise, to issue edicts as to what should happen in complicated institutions like museums—and they are complicated and they do have their own issues of policy development—to say, "This is what should happen", or, in the case you mentioned, a co-ordinating arrangement. It is quite possible for largely independent museums or organisations of any kind to form alliances which are perfectly capable of co-operating very productively and developing combined expertise. Often desired outcomes can be achieved by the way in which grants are administered. What bothers me about the present situation with regional museums in New South Wales is that, by and large, funding is provided for each one on the basis that, eventually, and even in the short term, the local government body is expected to fund them.

On the one hand, the real concern is only local but then, on the other, well, they should be supported if they bring tourists. Now, those two ideas are not compatible. There are several museums in New South Wales, as presently constituted, which are of possibly national significance and I think of the Age of Fishes Museum and Shear Outback, and those both are truly outstanding and deserve ongoing and substantial financial support by the State Government. The present funding arrangements, as I understand it, are pretty minimal and are unlikely to achieve any great advance.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: To close the circle on this issue, do you think there should be an established funding stream for touring exhibitions that can be applied for by regional museums? I am simply trying to get my head around how the State can support this better. If there is a funding stream and they need to put in an application and say, "Right, we have got this exhibition. We want to tour it to four or five other museums in regional New South Wales but we would like \$100,000 back", or something, is that the sort of thing that you say we should be doing?

Dr GRIFFIN: It is. If you look at major art museums in each of the capital cities, indeed that situation has applied since about 1978, or whatever, with a succession of various bodies which, in fact, did provide funding for major exhibitions and some of those have been truly outstanding and would never have occurred without that funding body. The funding is not always direct, of course. With those major exhibitions from overseas, sometimes it is a matter of covering the insurance—but, yes.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The States have brought a lot of art exhibitions as well, even the year 12 ones.

Dr GRIFFIN: Yes, correct. The States have also assisted in that.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: But you are saying museums as well. Alright, I will not take up any more time, Mr Chair, but I think it is a really interesting suggestion. Thank you.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Dr Griffin, given your experience as the director of the Australian Museum and then leadership positions in museums since, I ask for your observations on some of the conclusions about the Powerhouse People Matter survey, the annual survey of public servants in New South Wales that tries to independently assess how organisations are going. When it comes to the organisation's functioning with its management, when they are asked, the proportion of staff who agree with the following propositions are as follows: I feel the change is managed well in my organisation—20 per cent; I feel that senior managers listen to employees—28 per cent; I believe senior managers provide clear direction for the future of the organisation—

28 per cent; I feel that senior managers effectively lead and manage change—29 per cent; I am satisfied with the career opportunities available for career development in my organisation—30 per cent; I have confidence in the ways my organisation resolves grievances—31 per cent. I could go on. If you were the director of an organisation that had that kind of feedback from your staff, what would your response be?

Dr GRIFFIN: I would think it was entirely unsatisfactory. The key issues in any organisation are the way in which the staff are fully engaged in understanding the processes for making decisions and how to work together productively and have strong support for leadership of the museum. The inquiry you mentioned, the questions are entirely appropriate and reveal a situation which, as you possibly suggest, are unsatisfactory. There are problems there, demonstrated also by, I think, a fairly high turnover of staff. If you look at the very best museums around the world, as I have, admittedly a small sample but the characteristics are cohesive leadership and visitor-focused public programming.

Obtaining cohesive leadership in an organisation as diverse as most museums is hard work and that hard work has to be supported by the board and that is not always possible either. It has been said of boards that they should hoot when they go into the wrong part of the forest but that many boards do not know where the forest is. I think that goes to the way in which the Government appoints persons to the board and too often people are appointed who do not have any particular understanding of a museum. I think that is possibly the situation here—I emphasise "possibly". It is certainly in my own case and the Australian Museum very often that difficulties arose because sufficient care was not paid to those issues.

But I can also say, which can be verified by consulting staff, that the museum, over the time from 1954 when an outstanding director was appointed through to possibly—it is for others to say—my own time, there was a very high degree of commitment, of cohesiveness, of involvement and of support to the point where sometimes there was a problem if I said, "Well, this is what we should do, people would say, 'Yes, that is a good idea'", which I do not think is always the best. But those are very important characteristics and I do not think that has been paid any attention whatsoever. Just helicoptering people in from outside on the basis that, "Oh no, we always need to have the best person in charge of the organisation so we will appoint them on limited-term contracts", or, "We need to ensure that efficiency is achieved so we will have those ridiculous annual cuts in funds—efficiency dividends", those kinds of things are utterly stupid.

The best organisations, in fact, have executives who have been there for a long time. Consider the Australian Chamber Orchestra, consider the Nederlands Dans Theatre, consider the Art Gallery of New South Wales—Edmund Capon was there for 30 years. No-one would suggest they should have gone along after he was there for 10 years and said, "You've had a good go, buggie off". All these things are just not sufficiently considered. The purpose of government—the most productive purpose of government—is to ensure that best practice is observed and to encourage that; to encourage discussion and awareness vigorously of museums around the world and so on and so forth. Imagine if government or even Ministers should say, "Now, why don't you do such and such in this museum?" That is delusional.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Dr Griffin, at the last hearing Professor Barney Glover indicated that he was going to vacate the Chair, or the presidency or the senior position at the end of the year. What you just said indicates the importance of a robust, strong, independent leader appointed to the position. Do you agree with that statement?

Dr GRIFFIN: Yes. I think there are other characteristics. Very often Chairs are appointed because they have done well in business, or they have done well somewhere or other, or they are an entrepreneur—and often an entrepreneur is about the worst person you would want as a Chair. The principal role of the Chair is to make sure that the board works together with all those techniques that are well known—which you would know—about getting groups to work together.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Well, I don't know if you could make that statement about Walt.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I have been known to do that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Walt is notorious for bringing people together, isn't he?

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Sorry, in Government, not in Opposition—it is a different thing!

The CHAIR: Even in Government I am not sure about that.

Dr GRIFFIN: I am assuming that there would be a knowledge of these things; I did not make any supposition as to whether they were practised.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Nor should you.

Dr GRIFFIN: But these things are important; they are important in every organisation. If you look at satisfaction surveys of the kind Mr Shoebridge mentioned, those are vitally important issues and they are largely ignored. You end up with people hating the organisation they work for. There have been surveys done of this—something like 28 per cent of people express satisfaction with the organisation they are working with. That is not very good. You are not going to get much progress on that basis.

The CHAIR: Professor Miller, we are out of time now, but from a historical perspective, how would you categorise or classify the importance of the Powerhouse Museum, especially as it is located in Ultimo?

Professor MILLER: I think the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo is a tremendously important organisation; it is a remarkable achievement. It has not been allowed, so far, a very long lease of life. It seems to me that what would concern me particularly is that it be given the opportunity to continue telling and developing and changing these stories that really do need to be told. I went on a tour of the exhibitions earlier this week and one of the things that struck me was the environmental questions that relate these days to steam power and fossil fuel based power. They are so important now. The Maudslay engine, as I understand it, helped seriously to denude the forests around Goulburn, because it was burning wood in its boilers; the Boulton and Watt engine is now seen as the beginning of the process that is delivering us climate change.

Those stories need to be told and they are not being told. It needs the whole apparatus of a museum like the Powerhouse to develop those stories and tell them effectively with the tremendous objects that they have. It is a wonderful institution and it deserves to keep doing its job.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming today and thank you for your input.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

ANNE SCHOFIELD, Private citizen, affirmed and examined

LIONEL GLENDENNING, Private citizen, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming. Would either or both of you like to start with an opening statement of a couple of minutes?

Ms SCHOFIELD: I will start because mine is quite brief. I am speaking as an honorary consultant and life fellow of the Powerhouse Museum, a major donor of antique jewellery and historical costume, and as a representative of the many donors and benefactors to that museum over the past 30 years. I acknowledge and applaud the Government's recent decision to keep the Powerhouse in Ultimo and I urge the Government to provide sufficient funding to revitalise the museum and devise a plan of exciting and marketable shows that can display rarely seen material, honour past donors, attract new donors, support development and grow the visitor base—with a particular emphasis on families. Perhaps, starting with an exhibition called *Treasures of the Powerhouse*.

At the outset, I would like to point out to the committee members that there seems to be some confusion in the public perception about what is a museum and what is a gallery. In general, museums hold collections of historical material and objects, which are rare and important in our social life and culture. Galleries hold collections and show exhibitions of art, antique and contemporary paintings and sculpture. Of course, both are integral to our cultural life, but not one instead of the other. Art galleries should not be valued more highly than museums. Museums are about collections. The collections at the Powerhouse Museum includes science, technology and decorative arts, which include furniture, musical instruments, ceramics, glassware, leatherwork, weaponry and armour, metalwork and jewellery, textiles, carpets, lace work and fashion, among many others. These collections are large enough to be shared with other regional museums and loaned to other museums for special exhibitions. This, I feel, should be the preferred model for the Powerhouse Ultimo.

A museum is also a place of learning, with professional museum curators who are experts in their field striving to create visionary exhibitions for the future inspired by the past. At the present time, during the COVID crisis, it is more important than ever to look into our own holdings for materials for exhibitions and not rely on expensive imported exhibitions from overseas. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Glendenning?

Mr GLENDENNING: I am fine, no.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Schofield, in your opening statement you made reference to "a preferred model for the Powerhouse Museum". Does that imply that you are not happy with the direction or what is being proposed by the Government at the moment?

Ms SCHOFIELD: Yes, that is exactly what it means.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You are being a tad too diplomatic. Can you elaborate on that?

Ms SCHOFIELD: I think it is extremely important to retain the Powerhouse Museum and its collections. I have been disturbed by suggestions that a part of it may be removed and turned into a lyric theatre, for instance. I think this is a really crazy idea. I am very involved in theatres because I have been involved with the Sydney Theatre Company for 30 years—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes, I am aware of that.

