

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 4

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

CORRECTED

At Waratah Room, Parliament House, Sydney on Wednesday, 19 October 2016

The Committee met at 1:00 pm

PRESENT

The Hon. Robert Borsak (Chair)

The Hon. Scott Farlow

The Hon. Ben Franklin

The Hon. Shayne Mallard

The Hon. Walt Secord

Mr David Shoebridge (Deputy Chair)

The CHAIR: Welcome to the fourth hearing of the General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4 inquiry into museums and galleries. The inquiry was established to examine New South Wales government policy, funding and support for the State's cultural institutions, including museum and gallery buildings and heritage collections. It will also consider the proposed sale of the Powerhouse Museum site in Ultimo, and whether there are alternative strategies to support museum development. Before we commence I acknowledge the Gadigal people, 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 who may be present.

Today we will hear from representatives of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Before we commence I would like to make brief comments about procedures for today's hearing. In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, while members of the media may film or record committee members and witnesses, people in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photography. I also remind media representatives that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. It is also important to remember that parliamentary privilege does not apply to what witnesses may say outside their evidence at the hearing. So I urge witnesses to be careful about any comments they may make to the media or to others after they complete their evidence, as such comments would not be protected by parliamentary privilege if another person decides to take an action for defamation.

Guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat. Regarding questions on notice, there may be some questions that witnesses could answer only if they had more time or 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 the 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 witnesses to focus on issues raised by the inquiry's terms of the reference, and avoid naming individuals unnecessarily. Witnesses are advised that any messages should be delivered to Committee members through the Committee staff. Finally, could everyone turn off their mobile phones or switch them to silent for the duration of the hearing.

BARNEY GLOVER, President, Board of Trustees, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, and Vice Chancellor, Western Sydney University, on former oath

DOLLA MERRILLEES, Director, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, on former oath

The CHAIR: Would you like to start by making a short statement? Please keep it to no more than a couple of minutes.

Professor GLOVER: As we have been recalled for a second opportunity, we note the statement that we made at our previous appearance.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I am Walt Secord, Labor shadow Minister for the Arts. I would like to clarify a couple of things that have been circulating in the public arena. Thank you for coming back in this recalled hearing. I would just like to note that the recall was a unanimous decision of the Committee. It was not a decision of just one or two members; it was unanimous. So thank you for coming back. Professor Glover, when was the last time you discussed the Powerhouse Museum with the Premier's department?

Professor GLOVER: With the Department of Premier and Cabinet as opposed to the Office of the Premier?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I was going to ask you that as a supplementary question. I get what is called a tick-tock.

Professor GLOVER: I am trying to recall a conversation with the Department of Premier and Cabinet. I do not recall a recent conversation with departmental officials.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I will be more specific. Was there a discussion involving the Premier, the arts Minister, or bureaucrats involving the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum?

Professor GLOVER: I have certainly had conversations with staff within the Premier's office, and with staff within the office of the Deputy Premier and Minister for the Arts.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: When was that?

Professor GLOVER: I am sorry; I will have to take that on notice. I would need to go to my diary about when we met. Within the past few weeks I would have had that conversation. I am sorry that I cannot be more accurate than that.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Let me put this in context. In light of the Premier's greyhounds decision, yesterday's WestConnex acquisition, and his decision on shark nets on the North Coast—

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Where are you going?

The CHAIR: Order! Let him finish the question. You know where he is going.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I am just giving members a bit of context. The Premier has indicated that the Government is changing its position on the greyhounds. It changed its position yesterday on the WestConnex compulsory acquisition—

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Not true.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Okay, he tweaked it. The Government then changed its position on shark nets on the North Coast. As part of those discussions that you had with the Premier's department and Deputy Premier's office was there any discussion of changing the Government's position on the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum?

Professor GLOVER: Whenever I have a conversation with the office of the Premier—it was the office of the Premier rather than his department, Mr Secord—I am always looking for continual reassurance that there are continuing strong public statements being made that I have heard. I have had nothing but reassurance that the Government stands very committed to the move subject, of course, to the consideration of the final business case and the consideration of the acquisition of the site in Parramatta. Those matters are still ongoing and, no doubt, will be subject to consideration by Cabinet at some point in the future. Certainly, there is nothing that has happened recently. In every conversation I have I look to ensure that the commitment remains strong.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So in the most recent meeting when you have had discussions there has been no indication that the Government is changing its position or backflipping?

Professor GLOVER: Certainly not in conversations with me.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I take you back. You mentioned as part of your discussions with the offices of the Premier and the Deputy Premier that you made reference to securing land at Parramatta. Can you bring us up to speed on what is happening in that area?

Professor GLOVER: My understanding is that negotiations are currently underway between Property NSW and the City of Parramatta in relation to securing the preferred location for the museum. I have been informed of that. My inquiries were to determine how advanced those conversations were. I have been reassured that they are underway.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Where are we up to on the acquisition of the land at Parramatta?

Professor GLOVER: I gather negotiations are underway between Property NSW and the City of Parramatta.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So that land has not been acquired yet.

Professor GLOVER: As far as I am aware, no. But that would be a matter for you to put to the Government in terms of the exact stage of those negotiations.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What is your official title now? Are you the chair?

Professor GLOVER: I am the President of the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So you would be involved in decisions on the purchase?

Professor GLOVER: Certainly. We have oversight of the process that is underway, but it is a negotiation between Property NSW and the City of Parramatta. I quite appropriately sought to receive some briefing on progress in those negotiations. As President of the Board of Trustees I thought that was appropriate.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Just to clarify, Professor Glover, it is not the Museum of Arts and Applied Sciences that is purchasing that land. It is the New South Wales Government.