Ms SCHOFIELD: —and I understand how difficult it is to attract audiences. We cannot fill the theatres we have and we do not have any work for the artists, the actors and the people who create the furniture, the production people. They are all limping along in this particular time. I know it is a very difficult time and that this decision was made before the COVID crisis. But I think it is really important to focus on a policy for the Powerhouse Museum, so the people out there understand what it is, understand what the collections are. Exhibitions are essential to show people's stories and to teach them and to entertain them and to delight them. I was involved in an exhibition of jewellery in 2014-15 and I loaned, from my private collection, maybe 60 to 80 pieces for that exhibition.

It was the most fascinating exhibition, with jewellery from ancient times right up to the modern day. It ran for over a year in the Powerhouse, but the Government could not find funds to make a catalogue, or a brochure even—we did not even have a brochure. It was an example of a lack of funding for something which I believe was very important.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Earlier today we had evidence from another witness talking about concerns that Mark Newson had about his donations to his collection.

Ms SCHOFIELD: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: He had concern that he may, in fact, take them back because of his concerns. Would you fall into that category and do you know other people who have provided to the Powerhouse and have had similar concerns?

Ms SCHOFIELD: Absolutely. In my submission I said that I represent many, many donors who are terribly concerned by this lack of direction in the Powerhouse. They want to donate items, but they do not want them to go out to Parramatta. They are happy for them to stay in the city, in the CBD, and to be loaned out for special exhibitions to Parramatta or to regional museums. They do not know what to do and already we are losing collections. There is a very important collection of Australiana, which has just been donated to the National Museum of Australia. This is a very important collection and the more important items would have been donated to the Powerhouse, because it is owned by one of the former trustees. But you cannot hang about waiting for the Government to tell you what is happening.

This has been a real problem, the fact that people do not know what on earth is going on. I think that has been really tragic for the Powerhouse. It is a kind of white-anting of the place and people are just very confused about it all. Certainly, a lot of antique dealers and collectors that I know are looking for other institutions, or were looking for other institutions, to loan their things to or to leave them in bequests. But now that we have a change of heart, and we are not moving the Powerhouse, maybe they will come back and decide to donate to the Powerhouse, because it is the place for these things.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Thank you.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr Glendenning, I know you have strong views about what I think you have described as "faux heritage listings"—

Mr GLENDENNING: I do.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —of what is described in that heritage listing as the "Ultimo Tramways Powerhouse". Could I ask you to expand upon those views?

Mr GLENDENNING: Yes, very much so. My views changed radically when I read the first public statements from the Heritage office, when it sought public input into their, as I term it, "faux listing". They are actually listing two brick walls. To me as an architect who has had deep involvement in the evolution of the Powerhouse, who has referenced other architects, international critics, curators, masses of people who are far better informed than I am about cultural issues, I began reading the document and supported this public process. I must say I prepared a passionate and robust response. There were so many issues embedded in the consultants who prepared the report for consideration by the Heritage Council. Seriously, it began with the title of the paper. For a short period of time, I think, someone somewhere deep in the bureaucracy of the engineering, electrical, railways department called it the "Ultimo Tramways Power Station".

Its beginning in the 1890s was as the Ultimo Powerhouse. Its name now is the Powerhouse. They then compounded that error later by calling it the "Powerhouse at 500 Harris Street", which it is not. It is always addressed as Macarthur Street, strangely, but that is just a minor issue. I then went through the report, basically line by line, and, apart from the insults that the consultant made about Leo Schofield and Ken Woolley, who I worked with for many years, a master, members of a jury—they even took on the Institute of Architects and their award systems. It ranged incredibly wide. They created, I think, a sense that what was an incredible apotheosis on that site when the museum moved 200 metres—200 metres—from its original site from the Garden Palace where the fire occurred and destroyed the first collection in the 1870s.

It had been existent pretty much in this precinct for 140 years. It was dismissed, just simply dismissed as not relevant, the collection—not relevant. Two brick walls became the focus of this weird, faux, Claytons heritage listing. So I had a go at it having had experience on the Heritage Council of NSW many years ago as the government architect substitute, fairly familiar with issues relating to heritage and what have you, the Burra Charter and all the other issues that apply to heritage listings. My report stands and I still think it is a pretty fair summation of the basis on which the Heritage Council of NSW was proceeding. It subsequently must have listened to me because I noticed just a week or so ago, it has called for consultants who might be interested in modern architecture from the 1970s and onwards.

So I have had an effect on how it considers the whole site because to consider the building only as the remnant brickwork and to make errors about what was saved and what was not saved and how it was saved, just

struck me as a terribly poor basis on which to begin to make a judgment about listing. I notice also in the minutes of the Heritage Council of NSW, it has deferred consideration of the majority view of submissions that it should list the whole site, the precinct, the collection and the buildings, including the modern buildings.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Given your critical role on the site—

Mr GLENDENNING: It even questioned that in the final submission. I have to tell you, I am pretty upset about it.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I did not pick that up. What was that?

Mr GLENDENNING: Where it referenced not only my wife's essay on the building but my role as an architect in the whole evolution of the Powerhouse Museum. It cast doubt on whether I had that lead role. I admit there was a vast team of people working on the project.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You would hope so.

Mr GLENDENNING: I went down there with a hammer and nail and made a museum for God's sake. Seriously. Great buildings are built by large teams of people and as an architect you are basically a ringmaster towards the middle and end of the project.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: If you take that approach Renzo Piano has been an architect on not a single building on the planet.

Mr GLENDENNING: Exactly.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is it your position— Do you think it would be useful if this committee recommended that the heritage listing be expanded to include what you said earlier?

Mr GLENDENNING: I think it would be fundamental. This committee has been such a critical element of the whole revolution of the last five years of the difficulties that the Government has faced in arriving at a rational solution to what it wants to do—which we have supported from day one. The Powerhouse Museum Alliance came together to save the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo and to say that it was a very viable and necessary future cultural move to build western Sydney cultural facilities. There is no argument. It is a strange thing that we sit here at this table again.

I made comments about Gladys in Wonderland last time I was sitting here. I am now going to say that it is more like the Mad Hatter's tea party. I am just flabbergasted that we have ended up in these circumstances. We have spent over \$50 million on consultants. We are in a circumstance where five years later— I could go out and start the process again and no-one would notice that anything had changed. I certainly would not be building—as you have seen in other testimonies today—on a flood prone site. With one of my papers the EIS was pronounced, the public exhibition, I get the document and I read it but I cannot believe it.

I think, maybe I am an idiot. I take it to a friend, a very noted cultural architect who I respect immensely and who worked in the Government at the highest level as a senior architect, and we sat down on a Saturday afternoon for two hours and we arrived at 30 or 40 issues and this was subsequent to the announcement by the Government that the Powerhouse would not be moving. The brief for the building at Parramatta is based on the museum in Sydney. It has all the problems that Sydney had writ large. Large spaces. I said at the time the Powerhouse was beginning to the Premier that the great spaces of the boiler hall would cost a fortune to replicate in modern buildings. That was the rational basis on which we restored the original Powerhouse buildings.

You replicate it at Parramatta and suddenly you are spending \$1 billion. You cannot make it up. This is what the Government is trying to do. Not only are those spaces laid out so if you laid them end to end they would occupy 10 times the site, it has stacked them one load upon another load upon another load. As I explained to someone who said there are too many columns in the Powerhouse at Ultimo, there is a thing called gravity.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You are an architect, are you not?

Mr GLENDENNING: These people are denying gravity at Parramatta.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And the gravity is the same out at Parramatta, as I understand it.

Mr GLENDENNING: It is going to be an interesting question as to whether gravity wins by sinking it into the mud or whether it climbs out of it. I am sorry but I cannot seriously deal with the issue because in analysing the building dispassionately—and I must say both the other architect and myself reached different conclusions as to whether it was worth building on the site from a flood point of view as I do not believe it is sensible to build a

cultural building, particularly one with visitors— One day they are there, one day they are not. If you are regularly there you can probably manage it a bit like a lifeboat on a cruise ship but that is a subtle line.

The flood issue is profound and I think you should not be building a cultural building on a flood prone site. That puts aside all the other issues of function and access and all the other things that are doubtful in the relation or the way in which the solution of the building has been made. It is just simply not a viable thing to do, to put so many visitors at risk in a cultural institution on a flood prone site.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Have you had the benefit of reading the most recent Molino Stewart flood risk review, the July 2020 one?

Mr GLENDENNING: Yes. It is damning. It is an indictment. I cannot tell you that other consultants preparing reports have arrived at obviously conclusions that may in fact be faulty. That is my conclusion. As an architect, I would not proceed further.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Well, you have come to the end of my questioning now. What this report says is that based upon the material in the EIS that you have extraordinary problems with it. You have got the cascade of water going down the escape path—

Mr GLENDENNING: That is a scary issue. Not only have they reduced the perfectly valid link from the Parramatta Square down to the riverfront, a 20-metre wide— It is also a flood path which they have now constricted down to nine metres and then used the nine metres and the spaces around the edge as the escape route for people on the riverfront. So you will be wheeling chairs and prams through the flood water up the hill as it comes rushing down towards you. It is hard to perceive the reality as we sit in the glorious sunshine of an early spring. We have just had two East Coast lows which each dumped 100 millimetres on Parramatta. We have increased the paved surfaces in Parramatta.

We have built huge buildings that collect water on their facades, all rushing to the base. I did not see anywhere in the solution a stormwater retention system in this building to dampen down the flood flow, which I thought was current code requirement—that you have to hold part of the flood back on your site that you are responsible for so you do not add to the problem. Good luck. Here is the life vest, off you go.

The CHAIR: There are no lifeboats either.

Mr GLENDENNING: There is the thought.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: When there is discussion about the flooding risk to the undercroft spaces, the report says that is likely the place people will take shelter when there is heavy rain.

Mr GLENDENNING: That is right. Out of the rain and what have you.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But then they talk about there being two problems. The first is that it is necessary to walk down towards the river before being able to walk up to flood free ground.

Mr GLENDENNING: That is madness. If I designed a fire escape like that I think I would be visiting the local courts up the road.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is like putting a fire escape through the furnace, is it not?

Mr GLENDENNING: It is basically, yes, absolutely.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The second is that the routes upper design as overland flow paths. The conclusion is that people sheltering within these spaces may not appreciate how high and how quickly the river can rise and they become entrapments in which people drown or they drown trying to leave them.

Mr GLENDENNING: Correct. They have to go towards the river to leave the site. That is how the system works. You cannot come out the side of an undercroft. The other problem that arises too, if you stop people going in there for security and vandalism, noise, all the rest of it, you build a fence, do you not? What happens with all the debris that builds up? You are adding to the problem of rising flood. You are increasing debris. If you look at what was on the site after the last flood there were masses—it is debris timber, pieces of wood, plastic accumulations. I mean, you would not survive in that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Which is something I think can be usefully explored with the flood experts about the blocking of their large pipe proposals.

Mr GLENDENNING: Therein lies the other problem that the basis upon which the Arup report was prepared, I believe, as the Molino Stewart report who are the experts, I might add, because they prepared studies for Parramatta for the Parramatta City Council that shows that they may have used the wrong base for their

calculations on the flood. They have an arrangement where they calculate the amount of blockage in the system itself. As you well know with your own house you get back flows, your leaves fill up your downpipes. This system is no different; it is just bigger and the risk is higher as a consequence. So let us put two million people a year through there and see how it goes and run the risk. It is a risk. It is a question of risk. I would not take the risk as a professional, others might, I do not know.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Using your expertise as an architect do you think you can design away these problems?

Mr GLENDENNING: I do not believe so, not at this level. You are dealing with the lives of people and also much of the solution lies in the management of how you do it. We all know what management systems are like. We have seen the *Ruby Princess*—that is an example of management systems. They do not work. They are driven by human beings and in the best of worlds, someone will make a mistake. You cannot guarantee that that will not occur and therein lies the risk for me. I would not risk doing that and relying on security systems which have been handed down from one generation to the next through the building's life. And this building, would you believe, they are saying one-in-100 years which is something I said about the Ultimo Powerhouse but after 30 years it is not-for-purpose, is it? Is this thing going to be fit for purpose in 30 years? Not according to current belief.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You said you have spoken to and represented people who have significant collections who might be minded to make bequeaths of them, or contributions of them, to the Powerhouse. The current vision that we got from the Government—there is still a lot of detail missing but subsequent to the 4 July announcement—was to keep the Ultimo Powerhouse site, perhaps as some kind of cultural precinct, and I am unclear what that means, perhaps even as some kind of theatre space or artists' work space with the three large objects; the Boulton and Watt, locomotive No. 1 and the Catalina, on that site. But still the Parramatta site seems to be the primary site, the main site, the staff for example from the Powerhouse would be intended to move to Parramatta and be based there.

You indicated that people were keen to support the Powerhouse, as it has been existing in Ultimo. Would that type of model split over two or even three, if you include the storage facility in Castle Hill, meet the aspirations of people who might want to make contributions?

Ms SCHOFIELD: No, I do not think so. I have always said, yes there should be a museum or a cultural centre in Parramatta. I think the actual soul of the museum, the staff and the administration should remain in the central business district. I really do. I think the storage facility at Castle Hill is nothing but a storage facility. I mean I have been out there. I have seen everything. It is not a museum, it is a storage facility and all these amazing objects are out there. You open drawers and there are fabulous things in these drawers. A museum is only as good as its director and its curators and its collections, and that is what museums are all about. It has really got to all stay together and Parramatta has to have another cultural centre.

If this museum is revitalised, the one in Parramatta can share the exhibitions. It can be kind of an annex I suppose or it can be a centre where collections from the Australian museum and the Powerhouse share exhibitions and collections. It has really got to do with inspired leadership, I think, and excellent curators who know what they are doing and have some sort of vision. I do not really think it is a good idea to move the directorate out to Parramatta, I certainly do not, and certainly not now because when is Parramatta going to be happening? In 10 or 20 years' time, we do not know it is in the future. What we have now is a building and we have a collection. Let us concentrate our efforts in revitalising that building, putting some money into it and getting people excited about it. It is just so important really to keep it in the central business district.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Earlier you touched on the sense of uncertainty and not knowing about what is going to happen. Do you have any reflections on the impact that has had on the actual exhibitions and curatorial work that has been going on the Powerhouse at Ultimo over the past few years? The Committee has received evidence that essentially that has been deprioritised and it has not been receiving the kind of funding and attention that it might have in years gone by and the past few years the Powerhouse has, sort of, been allowed to decline in a way. Is that your experience? Do you have any reflections on the way that the leadership of the museum over the past few years?

Ms SCHOFIELD: I think for the last 10 years really it has been declining because of poor leadership, poor decisions, poor funding, not enough proper funding and also the sort of perception that people have. The minute we heard five years ago in 2015 about Mike Baird's decision about moving it everybody, sort of, lost interest. Why would donors give things to a museum that is out at Parramatta? People want that sort of museum to be in the central business district. Another sort of museum can be at Parramatta. It is a great idea. I think that should happen in time but I think we should really concentrate on what we have.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Surely we can all agree that there should be something spectacular and international best class at Parramatta that responds to Parramatta's own cultural attributes and its own story and there should be something urgent and amazing at Parramatta? We all agree on that?

Ms SCHOFIELD: Yes, we do. That could attract big blockbuster exhibitions and things that would attract big audiences. At the moment it is not looking like a museum, it is looking more like a cultural centre.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: It is going to have a farmers' market out there.

Ms SCHOFIELD: I know. There are all these ideas about—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: What have you got against the farmers?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I have nothing against the farmers.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: A farmers' market is not a museum.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes. Thank you, Ms Jackson.

Ms SCHOFIELD: It is going to have bits and pieces of this and that. It is not looking to me like a proper museum. I am very used to going to museums in Europe and in London. The Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum, the Musée des Arts Décoratif in Paris—I know what museums are. Museums are really depend on the generosity of benefactors and donors. If there is uncertainty about a museum, nobody is going to give anything. I think it is really important to concentrate on revitalising that museum.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There are multiple buildings on the Ultimo site. We had the Minister, in his last contribution to this Committee, describe the tram shed site as a 1980s building. I do not know if you saw that or heard that contribution, Mr Glendenning.

Mr GLENDENNING: I am not surprised.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Could you describe, if you can, what you think the heritage significance of that building is?

Mr GLENDENNING: It goes beyond the heritage significance. I would start with the point Anne Schofield was making that the museum in Ultimo was established as a completely integrated, museologically powerful expression of a museum. It had extraordinary display spaces. It had a huge variety, to match the variety of the collection, and it was supported by a range of specialist spaces. Those specialist spaces were within walking distance—100 metres max. There is deep storage in the basement. I distinctly remember making the distinction between display storage, which is the sort of thing we have at Castle Hill, and the deep storage which is located in the Harwood building. There is armoury. There are weapons. There are whole collections that require super security. The accessibility of the collection is fundamental to the research and the operation of a curatorial professional. You have heard that from others this morning.

The opportunity for conservation and the dry and wet labs that are in existence there—there is an opportunity with the small exhibition space at one end to do specialist exhibitions and link them to the Gehry building. The building itself is a very simple building. I think in its simplicity it has a potential to be used for a number of uses—the least of which is a lyric theatre, I might add. There are better sites for that if you are going to build a lyric theatre. There is something strange about the obsession with a lyric theatre on this site. It is not a development site, let me say that about it. From a heritage point of view, one of my papers really addresses the whole heritage issue. I do hope this Committee has the opportunity to delve deeper into the listing and all the other issues related to the way in which the Heritage Council is going about doing its work, because I make certain—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Assertions?

Mr GLENDENNING: Assertions—thank you. Opinions. I express them rather robustly about that process because I suspect other things have gone on, but there you go. It is an integral part of this professional set-up for a real museum—a museum that can allow things to work. If you move it all out to Castle Hill—basically that is what the building is. It is a building that supports the exhibition spaces in Ultimo and there are an extraordinary amount of exhibition spaces—20,000 square metres, which is big and not replicated in Parramatta. That will be basically a licence to write Cabcharge tickets. You have 53,000 exhibit movements. There are people adjusting, modifying, cleaning and moving stuff around. The risk goes up exponentially as you increase the level of movement.

The beauty of having it right next door—part of the original development was going to provide a direct tunnel access from the basement across Macarthur Street to the switch building, where the goods lift is located, to access all the levels within the building, to minimise the risk to the collection and to provide really efficient,

clear access that is secure for both the staff and the curators. Those things are there, ready to go. They work. They are professionally available to operate. I must say, when it was built the Powerhouse was built to quite a low cost per metre squared compared with other museums around the State and the gallery. We deliberately worked hard to maximise the budget. Therein again was the argument for retaining the existing buildings. I did not have to build all that. We just simply repaired it and conserved it and put new facilities, new air conditioning and what have you in it, and reused as much of that.

The sea water conduits operate, so there are no cooling towers in there. It operates much the same as the Opera House or the AMP building. It utilises the seawater, as does the Maritime Museum. In terms of state-of-the-art, it leapt state-of-the-art and went into a whole new realm of environmental sustainability. There are things about the building, and certainly about the air conditioning and other systems, that need updating. The control systems, the digitising of the systems—they are all necessary to upgrade. It is just part and parcel of a monumental exercise of dealing with it. I have prepared some budgets and I have publicly stated that for probably \$150 million you would be able to do a complete refurbishment of the whole facility bring it right up to speed, and then hopefully fund it sensibly into its future and not constantly nibble away at the edges of these institutions.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Do you have any views on the 2014 business case that was prepared by the trustees, which seems to be getting a fresh life through the Minister at the moment?

Mr GLENDENNING: As I have said in the opening comments, this process is so flawed. It is not making sense. Can I just spend one moment searching for the quote that I have got? It is a quote from Winston Churchill, God love him. He said it all.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: He said many things.