Professor GLOVER: Exactly.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Professor Glover and Ms Merrillees, thank you for coming again today. Professor Glover, do you stand by the answers that you gave at the last Committee hearing?

Professor GLOVER: Yes, I do. I know I was asked for some clarification in relation to a number of matters. We provided a written response to provide some clarification.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Some clarification—I understand that.

Professor GLOVER: We tried to provide a fulsome clarification.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: When you were asked, "Will you provide on notice the first written report given to the board about the relocation?", you answered, "Yes, I will provide that if it exists."

Professor GLOVER: I would have to refer to our response to you, which I do not have in front of me. We did provide a response, Deputy Chair, so I would refer to that response in relation to that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Professor Glover, your answer was quite specific. You said that you would provide the first written report, if it existed. Where is it?

Professor GLOVER: I will check our response to you because I do not have it in front of me, Deputy Chair. When I have that I will get the context to respond to your question. I have received a piece of paper from my advisers. I think we provided the timing of the submission of the report that we received. Do you have our written response? Could I have a look at that; I need to get the context?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I have conveniently highlighted the answer at the bottom there.

Professor GLOVER: Yes, thank you. I appreciate that. The question we responded to was, "When was the first written report given to the board?" It was a question of timing. My apologies if we have, once again, misunderstood that. Our response was that Ms Rose Hiscock, the former Director of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, provided the first written report about the relocation to the trust's 10 December 2014 meeting. My apologies if we interpreted that incorrectly. We interpreted it to be about the timing rather than the actual report. My apologies for that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: A written report was given on 9 December 2014?

Professor GLOVER: That is what we provided in terms of a response to you.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But the question that you were asked and the answer you gave was as follows:

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Will you provide on notice the first written report given to the board about the relocation?

Professor GLOVER: Yes, I will provide that if it exists.

Do you stand by that answer?

Professor GLOVER: I am happy to refer again to the response we gave. If it has not been interpreted correctly, my apologies for that. We responded to the questions on notice, which we felt addressed your question. If that has not been the case my apologies for that misinterpretation.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Professor Glover, was this a response to the questions on notice that were provided to you by the secretariat?

Professor GLOVER: It is my belief they were.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Professor Glover, in the course of an exchange between me and you, when asked earlier about the written report, you also said:

As I said, if there was a written report, it will be filed.

You gave the answer twice. So where is the document? Where is the written report?

Professor GLOVER: Again, to put this in context, I think I had to take that on notice because I was not sure of the answer to that question.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Twice you said that you would provide the report. Where is it?

Professor GLOVER: I really do understand what you have said. What I am trying to say in response is that the question on notice to us was, "When was the first written report given to the board about the relocation?" We provided an answer to that question. As I understand it, that was the question provided on notice to us. My apologies. I assumed that this was the question we had to respond to meet your requirement as you outlined it at the last meeting. My apologies if I have misinterpreted that.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Perhaps I can clarify this a little. There are two issues relating to the questions on notice. You get some questions that are in writing, and there are some that come through the transcript.

Professor GLOVER: I see. That must be the misunderstanding.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I think that is where the misunderstanding has been. I suspect that you have answered the questions in writing, assuming that they superseded the ones in here.

Professor GLOVER: My deep apologies to the Chair. That is exactly what happened. Thank you so much for clarifying that.

The CHAIR: What we are asking for is a copy of the report.

Professor GLOVER: My apologies. I thought that all of the matters that we agreed to come back on would be described in the submission. Thank you for the clarification; I appreciate that.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No problem.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Professor, you made a commitment twice, under oath, to provide a copy of the document. Are you saying that that just slipped your mind?

Professor GLOVER: No, I think that Mr Franklin has explained the misunderstanding. I took it that whatever we needed to provide back to the inquiry would have been sent to us in writing and I did provide—at least management provided—the material. I signed off on what was relevant. My apologies that I have misunderstood the process. That is all I can say. There is nothing more I can say on that matter at this time.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There is one further thing you can say. Will you provide a copy of the 9 December report to this Committee, consistent with your commitment, twice under oath on the last occasion you appeared?

Professor GLOVER: As I said, we will provide the report.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You said it twice but we have not got it. So is this the third time? Will you provide the report?

Professor GLOVER: I am sorry, I must ask you to be respectful, as I am being respectful to you in answering this question. I have explained the misunderstanding that occurred. Now that I understand, I will ask the management to provide that report, and it will be submitted to the inquiry.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: When can we expect that report to be provided, given we know its date?

Professor GLOVER: I will certainly refer that to the management of the museum to do as rapidly as they can.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Have staff been told that the exhibition space for the new museum will be of the order of 30 per cent more than the current museum exhibition space?

Professor GLOVER: Have the staff of the museum been told that in a staff meeting of some kind?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In any way, by the museum?

Ms MERRILLEES: We certainly consult with the staff on a regular basis regarding the proposals for the new museum. My apologies; I do not remember a figure of 30 per cent being articulated to staff.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: If not 30 per cent, have they been told that there will be more exhibition space? Have you told staff or volunteers that?

Ms MERRILLEES: Certainly the language that we have used is that we are looking at space that is comparable to the current operations and scope of the Ultimo site.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Just so that there is no ambiguity, you are saying that to the best of your recollection staff have not been told that there is proposed to be 30 per cent more exhibition space at the new site. Is that your evidence?

Ms MERRILLEES: To the best of my recollection, I do not remember a percentage of 30 per cent being articulated. No, I do not.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What about "greater"?