Mr GLENDENNING: Well, he said this, let me tell you. The Powerhouse move to Parramatta defies logic. This is what he said:

... a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma ...

End of story. I just cannot begin to comment on the flawed nature of the documentation that has basically been used as a support for this move. The fundamental logic needs to be understood that no one disagrees with the need for a cultural space in Parramatta. You will hear testimony from Suzette Meade in the days to come—

The CHAIR: In an hour.

Mr GLENDENNING: —about how beautiful a site there is at Parramatta. It is called the Fleet Street site. It is loaded with heritage. It is fantastic. You could do it in a way that would be far more cost-effective and get far more trophy buildings to open over the life of three years.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Mr Glendenning, at the end of this process we make a number of recommendations. Would you recommend that the site be moved to the Female Factory?

Mr GLENDENNING: Completely.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The Fleet Street precinct?

Mr GLENDENNING: Completely. A perfect lay-down misère. You have got the light rail. It is 80 metres walk from the CBD. It is not flood prone. It is rich. Its history is extraordinary—women's stories.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: It is deserving of World Heritage listing.

Mr GLENDENNING: As I said to the Lord Mayor yesterday morning at a meeting, if I were 20 years younger I would be pitching for the job.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I would even be happy to go to the Don Harwin commemorative hall there.

The CHAIR: On that juncture—thank you very much, Mr Glendenning and Ms Schofield, for coming. You have been most helpful.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

BILL d'ANTHES, Deputy Convenor, Pymont Action Incorporated, sworn and examined

SUZETTE MEADE, North Parramatta Residents Action Group, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you. Would either or both of you like to make a short opening statement limited to about two minutes? I know you would, Ms Meade.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Try to stop her.

Ms MEADE: Thank you to the Committee for inviting me in today, I am here as spokesperson for the North Parramatta Residents Action Group, which is membership-based corporation run by volunteers. Our objectives are to promote the preservation and activation of Parramatta heritage buildings and landscapes and enhance the historical, cultural and capital of our city. I am also here to give voice to the 3,600 people that have so far pledged to support the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union [CFMEU] green ban and stand in front of machinery with the community to protect Willow Grove and St George's Terrace from demolition, and the 13,984 that signed a petition in 2018 asking the Premier not to bulldoze these much loved parts of our Australian heritage. Lastly, but most importantly, to passionately promote the popular alternative proposal of a museum at the Fleet Street Heritage Precinct, also known as the Cumberland Hospital precinct, which would deliver more to Parramatta arts and cultural, and its long-term tourism future.

We object to the design and location of the Parramatta Powerhouse as currently proposed by the New South Wales Government in the EIS. While we strongly support more arts and cultural investment in western Sydney and believe Parramatta deserves a world-class museum, this should never come at the expense of its cherished heritage. It is ultimately unacceptable to me that any museum should destroy Willow Grove and St George's Terrace. The member for Parramatta speaks about there being hundreds and thousands of buildings like Willow Grove. This is not true; in Parramatta there remains just one.

Willow Grove is the only Victorian Italianate villa in the Parramatta CBD. Willow Grove was built in 1891, not the 1870s as stated in the Government's EIS. From 1879 to 1953 the site has been owned by a succession of entrepreneurial Parramatta businesswomen in their own right. This is exceptionally rare. In the wider context of Parramatta's extraordinary heritage, Willow Grove is part of a sequence of women's sites unmatched anywhere in Australia. In February this year our group reached out to the CFMEU to explain our how much the wider community loved these two heritage buildings and our desperation of not being heard by the Government to stop its plans to demolish them. In July a green ban by the union was placed on the demolition of both of these buildings. This was supported by the National Trust of Australia, the Historic Houses Association, and, most recently, this month the NSW Nurses and Midwife Association has also thrown its full support behind this campaign.

The City of Parramatta has always had the future development of the river with Willow Grove central to its design. Council's 2016 River Strategy and Civic Link, which was to create a pedestrian link from the Parramatta Square and open up the river as an open entertainment precinct, retained Willow Grove at its core. Now the Government's proposal not only seeks to wipe out Willow Grove but lacks a connection with the river strategy and civic link. Parramatta City Council's resolution of 14 January 2016 stated:

That it be noted if the government insists or force the location of the Powerhouse Museum on our River foreshore, it will result in a negative impact on Parramatta City Council and its vision as a River City and this is the only parcel of land that our Council can develop and invest in a public domain that will be beneficial to our local residents and business ... Further, that the option of Powerhouse Museum being located on the Riverbank Foreshore will lead to a financial implication for Parramatta City Council and the City.

In the *Parramatta Advertiser* that week, it reported that all councillors were against the museum being built on the old David Jones carpark site, which we know as Phillip Street riverbank, including the former lord mayor. It reported:

Councillor John Chedid said ... "This (the riverbank) is the only parcel of land where we can do something for the community" ... Cr Chedid said the government had not properly consulted with the council about possible Powerhouse Museum locations "... why come along and disregard the local views and businesses when it comes to the museum location," Cr Chedid told *The Advertiser* ... Cr Bob Dwyer suggested the museum be moved to Westmead and Cr Glenn Elmore said he preferred to see it relocated to the Old Parramatta Gaol.

Not many people know that in May 2016, just weeks before the State Government sacked councillors and put in place the administrator, Amanda Chadwick, there was in fact a determined development application for Willow Grove to become the temporary council chambers for five years plus while the new council chambers were constructed. Parramatta residents have been excluded from any meaningful and genuine consultation about what

we want in a Museum. In 2017 we were given a one-night-only opportunity to express what we wanted in a museum.

I attended this event at the Parramatta Park Royal and, apart from Mr David Borger who was in the room, it was an overwhelming call for museums to celebrate our great Indigenous and non-Indigenous history as the cradle of the nation. However, the results of this consultation do not seem to have evolved into the proposal. The next time we were offered consultation via the form of a push poll survey was March 2020—the week of COVID pandemic lockdown and total school closures. Infrastructure NSW pushed on with an online webinar despite our letters to Infrastructure NSW and the planning Minister that it was an inappropriate time to be carrying out such a process.

We were not asked what we wanted for our museum, but to be told what we were getting. Any time people tried to express what they wanted for Parramatta in a museum, and if it was not what the Government was promoting, they were told it as a done deal and the consultant said, " I am sorry you feel that way". To be blunt, it was insulting. Museums thrive best when they enjoy popular legitimacy and support from the community they are meant to serve. There are better locations for an iconic Parramatta museum that do not destroy heritage but, in fact, complement it. We urge the Government to consider the State Government's 26-hectare Cumberland Hospital campus. This is an exciting potential to maximise the precinct for Parramatta's community and a vibrant tourism destination which represents our First Nations narratives and also our forced migration to Australia.

We do not understand why, as the premier State, we are not—instead of splitting an existing museum—filling the void of a museum about our State's enormous First Nations history, our forced migration history and our evolving, diverse free migration of our new Australian stories. This is what international visitors travel around the world to experience. If this model was adopted, it would cost less but deliver more for the people of New South Wales. It is time for the Government to ditch this Baird idea. We encourage them, whole-heartedly, to be visionary and create a legacy for New South Wales' cultural future.

Mr d'ANTHES: Sydney nearly lost The Rocks to Stalinist towers in the early 1970s. Almost 50 years later, the New South Wales Government developed new plans for selling and leasing public land for overdevelopment in Sydney. They decided to flog off the choice land occupied by the Ultimo Powerhouse Museum complex—once described by Lucy Turnbull as one of the "jewels of the cultural necklace" encircling Sydney. The original plan seems not to have gone far beyond just transplanting the contents of the Powerhouse from its home and heritage in Ultimo to some unknown location in Parramatta. Later, it was announced that the new Powerhouse would be built on a site facing the Parramatta River.

This is considered by many experts to be too small and, worse, flood prone. It was somewhat surprising to me that the Government did not back-pedal and suggest that the maritime museum be sold up the river on barges to an artificial harbour in the David Jones parking lot. Using the same warped logic, I could expect Parramatta's Old Government House to be floated down to Sydney and converted into a high-end function centre on Pinchgut Island. To get a better idea of how this thought bubble of a project was conceived, I recommend that the inquiry again watch and listen to the evidence—including the pauses and non-answers—given by previous Premier Baird. In this case, we are hoping that the fierce expert and public opposition, the findings of this Committee, the context relating to the Powerhouse staying in Ultimo and plain common sense will prevail over political aspirations and Treasury avarice.

The Harwood building is not yet secured. Some members of the community believe that the bid to grab the entire Powerhouse property in Ultimo was an ambit claim and that the Harwood site was and is the major target of the Government and developers. The structure was originally built as tram sheds but also served as a temporary museum while the main Powerhouse building was being repurposed. It is now used to service the Powerhouse by providing storage, preparation and repair of exhibits. UTS and other hungry developers need to look elsewhere for sites to devour. The Powerhouse Museum needs the Harwood building.

Parramatta is not a regional city; it is a growing metropolis with its own important perspectives in Indigenous, colonial government, agriculture and early European as well as later migration histories. Even the inadequate business case and incomplete community consultation provided by the Government did not naturally suggest acquiring the Powerhouse for Parramatta. Like Sydney, Parramatta will have to fight to retain its historic buildings and sites, such as the women's factory with the surrounding buildings. All are of undeniable heritage value. These and other buildings are in great need of preservation and defence against high-rise contamination of their sites. In addition, cultural possibilities should be investigated with and by the local community. The consultation process should be provided with commensurate funding by government.

Under the embarrassing circumstances of this whole Powerhouse project—and especially after the New South Wales State election, where pledges were made to the electors of western Sydney to construct a cultural entity in Parramatta—the New South Wales Government should fund a cultural project requiring a similar

financial investment to the one promised. The expense of moving the Powerhouse from Ultimo to Parramatta should be used instead to fund the required repairs to the Powerhouse that were raised in earlier sessions of the inquiry. The Powerhouse should better promote their recently renovated Powerhouse discovery centre in Castle Hill—it is only 11 kilometres from Parramatta—and continue to ensure the regular loan and/or exchange of exhibits with other, smaller museums in New South Wales. I can personally attest to the benefit of exchanging exhibits between museums. My grandfather helped establish the Mystic Seaport Museum in the American State of Connecticut.