Ms MERRILLEES: As I said earlier, we have talked about it being comparable to the Ultimo site and operations at the Ultimo site. However, given that there is no design for the new museum at present, I think that is still to be worked out in terms of the architectural competition and the architectural design.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What was the basis of the initial quantity surveyor estimate that a funding envelope of \$450 million to \$500 million would be required? What was the basis? Was it for like for like—the same amount of space—or half the space, two-thirds of the space or 30 per cent more? What was the basis for that initial quantity surveyor estimate of \$450 million to \$500 million?

Ms MERRILLEES: The museum undertook a spatial analysis for the requirements of the new museum. That spatial analysis was used as the basis for the quantity surveyor's report.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What was the base line for that spatial analysis? Was it the same amount of exhibition space?

Ms MERRILLEES: It was comparable to the Ultimo site—however, reconfigured, as we are not reproducing the museum in its exact format now. So it took into account our current collection. It took into account our gallery spaces. It took into account the volumes that are required, given that we hold large items. It took into account education spaces and venue hire. It took into account a children's museum. It took into account our whole range of operations that are required to deliver a state-of-the-art museum for the twenty-first century.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So it is your evidence that you had a reputable quantity surveyor give an estimate that you could achieve that for an envelope of \$450 million to \$500 million. Is that your evidence?

Ms MERRILLEES: They were preliminary estimates based on the work that was done for the preliminary business case.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You said something earlier about some sort of spatial analysis. Do you have a copy of the spatial analysis?

Ms MERRILLEES: It is my understanding that the spatial analysis was for the preliminary business case and for the final business case, which is Cabinet-in-confidence.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So you are not going to provide a copy of the spatial analysis.

Ms MERRILLEES: My understanding is that the spatial analysis is for the preliminary business case and the final business case, which is Cabinet-in-confidence.

The CHAIR: Ms Merrillees, did you state publicly, upon appointment as director, that you are familiar with similar redevelopments but have limited direct experiences of such?

Ms MERRILLEES: I am not sure that I stated that on the public record. However, I did state that I knew of major capital cultural projects that have been undertaken. I have had some experience in capital projects. I also have a very highly experienced executive team who are experienced in capital projects, and a trust that also has experience in capital projects.

The CHAIR: Consequently, do you still believe that your experience is sufficient to envision, direct and control such a large and complex project?

Ms MERRILLEES: I believe that I have the skills required and I also believe that I have a team that I lead that also has the skills required. I also believe that I have a trust that has the skills required.

The CHAIR: Is it true that it took the senior museum executives a year to "vision" the new museum, and that this was only concluded after AEA Consulting was brought in, over many months, to babysit the process and the executive as a subsidiary part of the KPMG report? In other words, did you do it by yourself or did you do it with consultants as part of the KPMG process?

Ms MERRILLEES: AEA Consulting was brought in by KPMG as part of the preliminary business case, and we worked with them—yes.

The CHAIR: So you did not guide that process; they took control of it.

Ms MERRILLEES: That is not how I would see it. We worked closely with AEA, as we did with the consortium that was put together for the preliminary business case.

The CHAIR: Just turn your mind to Infrastructure NSW. What was its role in this process—in particular, Erin Flaherty, Executive Director, Transport, Social and Cultural Infrastructure New South Wales, and Liz Ann Macgregor, Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia? Did they have a role in what you were doing?

Ms MERRILLEES: I cannot comment on Liz Ann Macgregor but Infrastructure NSW sits on the steering committee for the project, and Erin is the representative of Infrastructure NSW.

The CHAIR: Do you have any reason or understanding why this vision of the new museum, which you mentioned earlier, was suppressed and made Cabinet-in-confidence?

Ms MERRILLEES: It was part of the preliminary business case and the final business case and, as such, is subject to Cabinet-in-confidence.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Thank you, again, for coming back. We appreciate it. We have been to Parramatta and we saw the proposed site. There has been some discussion about the site potentially not being large enough for the Powerhouse, which currently occupies quite a substantial site. I would be interested in your views about what you are going to do in regard to the display of the collection and the access to the collection. What opportunities do you think this new site could offer?

Ms MERRILLEES: If I may clarify, there is only about 3,000 square metres difference between the current site and the Parramatta site, so it is not a significant difference in footprint.

The CHAIR: You said 3,000 square metres difference.

Ms MERRILLEES: Yes.

The CHAIR: That is almost an acre.

Ms MERRILLEES: If I can also clarify, the amount of space—

The CHAIR: How can that not be a lot of difference?

Ms MERRILLEES: If I could clarify, the amount of space is based on the design, not the footprint. So we will have a comparable amount of space to Ultimo.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: This is exactly my question. These concerns have been raised with us, so I am interested in what strategies you have in place to make sure that the display and the access to the collection are going to be maintained or potentially improved.

Ms MERRILLEES: That is absolutely our concern, as it is the trust's concern. I think Professor Glover articulated the conditions under which the trust had articulated to the Deputy Premier and Premier.

Professor GLOVER: Perhaps I could interrupt and, just for the record, restate that. The board of trustees remains supportive of the project, absolutely, but we have always placed some strong conditions in relation to that. One is that the site is fit for purpose, as you have addressed. Certainly the final business case documentation will address that question in relation to the extent to which a comparable museum can be placed on that site. The second is that we have made it very clear—as has the Premier, the Deputy Premier and others—that this needs to be a world-class iconic museum of international standing. As a board of trustees we thoroughly support and endorse that. The final one is in maintaining the integrity of the collection, both in the way it is stored and the way it is presented to the public. That goes again to your question—to ensure that the spaces that will be created inside the new museum do justice to the quality of this collection. They are considerations that we, as a board of trustees, continue to put before those involved in the project steering committee and the consultants working on the project.

Ms MERRILLEES: If I may, Mr Franklin, I would also stress that this is not a readaptive use of an existing building. This is a purpose built, state-of-the-art, designed museum that will accommodate more items on display. If I may say, for the record, the Ultimo land area is 22,900 square metres and the Parramatta riverbank site is 20,160 square metres. So it will be absolutely around the design.

The CHAIR: You can understand our questioning, because it is all Cabinet-in-confidence. You may understand the vision. We do not see it. We do not know anything about it. The land is subject to Parramatta River flooding. We went through all that at the last inquiry. How can we have any confidence at all that what is being proposed is going to meet the requirements?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And do those calculations include the storage facility and the—

Ms MERRILLEES: Yes, they include Harwood.

Professor GLOVER: Chair, your point is a valid one. The constraints under Cabinet-in-confidence are not constraints that we are placing. They are obviously constraints placed on the process that we are in, but I can assure you that the board of trustees has repeatedly had input to this process. Our Audit and Risk Committee considers the risk elements in relation to this. There must be consideration of that. Similarly, the board itself has provided input and has restated our concerns regarding the matters I have just raised—the quality of the museum that will be constructed. As custodians of the collection we see the integrity of the collection as so vital—both in the way that it is stored and in the way that it is displayed. Of course, I continue to return to the issue of the fitness of purpose of the site. This final business case will address those matters, and I think that is the most important aspect of this.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The transition from the Ultimo site to the Parramatta site will obviously involve some significant upheaval, by its definition. Can you please let me know what planning you have in place to ensure a continuity of access of people to exhibitions and key offerings to the public. That is something I am concerned about because potentially suddenly everything will stop for a year.

Professor GLOVER: Before Ms Merrillees responds in more detail, let me say that this is another issue that the board of trustees has been considering. Obviously, the Powerhouse Museum on the Ultimo site will remain open for many years before the transition to the new site. We have an exciting program of exhibitions planned. I must congratulate the executive—the management team—at the museum, not simply for what we have achieved in the past 12 months but certainly for what is planned ahead. There is a very exiting exhibition program featuring the collection and featuring the new touring exhibitions that will come to the museum. We are excited about that future. That must continue until the point of the major transition of items.

I think it is also important to note that the Museums Discovery Centre was opened very recently, with the support from the New South Wales Government of \$34 million. That will establish a joint storage facility for the three museums—the Australian Museum, the Sydney Living Museums and the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences—and that illustrates that even recently the movement of very large items has occurred between storage in one location and another. So the museum has very contemporary experience in the movement of the collection.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Is this Castle Hill?

Professor GLOVER: This is Castle Hill, yes of course, which was opened very recently. I think there is experience in relation to the movement of items and the transition planning that will go on. But Ms Merrillees might like to add a little more detail.

Ms MERRILLEES: Yes, a lot of thought has been given to the transition model and work has been undertaken as part of the final business case. We are also working with our staff on what that transition model might look like. But, as Professor Glover articulated, the museum is absolutely committed to delivering world-class exhibitions and experiences on the Ultimo site as well as at Sydney Observatory and the museum's Discovery Centre for the foreseeable future. We have a program locked in that includes the Ancient Lives exhibition coming from the British Museum as part of a summer season. We have Sherlock Holmes coming next year as part of our winter season. At Sydney Observatory we are refreshing our current exhibitions. At the Ultimo site we are also refreshing some of our permanent exhibitions that have not been refreshed for probably about 30 to 35 years.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I think you mentioned when we were out there the motion exhibition. Is that one of them?

Ms MERRILLEES: Experimentation has just closed and we are refurbishing that offer. Also as Professor Glover mentioned we have just reopened the museum's Discovery Centre which also has education facilities and a public display. The museum is absolutely committed to an ongoing program of activity.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: So we will not have a situation where it suddenly shuts in six or 12 months and there will be nothing?

Ms MERRILLEES: And we would have transition plans to do touring exhibitions, pop-ups and limited displays so that it is absolutely critical for us to continue.

Professor GLOVER: If I could add one last point. I know time is short but if you look at the Western Australian museum which, of course, is shut for four years while they refurbish that museum—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: That is exactly one of the issues that I am trying to address.

Professor GLOVER: It is clearly an issue that is of concern. In this case should government accept the final business case and make the decision to support the move to Parramatta of the new museum, then we will be both maintaining a fabulous program at Ultimo and the construction of the new museum would be going on in Parramatta.

The CHAIR: I am advised that the current site is 8.3 acres—based on the figures that you just quoted in the previous answer—and that the Parramatta David Jones car park site is approximately 2.4 acres. Will you take that question on notice and provide the Committee with a map that will verify your previous answer?

Ms MERRILLEES: Yes, I will do so.

The CHAIR: From my review of having been out to the site I cannot see how it is the same, or at least only 3,000 square metres less, unless you are talking about a high-rise building.

Ms MERRILLEES: I am happy to take that on notice and provide that information.

The CHAIR: I want you to show the Committee on a map how the two sites compare. My advice is that the site is only 2.4 acres, which is less than 30 per cent of the large area that is currently available. You have to address the amount of cubic volume in the existing comparative arrangements compared to the new building. Will you take that on notice?

Professor GLOVER: That is correct.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That would include more height that the building could have.

The CHAIR: That is right.

Ms MERRILLEES: That is correct, and those volumes have been taken into account, given the nature and size of the collection.