That museum donated a nineteenth-century whaleboat on permanent loan to the Australian National Maritime Museum here in Pyrmont. Starting from seven years old, I have spent many hours in both museums learning about seafaring and the oceans. Finally, with all the attention being given to the Powerhouse, the importance and even the existence of smaller museums in regional areas, with their volunteers and other staff, should not be forgotten. My grandmother added depth to my knowledge of colonial New England and the American Revolution by taking me around the smaller museums and pre-Revolutionary homes in Connecticut and Massachusetts, many of which are staffed by volunteers. We need to support all our museums, whatever their size. Thank you.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Meade, where does the Cumberland Hospital campus fit in in relation to the Fleet Street precinct?

Ms MEADE: The current site is Cumberland Hospital east precinct. That is its official name. But we have adopted it as the Fleet Street Heritage Precinct because it sits on Fleet Street and there is a lot of heritage in there.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So we are talking about the same thing.

Ms MEADE: It is the same thing.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I just wanted clarification for our recommendations.

Ms MEADE: There are also people who say the Parramatta Female Factory precinct, which is only seven hectares of the 26.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Your submission, or your proposal, is that you support the Powerhouse Museum in Parramatta, but you would prefer it at the Fleet Street precinct/Cumberland Hospital campus?

Ms MEADE: We support a museum that celebrates and promotes our great history of Parramatta. I do not think we need to prescribe a name. We have obviously adopted the Museum of New South Wales because I am pretty sure we are the only State that does not have one and we are the Premier State. But that does not prescribe the whole site to just be about the Museum of New South Wales. We have got the living history. You could have brand-new modern buildings with travelling exhibitions and art galleries and technology involved in it as well. Because it is such a big site, it could have lots of small themes to it.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: We make recommendations at the end of the process. I want to make sure that the spirit of your—you support the green ban on Willow Grove and St George's Terrace because you do not want to go ahead there. Therefore, you want a museum at the Cumberland site?

Ms MEADE: We support the green ban on those two buildings because they are an exceptionally important part of our social fabric. We believe that the Cumberland Hospital precinct/Fleet Street Heritage Precinct is a much more suitable site because it is larger, it is more accessible, it does not flood and it has a wonderful narrative there, which you can build on as an experience that you can have tactile learning about.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: How strongly do you feel about the two heritage buildings? If the Government seems determined to demolish them, what would be your response to the proposal to remove them?

Ms MEADE: They will see me in front of them, standing in front of the machines—that is my immediate response, along with thousands of other people. We have been inundated with people offering their birth certificates. As we know, it was a maternity hospital for three decades. We have had people calling us. I had a woman come up to me in the street and give me a whole portfolio the other day from the Nurses and Midwives' Association, to say her mother was born there. I am having calls from builders in Condobolin who heard something on the radio and said, "Here's my mobile number. I know I'm seven hours' drive away, but I appreciate these buildings and I'll be there." So this is far beyond Parramatta now. It has become a bigger campaign. These buildings are important to Parramatta's streetscape. They are important socially, as well as architecturally.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But the Government has said—I am just going to be devil's advocate here and this is not my view—that there are hundreds of thousands of buildings similar to these—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I am not sure the Government said hundreds of thousands—

The CHAIR: I do not think they quite said a thousand.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Did I say hundreds of thousands? Thousands, I meant to say.

Ms MEADE: Geoff Lee said there are thousands of these buildings.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Sorry, there you go: Geoff Lee. Dr Geoff Lee.

The CHAIR: Geoff Lee said they are basically unimportant, replicated everywhere and dispensable. That is what he said.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Put inverted commas around "doctor".

Ms MEADE: That is incorrect, because there is only one Victorian Italianate villa in the Parramatta CBD that remains. Originally there would have been a lot of them along the riverbank there, but this is the only one that does remain. It also has an exceptionally large frontage to it and a very important landscape.

The CHAIR: The curtilage of the house is just as important as the house itself.

Ms MEADE: Absolutely. When we are talking about heritage and suggestions of moving buildings to other locations, which I believe was suggested by Infrastructure NSW to the CFMEU, I think we forget that the importance of a place socially is its setting and its stories of where it is placed in that area. You would not pick up and move other heritage or much-loved sites to other places and expect that narrative to remain.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I wanted to ask Ms Meade about the proposition that I think has been put forward by Parramatta council in relation to its vision for the site on the river as a public domain, and why that is important in Parramatta—why the council and the community would want that space as open space, as green space, as public domain space.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: They did sell it, did they not?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Who?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The administrator sold it.

Ms MEADE: The administrator sold it.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: And got the money.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: The unelected administrator, Amanda Chadwick, sold it.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have asked a question.

Ms MEADE: Would you like me to answer the question?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I would like you to answer the question please, Ms Meade.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Apologies on behalf of the entire Committee, Ms Meade.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I like the way you stood up for yourself there.

Ms MEADE: It was unlike me, right? In 2016 the council ratified its river strategy, which marries up with the Civic Link. That was a slow process of purchasing the properties from private owners along Phillip Street. That was a connection of Parramatta Square with, I think, a 29-metre-wide Civic Link from Parramatta Square, which has finally got off the ground, coming down and having this great pedestrian link down past the beautiful Roxy Theatre and its Spanish mission architecture, coming down and looking at Willow Grove. That was your end journey and it was opening up to the river.

Along Parramatta River we have long seen the backs of buildings, like the river was not something worth celebrating. That is what Parramatta council wanted to do: to open up the river, to celebrate the river and have it as an end point, but a very important place to hold Parramatta council's burgeoning cultural activities. It has Parramasala, the Loy Krathong and the winter festival. There are very few public squares and spaces that Parramatta council has that can hold these crowds now as we get bigger. Prince Alfred Square, which is opposite the Riverside Theatre, does not have any amenities in it. It is very small. We are getting more popular and our activities are getting more popular. This was going to facilitate these larger events being held in Parramatta in a central location.

At the moment the only other larger space is Parramatta Park, which council has to lease at great expense. Not having this great asset, I can imagine, is what Councillor Chedid at the time was saying, that they are not

going to have that space for themselves as their own asset to hold their cultural calendar on and they will have to seek other land to lease to hold those events.

The CHAIR: Ms Meade, what kind of budget do you think may be required to realise the full potential of a museum of New South Wales?

Ms MEADE: I have submitted in my submission the business proposal that NSW Treasury asked me to prepare after I reached out to it in April. I asked to meet with the Treasurer to discuss an alternative vision that would cost less to the Government but give more to the people of Parramatta culturally. His staffer called me about 36 hours later, on a Sunday, and said, "That is great, could you come in?" I came in and met and did a presentation. I was told not to waste my time talking about the current proposal, because they agreed it was not a good one, and that I should just talk about what I foresee as a better option. Then I was asked if I had a business case. I said I could reach out with experts and put one together, but it is not going to be a bit long business case.

I reached out to Lionel Glendenning and Jennifer Sanders and asked them to help me prepare as architects and experts—I can only give the passion and the community view. We prepared a costing of \$450 million in the Cumberland Hospital precinct, which would be a rollout over four years but not waiting four years for something. It would be a slow rollout of expenditure of no more than \$100 million per year and lots of openings, lots of ribbon-cutting and bringing people to the site in stages instead of waiting. I believe that is more fiscally responsible. I think it is culturally more interesting for Parramatta. I think it is more open green space for Parramatta.

In the pandemic world and going forward we are going to have to have more of these outdoor spaces and these cultural events that are in more open spaces. As we found out during lockdown, they were the places that we turned to and we had to enjoy because we were not allowed indoors. I think this would also possibly, hopefully give more money allocation to the Riverside Theatre, which appears to have fallen off the back of the wagon so far in progressing.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Can I ask a follow-up question about the Cumberland site? I just want to be clear that the footprint does provide some capacity for modern development as well. It is not purely historic. Obviously there is a substantial collection at the Powerhouse, a lot of which is not on display at all at the Ultimo facility, and that the idea of trying to bring some more of that to the public gaze is a good one. I just wanted you to talk a little bit about the potential for a mix of old and new, I suppose. It would not just be a historic museum—

Ms MEADE: Absolutely not, no.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: —at Parramatta. There would be that potential for old and new. Is that your vision?

Ms MEADE: Yes. In the proposal that we put forward we looked at a really interesting architect called Sejima, who is a Japanese architect, which would be very interwoven and serpentine buildings that sort of wrap around the existing heritage buildings there, which would reflect the river and our First Nations stories. We could have this juxtaposition of new structures married in with—there are over 77 buildings that can be repurposed on that site. The history of this site is about repurposing. It started as the Female Factory for only 22 years. It then became the Parramatta insane asylum—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Can I just ask: The Female Factory makes up—

Ms MEADE: Seven hectares of the 26 hectares, yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Right.

Ms MEADE: That is the national heritage core that World Heritage listing is being campaigned for. That would be your living museum experience and adaptive re-use buildings, but the rest of the site—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I have got to say I have been interested in what I have—I understood from previous submitters, whether it be this inquiry or the former inquiry, that we were talking essentially about the women's factory being the site.

Ms MEADE: Yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: At the same time, there are these proposals for World Heritage listing. I wondered how consistent seeking to obtain World Heritage listing was with these proposals for building a museum on the same site. It seems to me that if you talk about place being as much an issue as the actual fabric of the building then listing for World Heritage purposes may not be consistent. This is not to argue against the use of the rest of the site, but it may not be consistent—

Ms MEADE: No, it absolutely is consistent.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: It is consistent?

Ms MEADE: Because the site is 30 hectares, and you have got seven hectares of the World Heritage proposed site and then all the way down to Parramatta Gaol you have got this open space with older single-level buildings there. Not all of them are—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Again, I am not disagreeing with you at all in this regard. You are really talking about using the non—

Ms MEADE: No, the whole site. The whole precinct would be a destination of mixed cultural arts—community-based centres in some of the buildings for Parramatta community theatre, theatre rehearsal spaces and then some startup hubs in some of the smaller buildings, like at Abbotsford Convent.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I think we might be talking at cross purposes. I think I understand what you are saying.

Ms MEADE: I know what you are saying, that you think a new building might jeopardise the World Heritage listing—is that what you are saying?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Yes.

Ms MEADE: I think the Parramatta Light Rail might have more of an issue of jeopardising that than a future new build that would be at the other end of the site, because it is a very long site. What we are talking about with the World Heritage is at one end, and you have much further expanse to build in other areas that would not jeopardise the borders of the proposed heritage site.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: That is fine.

Ms MEADE: But it would be a symbiotic relationship because, as I think Kylie Winkworth was saying, bucket lists for travellers are World Heritage sites. So, you get these people who want to come to World Heritage sites, but then we would have this modern new museum down here for kids who do not want to go to that. You can return because it is multilayered and that is what you want—you want people coming back and staying for a weekend. Sorry, I am very excited and passionate about it.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Can I just ask both organisations, as community organisations representing grassroots interest in both proposals, both sites, what level of consultation you have had with the Government over the proposals—meetings with representatives of the Powerhouse, meetings with Government Ministers? Have you been satisfied with the level of engagement over the proposals with the communities that you represent?

Mr d'ANTHES: Is this a Dorothy Dix question?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes, it is.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Welcome to committees.

Mr d'ANTHES: I have attended every one of these sessions, usually sitting in the front row. As I said, the most interesting one was the ex-Premier, where you able to ask questions and you were not getting answers. It was very telling, I thought.

The CHAIR: It is question time, not answer time.

Mr d'ANTHES: We have not been able to convince too many people other than ourselves and the community—as in, people who are involved with Government—to even take what we are saying seriously. They really did pick the wrong museum because the local groups—Pymont Action, Ultimo Village Voice, Council of Ultimo/Pymont Associations, which is a combination of all, the Blackwattle Bay coalition—all of these groups are dead against moving the Powerhouse because it is an integral part of the whole area. It belongs where it is. It is the Powerhouse, after all.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: In relation to the business case for the Ultimo site that is now in development, subsequent to the announcement on 4 July that some form of Powerhouse will stay there, has there been any consultation with you and the other resident groups about the development of that business case?

Mr d'ANTHES: They do not believe that the Government is serious about leaving the Powerhouse there in reasonable form. The Harwood site is of most interest at the moment in the community. They say that we need to keep that and any change to the way in which the Powerhouse is administered or run is not good for the

area. The Castle Hill centre is another form of Powerhouse and there is no reason why that cannot be used as it is and promoted as such.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Ms Meade, do you have any views on the adequacy of community consultation from the Parramatta residents?

Ms MEADE: As I generalised in my opening statement, we have only had two opportunities: One was an hour meeting in 2017, and then the recent one in 2020, which was a postcard that was sent out advertising a webinar. But that was right in the middle of when the Premier told us not to send our kids to school and to stay home. The push poll did not give any opportunity or characters to write what you wanted; it was a multiple-choice question with questions like, "How would you like Willow Grove and St George's Terrace remembered?"

The Hon. WALT SECORD: It actually said that?

Ms MEADE: Yes. I have the screenshots of the push poll in my appendices. Actually, that question came—they changed the survey 10 days in and added questions. We also questioned the planning Minister how the accuracy of that survey could be because they changed midstream. Obviously, the answer was that we would like to remember it by keeping it there. There was discussion of a garden or a 3D video of what used to be there. People felt very restricted. They did invite us to send us an email if we wanted to write further. As far as meetings, I have always sought meetings. I met with Minister Harwin twice in 2017. He has just accepted for me to meet him again in 10 days' time via Microsoft Teams to discuss the business case that I prepared for Treasury.

Minister Stokes, however, will not see me. I have made about eight requests to see him this year to discuss Cumberland and the process of consultation during this period and I have not had a response. We made a presentation to the Parramatta lord mayor yesterday and we plan to make a presentation, hopefully, to the Parramatta Chamber of Commerce shortly, as well. We try to talk to as many people as possible and I keep knocking on doors hoping for conversations.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I wondered about the views of the community in relation to the status of Willow Grove and St George's Terrace based on the commitments that were given prior to the last State election in relation to those historic premises and what subsequently played out. How does the community feel about that change of heart, that change of tone, that change of policy? Does the community feel as though the commitments that you were given prior to the election have been honoured?

Ms MEADE: Absolutely not. Obviously, people felt very let down and felt that there was a promise for the safety of these two buildings to remain in Parramatta. Parramatta council have passed two unanimous motions to support the retention of these buildings as they intended to, and the fact that there has been no consideration of how important these are has really upset the general community. Of course, that follows on from a lot of destruction leading up to this point with the Royal Oak Hotel, a pub older than Perth, which really did not need to be knocked down, if there was a little bit more interpretive design with the light rail line—that really hurt people in Parramatta when that went down. Obviously, we are still waiting for a pool and so now it is like, "Now you are taking Willow Grove from us?"

It is quite emotional out there and you can stand around Willow Grove, which I very often am, and people will wave at you and beep the horn as they drive past saying, "Good on you". People have come to take this beautiful green space in Parramatta for granted because council were always going to keep it in their future. The fact that it is now going, people are really angry and people are really upset. I have old ladies emailing me saying that they will come down and stand there, and I say, "Okay, I'll let you know."

The CHAIR: Do you think it will have a political impact on the re-election prospects for Dr Lee?

Ms MEADE: Well, if you listen to Ray Hadley, who seems to be quite passionate—

The CHAIR: Ray Hadley's got form in things like that, yeah.

Ms MEADE: He started talking about greyhounds and promising to support anyone who ran against Geoff Lee if Geoff Lee did not change his mind. So, there are a lot of political discussions about this.

The CHAIR: But what do you think the prospects will be? You live in that electorate.

Ms MEADE: I do. I think it is the straw that broke the camel's back, now, because, as I just mentioned, we have had a succession of community outcry for stopping our heritage being demolished. The fact that there is another more appropriate site that is widely supported by communities and experts to go to—it just seems totally unnecessary. I think people are ready to rise up.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Meade, where does the Roxy Theatre fit into this?

Ms MEADE: I just mentioned that because it is actually on the Civic Link, the walkway that is opening up. People will walk beside that as they come down from Parramatta Square and then reach Phillip Street and Willow Grove. Of course, right now that is a wonderful Spanish Mission, unused 1,500-seat theatre, which could be a wonderful addition to our cultural future as well. There is a lot of heritage in Parramatta, which is why we have the National Trust on board. We see Cumberland as the octopus head. You have Old Government House, Elizabeth Farm, Experiment Farm, the Roxy Theatre, Willow Grove—there are all of these places that you can go out from and have that collection of returning visitors to Parramatta. I sound like the tourism board, don't I?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: You are doing a good job spruiking it.

Ms MEADE: We really need a strong tourism strategy in Parramatta, beyond Bankwest Stadium.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Should get a new member.

The CHAIR: Shooters, Fishers and Farmers might have to run a candidate there. You never know what might happen.

Ms MEADE: There are some foxes around there.

The CHAIR: I am sure there are plenty of foxes there, and rabbits too. Any other questions?

Ms MEADE: A few white elephants—sorry!

The CHAIR: The white elephant has not quite got started yet, but I am happy to go if it does. Thank you very much for coming today. Your input has been fantastically valuable to us. Thank you for your time.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Dr JOHN MACINTOSH, Director and Principal Water Engineer, Water Solutions Pty Ltd, before the Committee via teleconference, sworn and examined

STEVEN MOLINO, Managing Director, Molino Stewart Environmental and Natural Hazards Consultants, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Dr Macintosh, would you like to start with a two-minute opening statement?

Dr MACINTOSH: Yes, thank you very much. Good afternoon, committee members. It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to talk with you and I thank you for your invitation to do so. I am a chartered professional engineer and I specialise in the area of water engineering. I have considerable experience in issues associated with river flooding. These include, for example, quantification, hazard and risk assessment, mitigation, protection and management. I also have considerable experience in connection with community issues involving the hazards of flooding and its consequences including one notable tragedy involving multiple loss of life.

My submission that I have made to the Government has been one that implores them to follow an integrated evidence-based process when dealing with development proposals affected by natural hazards. In the case of the Powerhouse Museum, this process should serve to ensure that the proposed development would minimise to an acceptable level associated risk to life and property if it were to be constructed within the Parramatta River flood hazard area. That is my motivation for being here today and, as I said, thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Molino?

Mr MOLINO: Yes, Mr Chairman and honourable members, thank you for inviting me to provide evidence to this Committee in relation to the flooding issues at the site. From the age of three, visits to the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences were part of my childhood and adolescence and probably influenced me to study engineering and science at university. I took my children to the museum after it moved to Ultimo, but after we moved to western Sydney, those visits petered out. At a personal level, I would be delighted by a move by the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta, where it would be much more accessible for me and my grandchildren. However, at a professional level, I have serious concerns about the site that has been chosen and the lack of proper consideration of flood risks in the museum's design.

I understand that the Committee has a copy of my initial analysis of the site's flood risks and how the design brief and preliminary design concept responded to those risks, but since then I have reviewed the EIS and prepared a subsequent report, which considers the design details in the EIS. Suffice to say that the EIS does not allay any of my concerns in my original report, but heightens most of them and introduces some new ones. Fundamentally, there has been an almost complete failure in the design to consider the impacts of floods, which exceed the level of a flood with a one in 100 chance per year. While such floods are rare, they can and do occur. In 2011 and 2010 there were numerous floods in Victoria and Queensland with probabilities as low as one in 200 chance and even less. The Lockyer Valley flood, which you probably remember destroyed Grantham, has some estimates saying it was a one in 2,000 chance per year event.