The CHAIR: The Ultimo public display area is approximately 15,000 square metres. It would be nice to know how much you contemplate with the new building in comparison.

Ms MERRILLEES: Yes. As I said, that spatial analysis is part of the final business case, but I am happy to take that on notice as you have requested.

The CHAIR: If you provide other information to the Committee we will take it in confidence and only Committee members can view it. If you do not want it to be public, that is okay.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Professor Glover, I was not going to raise this matter until you made reference to the information flow constraints that were placed on you and your organisation by the Government.

Have there been discussions with the Premier or the Deputy Premier on what you are able and what you are not able to reveal to the Committee?

Professor GLOVER: My understanding is that matters to do with the preliminary business case and with the final business case are Cabinet-in-confidence. It is not being imposed upon us. I understand that is the process and I understand that in that regard I cannot speak about them.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Do you understand why members of the community have put to us that they feel there is a cloak of secrecy over this project, decision-making and the Powerhouse Museum itself?

Professor GLOVER: The decision-making I am assuming will be made when the final business case is considered by Cabinet. As I have said, and I said at the last inquiry, as far as I am concerned the board of trustees' position is clear in relation to the support we provide but also the caveats that we continue to ensure we put before government at every opportunity, and throughout this process. But if a matter is Cabinet-in-confidence, as I understand it, that precludes me discussing it here.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I take it that the board would have received briefings to that effect from the Department of Premier and Cabinet?

Professor GLOVER: Certainly we have had advice, yes, but that is in terms of responding so I, a person not within government—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You know your obligations and responsibilities.

Professor GLOVER: Absolutely. My obligations as president of the board, but also for board members to understand in relation to these matters.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I refer to the culture of the organisation itself which is not subject to being Cabinet-in-confidence or not subject to ministerial direction. Do you support Ms Merrillees and other members of the Powerhouse Museum thwarting the Opposition's efforts to find out how much is being spent by the Powerhouse Museum on overseas trips to Argentina, Singapore, Korea, Greece, Sweden, France, Germany and Vietnam?

Professor GLOVER: I am totally supportive of the director and the management of the museum.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Blocking the information.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Let him finish the sentence.

Professor GLOVER: You have raised the question of culture and you went on to make some statements. I do not accept the statements you are making from how I understand it, and I am very confident in the briefing I have had that normal processes apply to requests that are made. I will leave it at that and Ms Merrillees can add further if she wishes to. But I do want to say in relation to the support the board has for the management, and particularly for Ms Merrillees, the director, we have the highest regard for her capability. We are very fortunate, I think, to have a director of her experience and capability at this time both to continue to manage and lead the museum but importantly through what may be subject to the final business case being approved by Cabinet—obviously a very challenging and exciting period ahead. I think we are very fortunate in that regard. I think we are very fortunate in the senior appointments that the director has made recently.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: No, I did not ask—

Professor GLOVER: I am sorry, I think that goes to culture.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I asked you if you supported the decision to block the release information.

Professor GLOVER: Absolutely, but you went to culture. I want to restate on the record the great support the board has for the senior team, for their experience and their capability. If I could go to the substance of your question which relates to international travel because that is the subject of the request that Mr Secord has made—

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: That was the specific issue.

Professor GLOVER: It was the specific issue. I just want to indicate—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Disclosure.

Professor GLOVER: I am sorry, I did not hear your comment.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It was about disclosure, not about the travel. Why will you not say how much was spent going to Argentina?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Professor Glover is answering the question about international travel.

Professor GLOVER: I think it is a very important point, and I know the Deputy Chair, the Chair and the members of this Committee, as I am sure many people in this room, understand the quality of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, and the cultural institutes that we have in New South Wales.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: It is a yes or no question.

Professor GLOVER: No, I am sorry, I need to provide the context in order to understand—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I am mindful of the time which is limited to 50 minutes.

Professor GLOVER: I know. We started just after 1.00 p.m. We have provided an extra 10 minutes. My answer was to say that—

The CHAIR: Professor Glover, I will decide when this Committee starts and ends, not you. You do not run this Committee from the evidence chair.

Professor GLOVER: Can I finish my answer?

The CHAIR: You certainly can but please do not start dictating to my Committee the amount of time it will spend questioning you.

Professor GLOVER: I did not. I said that 50 minutes was not the—

The CHAIR: You started down that track. You have whatever time you need to answer the questions in whatever way you like.

Professor GLOVER: Thank you, Chair; I appreciate that. I believe that we have great institutions which we want to remain great in New South Wales. To go the substance of this, I believe that our directors and our senior staff in our museums, in our cultural institutes, need to make international trips. They need to see what is happening in institutions around the world. We cannot develop the new museum unless we understand best practice around the world. We need to professionally develop our museum executives and, importantly, we need to look for the exhibitions we will bring into our museums in the future. So international travel is very much a part of what we expect of our management teams and our museums. I will ask Ms Merrillees to go to the specifics of the process.

Ms MERRILLEES: Mr Secord, I categorically deny that the museum has deliberately withheld the information. The museum is processing the GIPA request in accordance with the GIPA Act. Our governance team is going through that due process. However, I am very happy to state on public record that the museum on average spends between \$60,000 and \$100,000 per annum on overseas travel. That accounts for 0.2 per cent of our annual operating budget. The fact that our staff are increasingly being asked to represent and present at overseas conferences and events is a sign of a well-respected and relevant museum, as well as a recognition of their skills and expertise. As I stated before, the museum is simply going through due process in accordance with the GIPA Act.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I differ with you on that. The standard application for a freedom of information request is \$30. You guys sent a bill for \$1,020 to provide that information. There is another way to do this. Will you take on notice that information and then provide it to the Committee?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You can ask for it on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I will ask for it on notice.