The New South Wales *Floodplain Development Manual* requires consideration of the potential impacts of the full range of floods, right up to the probable maximum flood and a risk-based assessment used to determine appropriate design responses to those risks. For example, it is generally accepted that a shop or an office need only be protected against floods up to the one in 100 chance per year event and to offer a higher level of protection to common office furniture and fittings is not economically worthwhile. However, where lives are at risk, modern practice is to provide protection to floods up to the probable maximum flood, which might only have a one in 1 million chance of occurring.

In the case of the museum design, there is virtually no consideration of what happens in these larger events. This means that with the design as it currently stands, people in the Riverside precinct and proposed undercrofts have no reliable means of safely escaping rising floodwaters and may be forced to enter hazardous floodwaters to reach high ground, people inside the museum with mobility challenges will have no means of escaping from rapidly rising floodwaters, which could rise up to four metres inside the building, the collections on the ground floor have no protection from the direct impacts of flooding which exceeds the ground floor level and the unique collections on other floors, which rely upon maintenance of double-A class climate control for their preservation, will be exposed to unacceptable humidity levels for days, if not weeks. In short, the design as it currently stands considers people and the museum's unique collections to be worth no more than common office furniture. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Are there any questions?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Mr Molino, with the current site that the Government has picked is there any way to mitigate the concerns or the flood problems that you have highlighted in your two reports?

Mr MOLINO: For some of them, yes. For example, with the risk to people's lives inside the buildings, by providing disability access ramps inside the building, may be a way of providing suitable escape routes up to levels above the probable maximum flood. But some analysis would need to be done in that regard because these floods can rise very rapidly and you would have to do some calculations in terms of how quickly those rose and how quickly people could get up those ramps and how many people would be relying on the ramps and the stairs because the lifts would be out of action because it is proposed that the substation be built at ground floor level. So it would go out as soon as the ground floor floods.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: We have heard evidence that it would create channels and it will drive people—

Mr MOLINO: That is the other problem that you have. There are two types of flooding at the site.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Can you take us through it?

Mr MOLINO: Sure. There is the river that comes up and there is the water running down through the streets of Parramatta trying to get down to the river. Any building that you put in the way of that water, it will have to find its way around those buildings.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Is it similar to when you find in major international cities these wind tunnels, where all the wind gets collected and it just forces through?

Mr MOLINO: Exactly. You only have to go out here to experience the wind tunnel effect.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Go up to Oxford Street.

Mr MOLINO: That is right. So you have a flow and the way things work at the moment in Phillip Street is that Phillip Street fills up and overflows through Willow Grove grounds and—I have got to get this right—through Dirrabarri Lane.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I cannot remember.

Mr MOLINO: And also near the Wild Street Bridge so there are three overland flow paths where that water flows down to the river. What is proposed as I understand it from the design details I have seen, is to reinforce those channels and in fact to try and direct more of the water down those channels so that it does not build up to a higher level in Phillip Street. That might be okay as it goes except that they are also the proposed escape routes from these undercroft areas so you would actually have to be walking up against a cascade coming down these pathways.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But this would also happen even when there is just heavy, normal rains.

Mr MOLINO: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So we are not just talking about one in one hundreds, we are talking about—

Mr MOLINO: Yes, that is quite correct. The undercroft areas are actually affected in the more frequent events. These undercroft areas are underneath the building, below the one in a hundred flood level and they have two problems. One is that to get out of there you have to walk down towards the river which is rising and then if you have managed to negotiate that hazard, then you have to walk up the paths that are cascading with the flows coming down towards the river. So there has been no provision for safe escape routes from those undercroft areas.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So even with a sort of moderate—I am not talking about a one in 100—but when you have quite a heavy rain—

Mr MOLINO: The rain we had in February would have cut off access out of those undercroft areas. Now it did not flood—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: We did see footage—

Mr MOLINO: I would have to look at the levels. It may or may not have gone into those undercroft areas as they are proposed.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Are you able to in a sense nominate what the February rainfalls would have constituted?

Mr MOLINO: The flood level that was reached there was less than a one in 10 chance per year event. Maybe even only a one in five chance per year event. It is a common event.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Thank you.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Thank you, you answered my question.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I wanted to draw a little bit out about the specifics of that having to walk up as the rain comes down. Specifically for people with mobility issues and specifically for people with prams—these are more likely. It is not just people who are sitting around here who would necessarily be trudging up.

Mr MOLINO: No, it is not necessarily going to be fit and able adults. You will have children, you will have people with mobility challenges and it is not just the depth of the flooding, it is the velocity of the flood waters. It is very difficult to keep your feet in high velocity flood waters and the challenge is that once you get away from Phillip Street, it drops rapidly down to the river and that accelerates the water. It would be a real challenge for an able-bodied person to walk up against those flows, let alone someone that is infirmed or young—like a small child—or people with mobility challenges.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We heard some evidence earlier—and it would be interesting to hear your expert view on it—that the surrounding buildings to the site, which are very large, high-rise buildings, have the consequence of taking rain and water in a storm situation and accelerating that towards the ground. There was some evidence that that surrounding setting would potentially exacerbate—

Mr MOLINO: No, I think the fact that Parramatta CBD is all concrete and bitumen means that any rain that falls essentially runs off. So every drop, whether it is falling on the roof of a building or whether it is falling on a pavement at ground level, it does not increase the amount of water that runs off.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Mr Molina, you were referring to the February 9 2020 rain event?

Mr MOLINO: That is correct.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Okay.

Mr MOLINO: In fact there is a building at 32 Phillip Street which is right next to Willow Grove, between Willow Grove and that lane. Floodwaters entered that building but they were not floodwaters from the river, they were floodwaters from Phillip Street. So Phillip Street filled up sufficiently to flood the foyer of that building at 32 Phillip Street.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Now Dr Macintosh on the audiolink, in your submission you refer to doing the museum on a floodplain as "risky business". Do you still stand by that evidence?

Dr MACINTOSH: Yes, thank you. Absolutely and standing back from the details of what is proposed for this development, the key aspect to risky business references to what the circumstances are and what the ramifications could be. The way to deal with this in any development proposal is to actually work the problem seriously and work it in a way with an appreciation as to what human nature is like and how people interact with floods. Steve Molino mentioned the Grantham floods and I have the privilege to be the Grantham Floods Commission of Inquiry's flood engineer to assess the circumstances surrounding that.

As part of that process, I was exposed to and had to thoroughly investigate every single fatality that occurred and the circumstances associated with those fatalities. What became crystal clear to me is that when floods occur people do strange things and get themselves into problems and they are just so vulnerable. We had people in wheelchairs on triple zero drowning while on the call. I had people trapped on river banks, who were watching the floods, being washed away. I had people in cars who thought they could make it through and got to a spot where they were stuck and then drowned.

I had State Emergency Service people who went with their trucks to save their families and ended up losing their children out the door with the flood waters washing through. So flooding is a very hazardous thing. It does not take much to drown people. It is not cities, it is countries, and it is something that people are just not aware of. They are not aware of the hazards. So when it comes to development proposals and so forth, in my view it is an issue which needs to be looked at very soberly and thoroughly with the view of protecting human life. Floodplains are dangerous places and we see that all the time with people crossing roads and so forth, people lose their lives.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Have you surveyed the data relating to the Parramatta site?

Dr MACINTOSH: Yes, with the Parramatta site—I am a Brisbane lad so it is not my home turf—the information that I am aware of is purely that information which is published in the report prepared by others. And,

of course, tempered with that with historical news events which have been published as well. I have discussed the issues there with some of my colleagues who are members of the Institution of Engineers, National Committee on Water Engineering, and understand that there are issues there to be taken seriously. So I have not got the intimate knowledge that Mr Molino has got but I have certainly got the appreciation of flood hazards in flood areas.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: In the evidence to this Committee and in previous inquiries the Arup report relied on 1987 flood data. Has the landscape of Parramatta changed significantly since 1987?

Mr MOLINO: There has actually been a change in the methodology for calculating run-off from rainfall. So Engineers Australia publish the bible of Australian rainfall and run-off. It was published in 1987 but there is a more recent publication and so there is a new methodology in 2019. I understand that methodology is being applied by Parramatta council in a flood model it has commissioned and is imminent for release. The data in that would be much more reliable than the methodology that is being used by Arup. But Arup chose to use the 1987 methodology, and I can understand why they have done this, so that they could compare it with the flood levels that are currently adopted by council which are also based on the 1987 methodology. But it is a change in methodology rather than a change in the amount of development.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: That is where I was trying to take you.

Mr MOLINO: There is a newer methodology and Arup, to be fair to their analysis, they were given permission to compare their results with those interim results from the 2019 methodology that Parramatta council is using but that only compared the flooding in the river, but it is the flooding that is coming down streets which is setting the level that they are choosing for the current floor level, and there is no comparison there. So I just do not know how good their modelling is in that regard.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: To give a comparison, what would it be like to be walking up water flowing down like that? Would it be like standing in front of a fire hose? What would the velocity or force be like? Would it be like a trickling stream?

Mr MOLINO: No. It would be like trying to walk up a creek which has got a fair amount of flow in it. It is going to be shin to knee deep or even higher and the sorts of velocities could knock you off your feet. I am actually a white water kayaker, and trained in swift water rescue, and there are ways and means of negotiating that type of thing but, as John said, the average person would not know how to do it. Even people who are trained in it would be wary at some of the flows that would be going down there.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Would it be comparable to trying to navigate a rip when you are swimming in an ocean?

Mr MOLINO: No. It is like standing at the beach in knee-deep water and there is a strong rip. You know how that can knock you off your feet. You can be standing in a spot in that rip and you can feel the sand moving from under your feet. You are reasonably stable while you have got feet on the ground but as soon as you lift one foot off the ground then you become unstable. If you are going to have to walk up these steps you are immediately going from a stable two-feet-on-the-ground stance to one foot on the ground. You less than halve your stability.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: This is not in any way a criticism of either of you. Are you giving, in a sense, evidence jointly or are you entirely independent of views in terms of what you are saying?