Ms MERRILLEES: Certainly.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I would like the information that is referred to on page 24 of an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 14 October which refers to international travel involving Argentina, Singapore, Korea, Greece, Sweden, France, Germany and Vietnam. Will you take it on notice and provide it to the Committee, and save me \$1,020?

Ms MERRILLEES: I am happy to provide that on notice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Professor Glover, you directed some correspondence dated 1 September 2016 to the Deputy Premier and Minister for the Arts setting out three criteria for the transfer of the museum. Is that right?

Professor GLOVER: Yes, I did write to the Deputy Premier and I outlined those matters, yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Will you provide the Committee with a copy of that correspondence?

Professor GLOVER: Yes, I can.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In that correspondence, which referred to three criteria, was the first criterion that the whole site option where the new site is located is unencumbered by other commercial developments to realise an iconic world-class flagship museum? The second criterion was that the new museum will improve the MAAS exhibition and programs presently provided and not diminish the scale and scope of the museums or opportunities as presented currently at Ultimo. The third criterion related to sufficient funding to meet these requirements, as well as to competently transition the collections and operations to the new site. Were those the three criteria?

Professor GLOVER: I do not have a copy of the letter in front of me but, broadly speaking, they are the matters I have written about to the Deputy Premier and the Premier relating to this matter.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Do you have any research to hand that suggests that those criteria can be met in a funding envelope of between \$450 million and \$500 million?

Professor GLOVER: They are matters that are naturally under consideration through the final business case development. I felt it was necessary—the board of trustees continues to feel it is necessary—to reiterate the basis under which we provide support for this project. I simply wanted to restate those to the Deputy Premier and to the Premier very clearly.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: If the final business case provides that any one of those three criteria cannot be met is it the position that the board would reject such a business case?

Professor GLOVER: The board would express its serious concern to government if we felt those conditions were at risk, yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Or would you reject the business case—the business case that found you could not have a whole site option; that it would have to be partly commercial? Would you reject that?

Professor GLOVER: I would rather not speculate about what might happen. At the moment we are going through a final business case process. We are providing detailed input into that process both through the management of the museum and, of course, from the board of trustees, as appropriate. I have made it very clear that the support of the board clearly is predicated on the matters that you have addressed, Deputy Chair, and I look forward to a final business case reflecting those.

The CHAIR: Professor Glover, have you or Ms Merrillees been made aware of any alternative use or proposals for that site?

Professor GLOVER: For the Parramatta site?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Professor GLOVER: I am not aware of alternatives but that would be a matter for the City of Parramatta, I am assuming.

The CHAIR: In relation to and/or in conjunction with the potential use of the site by the MAAS—in other words, dual use? Are you aware of anything, Ms Merrillees?

Ms MERRILLEES: Certainly there are a number of options being looked at for the site but I am not aware of any formal—

The CHAIR: Do you want to elucidate some of those options?

Ms MERRILLEES: No, the options are subject to the final business case.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But those options involve more than one use on the site, contrary to your first established criteria.

Professor GLOVER: That is one of the reasons, Deputy Chair, that I wrote to the Premier to restate that we believe a museum should stand alone on the site. There may be some obvious, as there is on the current site, commercial activity going on in relation to the museum. One expects that to occur with museums and with our museum currently, and all sorts of commercial activities like that. But we certainly have a view, and it seems to be the view in the public domain that has been made by others, that the site should be for the museum.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So that was, if you like, a shot across the bow to shut down some options that were being proposed in the business case?

Professor GLOVER: I was just making clear the board's position.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Just apropos of nothing.

The CHAIR: Tricky questioning.

Professor GLOVER: Not apropos of nothing. Certainly the board has a strong view on these matters and I think it is appropriate that the board expresses those views.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: As you would expect.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Why did you express it on 1 September? What was it about spring that meant that you had to issue the letters to the Premier?

Professor GLOVER: Actually that was my first piece of correspondence since I met with him after being appointed in July, so it was shortly after my appointment. I thought it was appropriate, as we are moving more into the business planning process and also through the site acquisition process, that I made the views of the board very clear to the Deputy Premier, as the new President of the Board of Trustees.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Your evidence is that having been appointed in July you wrote a letter on 1 September as your "Hello, Deputy Premier" letter?

Professor GLOVER: No I would not describe it that way. We are going through a very complex process, as you can understand, and the board and I would take opportunities. I had a meeting with the Deputy Premier and at that meeting we discussed a number of things. Those were matters I discussed. I followed up with a letter to him.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Did you discuss other options for the site—multiuse options?

Professor GLOVER: No, I did not discuss that with the Deputy Premier.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You were appointed in July. You have had your range of stakeholder meetings. You met with the Deputy Premier, you met with your board directors and other stakeholders. By that time you have sort of clarified your position and taken on these views, I imagine?

Professor GLOVER: Yes. I just thought as the new President of the Board of Trustees I should write to the Deputy Premier. We had other matters to discuss. There were board vacancies for which he would like some suggested names. There were other matters that I wished to respond to and I took advantage of that to write to him and to restate the board's position, yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Talking about meetings and the like, since the last occasion this Committee met on 5 September, have you had cause to have any communications with any members of this Committee?

Professor GLOVER: Not that I am aware of. I have not spoken to anybody on this Committee.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: We can have a cup of tea, if you like.

Professor GLOVER: Was I precluded from doing so? I am sorry, I did not realise I was, but I have not spoken to anyone here.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I did not say that, Professor Glover.

The CHAIR: Professor, you can talk to anyone you like.

Professor GLOVER: I am just wondering what the premise of the question was.

The CHAIR: Ms Merrillees, as a long-standing professional museum director, do you ask this Committee to believe that you can squeeze the enormous objects currently on display at Ultimo into the footprint at the new site at the Parramatta car park?

Ms MERRILLEES: Again, I gave you the footprint as I know it. But the other matter is that this is about volumes; it is not about footprint.

The CHAIR: Will you elucidate what it is about?

Ms MERRILLEES: It is about the volumes for the museum because of the size of the collection that we hold and because of the size of some of the objects. Part of the spatial requirements was looking at those

volumes to ensure that the major, large and very valuable items can fit in within the new museum. We have undertaken that as part of the spatial analysis.

Ms MERRILLEES: I am quoting exactly what was in the board of trustees report of its July 2015 meeting:

It was noted that whilst the funding envelope of \$450 to \$500 million has been estimated in initial quantity surveys, it was not possible to nominate the overall project cost until site selection and a full business case have been completed.

The CHAIR: So we do not really know what the project will cost?

Ms MERRILLEES: That is correct.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: I refer to the issue of volume and I want to clarify what you said earlier. The Ultimo site has some inefficiencies in regard to its spatial component because of the adaptive reuse of the old building. Did you say that earlier?

Ms MERRILLEES: There are constraints on the present site, yes.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Members of the Committee are aware that the new age of museums is digital. Are there digital and technology constraints that will be relieved in a new purpose-built site?

Ms MERRILLEES: Yes, absolutely. I again stress that the Ultimo site is an adaptive use and this is an opportunity to build a state-of-the-art, fit-for-purpose museum specifically designed for the collection. It is also an opportunity to embrace new methods of content delivery through digital technologies. I think that is a very exciting opportunity.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Would you contend that we could future-proof the new museum in regard to future technologies? I know that retrofitting technology is a problem in this building.

Ms MERRILLEES: Technology is adapting so fast, but absolutely—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You can always have old technology as a display.

Ms MERRILLEES: And we have at our collection. Certainly there are a number of opportunities. One is around the digitisation of the entire collection which broadens both digital and physical access to the collection. In that way we can embed it and tell the stories of the objects through the new museum. So that will play a very significant part in our thinking.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: And that appeals to students which I think is an important market for Parramatta. I refer to the Castle Hill annexe. I was interested to hear you say that it involves other museums. Is that a new occurrence because I believed that only the Powerhouse had it before.

Professor GLOVER: Yes.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Secondly, what will be the relationship between your organisation and other institutions going forward?

Professor GLOVER: Ms Merrillees can go into more detail but I think one of the exciting things about the Museums Discovery Centre at Castle Hill is the collaboration between the three museums—MAAS, Sydney Living Museums and the Australian Museum. For those who have visited the 9,000 square metre site, you get a sense of what is stored there, the exciting pieces from the collections that are stored there, and the opportunity for people to visit that site. Certainly on the open day it was a very exciting weekend to see people taking advantage of an opportunity to look through the facility to get a sense of the objects which are in all of those three collections.

It does illustrate one of the important constraints on our museums we all face which is storage and how you get access to these very large items and put them on display for the public. But it illustrates as well, I think, very importantly, that collaboration is building between the cultural institutes of New South Wales. I know that is something that the Deputy Premier has been particularly keen to promote—enhanced collaboration both here in the CBD and, in this case, in the facility at Castle Hill. We are looking forward—I know this is one of the things that Ms Merrillees has spoken about on a number of occasions—to enhancing collaboration between the museums, not simply the three I have mentioned but taking into account other of the cultural institutes and the State significant organisations.

Ms MERRILLEES: I want to reiterate that we welcomed more than 6,000 visitors on our open weekend for the Museums Discovery Centre. It has been an incredibly productive and rewarding partnership with the Australian Museum and Sydney Living Museums. There is an opportunity here for a number of joint programs that we can run at the Museums Discovery Centre over the school holiday period and education

programs that we are doing jointly. We have an MOU in relation to that with those other institutions. We have worked very closely with our other cultural counterparts but we also work very closely with the regional museum gallery sector. Recently we opened the exhibition Gravity (and Wonder) in conjunction with Penrith Regional Gallery which has been an enormously successful partnership. I am also very pleased to say that over the summer month we will be running out coding challenges in Sydney's west, as part of our summer holiday program. Partnerships are incredibly important for the museum.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Speaking of other museums, in her evidence Ms Torres gave three comparable examples of the shutting down of the Powerhouse and relocating it to Parramatta. Ms Torres said comparable examples are: the establishment of the National Railway Museum at York, the Royal Armouries Museum at Leeds, and the National Arts Museum in Oslo. Ms Merrillees, you know your way around museums. Do you accept that none of those are comparable with the move of the Powerhouse to Parramatta?

Ms MERRILLEES: I think any relocation for any museum is a significant project. Could I ask for clarity? Are you talking about—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Comparable projects.

Professor GLOVER: In terms of scale, or the collection being moved?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In regard to its establishment. Ms Torres said that the establishment of the National Railway Museum in York, the Royal Armouries Museum at Leeds and the National Arts Museum in Oslo were each comparable to the relocation of the Powerhouse from Ultimo to Parramatta. But the establishment of those three museums was in no way comparable.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: But every museum will have its unique challenges.