Mr MOLINO: No, completely independent.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: That is not meant as a criticism. I am trying to work out your—

Mr MOLINO: No, just to the understanding of the Committee. Dr Macintosh and I worked together on a project in Queensland about six or seven years ago. I have not done any other work with John since then. I only had the opportunity to read his submission to this inquiry after I had already prepared my report. There has been no collaboration whatsoever.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We talked a little about the potential impact and safety consequences of a flooding event for people on the site—visitors or people in and around the precinct. I want to talk about the impact on the built form. As we know if there is a flooding or storm event, and thankfully no physical injuries, please draw out about the significant consequences for the building, with the mud, debris, damage?

Mr MOLINO: We are talking about a large concrete, multi-storey building. That building should be able to be designed against the impacts of flooding. So the stability of the building is not an issue. Mud and debris getting inside the building, yes that is an issue, and it would be a significant effort to clean that out. That does not

concern me so much if it were an office building. In fact, I would have no issues with office buildings being built near there, not necessarily right down as close to the river as this building is being proposed. In some of those areas with a smaller footprint, and having a floor level at the same level as this museum, and the water going in and you having to clean out afterwards, the probability of having to do that in my view is an acceptable probability and it is with council's development standards for office buildings.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: It goes back to you. You chuck out the office furniture—

Mr MOLINO: Exactly right.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Steam clean the carpet.

Mr MOLINO: Yes, but loss of life is a different standard and these collections have to have a different standard as well. It is like the security on your building. If you have no contents that are worth much you don't bother about burglar alarms, back to base, deadlocks and all of that sort of thing but if you have got things that are highly valuable you not only have those things but you also might have them locked in a safe and all that sort of thing. It is about risk management appropriate to the value of what it is that you are exposing to that risk.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Absolutely. Thank you. Dr Macintosh, I wondered if you just had any reflections on that as well?

Dr MACINTOSH: Yes. I absolutely concur with Mr Molino on that one. The thing to emphasise there is that when it comes to flooding and flood immunity it depends very much on the value of that asset to the community. Your hospitals and your power supplies and your communications will be up high. As the services become of lower value to the health and wellbeing of the community you can accept a higher chance of inundation and loss of that asset. Flood immunity is like an insurance policy; you have an insurance policy against something that you cannot afford to lose. If that something will affect the health of your community you have a very good insurance policy. If it is someone's life—an exceptionally good insurance policy. That is the way it needs to work and it does work. The other thing I would like to emphasise here to assist you in these probabilities and so forth—we are talking of notional levels of, say, the one in 100-year flood level, or the one in 20.

For establishing levels of inundation these are benchmarks that people might choose for consistency. But the important thing to realise when we are talking about probabilities, particularly when it comes to risk management, and I emphasise this, is that when we say something is one in 100—or, more correctly, a 1 per cent annual exceedance probability—it means that event can be expected to have a chance of occurring in every single year of one in 100. Every year there is a one in 100 or 1 per cent chance of that occurring in any year. In two years—well, there is a chance of 2 per cent that it will occur in two years. In a 50-year period there is a one in two chance of such a thing occurring. So, when it comes to issues such as designing against loss of life and the life of the item might be a 100-year life or a 200-year life, you are needing to consider a very, very high probability because it is an accumulative thing that is going on. That is the other aspect that I think goes hand in hand with decisions associated with choosing an appropriate design standard when it comes to losses.

The CHAIR: Mr Molino, given the current design proposal for the Parramatta site, what if anything could be done to mitigate those flood hazards you were talking about earlier?

Mr MOLINO: Certainly, in terms of protecting people inside the building, better disability access from the ground floor to upper floors so that people could escape without having to rely upon the lifts. That would require careful design. Really, in terms of protecting the collections, you would actually have to find some way of excluding water from the building. That is achievable but it becomes a very expensive exercise and you would have to have an emergency power supply to the building. You would have to have a diesel generator at a level that is above the probable maximum flood level within the building, so that you could switch over to emergency power.

In terms of the people external to the building, you are either going to have to get rid of those undercroft areas or you are going to have to provide an additional access from those at a continually rising gradient up to the ground level within the building, so that people are able to walk away from the rising floodwaters and not walk up the cascades that are coming down around the building. I think they are the only ways that you are going to be able to achieve that. Subsequent to my first report, having looked at some of the design details in the EIS, there is a reliance on the design to deal with the ponding that currently occurs in Phillip Street. Part of that goes down through the Willow Grove property. Now, the design proposal is to basically block that flow path off directly and to put a pipe through that then takes it through to the other side. But there is not sufficient information in the EIS for me to be able to know whether that has been properly designed for the potential for that pipe to block.

If it does block, that water level just builds up and then overflows. If they cannot rely upon that underground pipe to replace the overland flow that currently goes through Willow Grove then they will have to build a higher floor level because the one in 100 level gets higher. But then, that provides a bigger dam and they are just chasing their tails. At the moment the design is essentially to build, not just inside the building but outside, a ground floor level plain at a level—I think it is 7.5 metres—which essentially dams Phillip Street. Either the flow runs down the lane and runs down near the Wilde Avenue bridge, or it goes through this pipe and then pops out and goes down to the river. If that pipe does not achieve its objective then that dam is just going to make the water level rise even higher and more water will go around the sides. I think that is something that has not been properly looked at.

The CHAIR: That does not address the threat to human life of anyone that is on the—

Mr MOLINO: No, no. But I think it is a real design challenge in actually being able to design the building the way that they are doing it, with these two buildings that have a floor level at exactly the same level as the outside level. I think they are going to have to somehow lower that outside area to provide, if you like, a relief valve to the ponding that occurs in Phillip Street. I think it is a completely wrong design approach.

The CHAIR: Just looking at your diagrams in your report, it does seem that in flood events the water does come right around the whole site.

Mr MOLINO: That is right.

The CHAIR: How do you evacuate it from within the building if that happens?

Mr MOLINO: Well, you do not. What we would advocate in those circumstances is what we call "shelter in place"; so, you stay upstairs within the building. But that building needs to be designed to accommodate that and to encourage people to do that. So, emergency power supply is certainly one of the things. Do not forget that flooding in Parramatta only lasts for a few hours. To shelter within a building just for a few hours is not a big deal, in my opinion, providing that building has made adequate provision for people to safely shelter within that building. But within that few hours—within only a few minutes—people will die if they do not have adequate shelter or an adequate escape route to those shelters.

Dr MACINTOSH: The other item to bear in mind is that the whole idea of having the museum at this location is to attract people to the area. So, to succeed, the objective is to get lots of people to come to Parramatta. This will not just be around the museum; it will be in the whole area. We are looking at increased people in the area and exposing more people to the hazards surrounding the area. Just looking at the proposed museum and egress paths from that museum is not the full story in that regard, I do not think. The other thing I would like to just emphasise is that, when it comes to flooding and so forth, we engineers are always trying to improve our understanding as to Mother Nature and how it rains and why it rains and where it rains and how much it rains, and so forth.

As discussed, we see the new version of *Australian Rainfall and Runoff*—the engineering bible, so to speak. One thing is for certain—and the 2011 event demonstrated this. That event was really circumstances which occurred which did not really hit anyone's radar—that these meteorological conditions could develop. That is Mother Nature for you. We are really trying to get Mother Nature to follow our rules, but she does not follow our rules all the time. The precautionary principle really does apply in these issues and we have got to look at it very carefully in that manner. I do not often like using this as a throwaway line but it is a real one, in that there is additional uncertainty with climate change and these aspects as to how this will affect things. It is something that is very hard to quantify, but it does underscore the requirement to look broader and have resilience in whatever plan is put in place.

Once again, it comes back to having a really good evidence-based approach to examine this issue in an integrated manner with the environment. As Mr Molino has said, he has not seen that in his review of the EIS. It is a serious omission, I feel.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I have one last question. Mr Molino, do you have any knowledge or were you asked to provide any information on the Fleet Street Cumberland Hospital/Female Factory site?

Mr MOLINO: No.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Thank you.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Mr Molino, I just wondered if you wanted to comment on that last statement from Dr Macintosh about the potential impact of climate change on the nature of these unexpected

weather events. It had occurred to me that these extreme or unexpected weather events do appear, certainly to a lay nonscientist like myself, to be occurring with more frequency.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You are not old enough, Ms Jackson.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I will accept that interjection proudly. Sorry, Mr Molino, we are right at the end of the day.

Mr MOLINO: That is fine. Certainly the climate change modelling that has been done both internationally and nationally would suggest that the intensity of rainfall events is going to increase. Therefore, the type of events that I am saying have not been considered are likely to be more common and more frequent in the future. We do not know that for certain but, as Dr Macintosh said, the precautionary principle needs to be applied here. We are talking about people's lives and, as he rightly pointed out, we are talking about thousands of people being attracted to this particular site. We are talking about large numbers of people. It is not the odd person here or there trying to drive across a causeway. It is large numbers of people congregating in this area.

The CHAIR: The Government is saying, or the business plan is saying up to two million visitors a year. It is going to be a very busy place.

Mr MOLINO: Yes. May I just add one other thing to just help you, I guess, get some of these probability issues in your head? It is more frequent events that are a threat to people in that undercroft area. It is events less frequent than the one-in-100-year event. As Dr Macintosh pointed out, though, the longer period that the building is there the more likely it is that that is going to happen. You cannot just expect maybe one of these events in 100 years. In Kempsey in 1949 they had a one-in-100-year event; the following year, 1950, they had an event that was almost the same size. On the Georges Rivers in south-western Sydney in the late 1800s they had three, maybe even four events that exceeded a one-in-100-year event. These events can happen in quick succession. If we go into a La Niña period, as we are at the moment, then we could see a series of floods one year after another, and then we could go for 100 years and not have one. It is a bit of a lottery, but when you are playing with things that are difficult to replace it is not the sort of lottery that you want to be playing.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming today, Mr Molino and Dr Macintosh. We will call it a day.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee adjourned at 16:59.