Ms MERRILLEES: I am not sure I agree. I think particularly with the Oslo example, I think the amalgamation of three separate museums, the National Gallery, the National Museum of Contemporary Art and the Museum of Decorative Arts, and all of those three distinct collections, all located on different sites is one major museum which is a billion euro project and is even bigger in scale.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: This is downtown of the CBD. It is not moved kilometres west; it is downtown of the CBD. It is just not comparable at all, is it?

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: To our growing second CBD.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is not comparable at all.

Ms MERRILLEES: Moving objects is not about distance. The same level of care and consideration would be required for them to relocate three distinct collections as it would be for us to move—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am not talking about the physical effort of moving it. Obviously moving a house an inch is as difficult as moving a house a kilometre. I am talking about the establishment of a museum in downtown Oslo which is fundamentally different to the shutting down of Ultimo and relocating it to Parramatta. They are not comparable, are they?

Ms MERRILLEES: I disagree. The Royal Armouries was, in fact, moved more than 300 kilometres away.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But the Crown jewels of the Royal Armouries remain at the tower in the heart of London. It is absolutely not comparable, is it?

Ms MERRILLEES: And the Railway Museum transferred its collections to York which is more than 330 kilometres away.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That was a disparate collection of locomotives and the like that was not housed at a single location in London; it was the gathering together of a whole series of disparate regional locations. It is fundamentally not comparable, Ms Merrillees.

Professor GLOVER: I think the issue that you are pushing is the use of the word "comparable". I would have thought that as Mr Franklin indicated there are unique challenges. Museums are unique institutions and clearly whether you move it 100 metres, as you pointed out Mr Deputy Chair, or you move them 22 kilometres, there are very similar constraints and very similar challenges, notwithstanding the fact that there have been examples and they are three where significant collections have moved.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Not one of those is genuinely comparable to what is being proposed with the shutting down of the Ultimo site and the relocation to Parramatta, Ms Merrillees. I will give you the

opportunity to answer as Professor Glover jumped in. Not one of them is comparable for the reasons I have set out?

Ms MERRILLEES: I disagree.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: The question has been answered.

The CHAIR: I refer to digitising large parts of the current collection. I can understand perhaps some of that—there is a lot of it—but are you talking about replacing current display items at the site by digitising them? For example, how do you digitise a locomotive and carriages? Are you not going to display them again?

Ms MERRILLEES: No, I think you have misunderstood me. Digitisation is an opportunity around access.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Particularly for people from the regions.

Ms MERRILLEES: For both conservation reasons and—

The CHAIR: Online access as opposed to physical access because you do not have enough space at the new site?

Professor GLOVER: Not "as opposed to" but "complementing".

Ms MERRILLEES: Complementing physical access, absolutely.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: And academic access.

Ms MERRILLEES: Academic access, research access. If I can clarify, it is not at the expense of showcasing objects. In fact, this year alone more than 20 per cent more of the collection has been on display. In fact, last week we opened Icons which is significantly featuring our collection. In 2014 we also launched our Recollect series which was about getting more of the collection on display. So certainly there is no intention that the collection does not feature.

Professor GLOVER: Online access should also, we hope, enhance visitation.

The CHAIR: So would I; I would agree with that.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I support what the Chair just said. Do you agree that digitisation is critically important to focus on for access for regional people to the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences? You can answer with one word.

Ms MERRILLEES: Digitisation is important for a number of reasons including online access for regions, which is critical.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Will you give a commitment that that will remain a high priority for you?

Ms MERRILLEES: Absolutely.

The CHAIR: In relation to the move, would the board consider selling any surplus museum items?

Professor GLOVER: No. We have a deaccessioning policy and we would always abide by that deaccessioning policy. We have no intention of selling any part of the collection. It is a magnificent collection, one that we are extraordinarily proud of and we want to see it displayed in a state-of-the-art, iconic, world-class museum.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Ms Merrillees, was that internal meeting in August when staff were told that the new display space would be in the region of 6,500 square metres?

Ms MERRILLEES: I will have to take that on notice. I cannot recall.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Was there a meeting that approximated that to your memory? Do you want to take that on notice?

Ms MERRILLEES: I will take that on notice. We have regular Parramatta updates in our senior management team and at all staff meetings. I cannot recall what was discussed at the August meeting but I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: If there had been discussion about 6,500 square metres which is so diametrically opposed to what the board has set out as conditions, it would stick in your mind, would it not?

Ms MERRILLEES: Well, it has not stuck in my mind, so I would say no.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is your answer that it did not happen?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Ms Merrillees has said she will take it on notice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is your answer that it did not happen, as best as you can remember sitting here?

Ms MERRILLEES: I said I will take it on notice.

The CHAIR: I note that you have taken a number of questions on notice.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: And there may be more.

The CHAIR: And there may be more. The Committee has resolved that answers to questions taken on notice be returned within 21 days. The secretariat will contact you in relation to the questions you take on notice in due course. Please note that the written notice you will receive from the Committee secretariat is not the only definition of what questions you may have taken on notice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: We will get a highlighted set of the transcript.

The CHAIR: You should read the transcript and refresh yourself in relation to the questions that were asked so that everyone can be clear what the answers are.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Can I clarify something for the sake of Committee members? Does the secretariat write to the witnesses and say, "These are the questions you took on notice during the inquiry?"

The CHAIR: Yes, and they highlight the transcript as well. There really cannot be any misunderstanding from the witnesses about the questions. If the secretariat got it slightly wrong you can read your own transcript and know and understand what you were undertaking to provide to the Committee. It is all highlighted.

(The witnesses withdrew)

Committee adjourned at 2.05 p.m.