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I am happy for my name to be publicly attached to this submission.

I object to:  
Powerhouse Museum Renewal  
Application No SSD-32927319

I object to this project – the misnamed Powerhouse Museum renewal - because it is a deeply confused, poorly conceived and wasteful proposal for major demolition and over development of NSW's Powerhouse Museum. This project is State Sanctioned Destruction – not State Significant Development.

The project is revealed to be detrimental to the renewal of the Powerhouse Museum as announced by the now Premier and then Arts Minister on 4 July 2020. Indeed, it is revealed to be a project which will morph the Powerhouse Museum into a so-called Ultimo Creative Industries Precinct – a 2018 thought bubble of former Minister Harwin, now resurrected, without consultation, as the Government's intent for the Powerhouse Museum's buildings, structure, site and precinct.

This is a deceitful project – it is museum erasure – not museum renewal. I note that the Powerhouse Museum has been endowed for generations by the people of NSW and the Museum with its Collection is held in trust for the people of NSW. What is being revealed is the utter dismissal of this core relationship by the current Trust and management who are intent on dismantling this world renowned Museum.

I note that the following fundamental documents have not been provided:

- There is no **Masterplan** for the site and that the Harwood Building – a critical and proven facility for the operations of the Museum and designed for best museum practice – is excluded from the Concept DA. This exclusion undermines the Government's announcement of 4 July 2020 (see att media release) to renew the Powerhouse Museum.

Without a seeing a Masterplan for the site it is impossible to know what is being planned for the Museum's entire site which hitherto has underpinned its identity as a Museum founded on our industrial heritage and, which has been the framework for its successful operations since opening for Australia's Bicentennial in 1988 as a fully professional museum facility.

- There is no **Design Brief** – this is an insult to the public being invited to comment on this project as we are yet again being kept in the dark as to what the detailed plans are for the home of the Powerhouse Museum – especially as consultation to date has been revealed to be on a false basis and that the Museum is not being renewed as promised.
- There is no **Business Case** for the proposed project yet the \$500m projected cost is an eye watering amount to be spent on removal, demolition and new building for what is essentially a vagary which bears no relation to the 142year old Powerhouse Museum. There is doubtless an intent to maximise commercial opportunities given one of the goals in the Museum’s recent strategic planning session is ‘sweating the asset’.
- The Curio CMP is missing **Part D Appendix H Draft Conservation Management Plan Community Consultation Report** (March 2022)

The EIS outlines a project of unsustainable demolition and redevelopment which goes against every tenet of environmentally responsible custodianship of our built heritage. The Powerhouse Museum opened in 1988 after a 10 year design and building program of adaptive reuse and contemporary architecture developed in close collaboration with the Museum to ensure the successful cohesion of Museum, collection and architecture goals.

The Museum was awarded the RAIA NSW Sulman award, the ACROD Award for barrier free circulation and, the National RAIA awards: Presidents Award for the recycling or new use of a building, Belle Award for Interiors; and was a finalist in the RAIA Sir Zelman Cowen Award. The Museum was Westpac Museum of the Year in 1988 and the Australian Tourism Commission’s Best Tourist Attraction in Australia Award. (See att list Awards 1988 – 2008).

The Museum’s world recognised building, encompassing historic industrial fabric and modern architecture, is an architectural model for Harry Seidler’s Ian Thorpe Pool, Ken Woolley’s ABC HQ, Philip Cox’s Australian National Maritime Museum, and UTS buildings – the Powerhouse Museum on Harris Street, Ultimo is in the cultural and educational precinct which the Museum has anchored since 1893.

The 2,000 plus pages of the EIS offer no justification for the destruction of the Museum – its purpose, identity, structure, exhibitions and facilities. The Museum was designed for a working life of 100 years and is now being ‘disappeared’ under the watch of the current CEO whose vision for Powerhouse Ultimo is to be ‘Bold in the face of constraint - ignore the weight of history, language and architecture.’ (Talk to Committee for Sydney, 2021). This glib phrase is the antithesis of the Powerhouse Museum - a museum which explores the past, to understand the present and envision the future. The Powerhouse is a museum which celebrates industrial and design heritage – intervention not demolition – in its architecture, the Museum and its site.

### **Specific Objections:**

## **Urban Design and Access, Building Envelopes, Need to Preserve Open Space, No Demolition**

The *Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy Urban Design Report Vol 3 2022* confirms the primacy of Harris Street as the major public circulation urban backbone for the peninsula - the spine - and that it should be upgraded to a boulevard with calming landscaping, urban elements and built forms. The strategy identifies Harris St as the local high street with a dedicated bus route (as it has now), a civic urban place, a generous public realm with trees, appropriately scaled buildings - many with heritage and urban values. The concept of putting underground both the traffic flyover near the wool stores and the William Henry St bridge has also been floated as a long term improvement to the peninsula.

The Museum's renewal should enhance the local character and scale, pedestrian amenity and transport efficiency of Harris Street - not overpower this primary corridor which the proposed building envelopes along Harris Street clearly would, especially with the trendy but visually meaningless, overshadowing and obtrusive cantilevered levels.

I object to the implied demolition of the Wran Building and the Galleria – Sulman award winning architecture and the signature contemporary architecture of the Powerhouse Museum. What an obscene waste of money and, of the capital assets of the Museum – so much for sustainability. The Powerhouse Museum is more environmentally responsible in philosophy and architectural concept.

I object to the proposed over scale envelopes for buildings (30m + for 'design excellence') along Harris St which are not only out of scale with the streetscape but also build on the public space of the Harris St forecourt of the Powerhouse Museum. The community would lose valuable public space in an area where open space is at a premium.

The Museum's Harris Street forecourt is part of the whole Museum site and is designed as the key site for public arrival and departure from the Museum - hence the major entrance into the Wran Building. The forecourt was planned with Ultimo's residents, workers, students etc in mind, as well as local and tourist visitors to the Museum arriving at Harris St and, from Haymarket, Darling Harbour and George St. Changing the main entrance to the bottom of the site and away from the Harris Street boulevard is short sighted and ignorant of the visitor arrival and circulation experience.

The forecourt led to the pedestrian bridge (now demolished) and was a thoroughfare for Ultimo residents etc, and museum visitors moving across the bridge leading to level access to the former monorail, Wheat Rd and Haymarket and, the George St buses. The lift and ramps as well as stairs at the end of the pedestrian bridge assisted with public access. And there was a convenient car park there which served the Entertainment Centre, Haymarket, Darling Harbour south as well as the Powerhouse Museum. Now residents and all have to traipse down a steep hill on a narrow footpath and navigate a car park and steep, angled steps to get access to Haymarket.

A superior access solution would be an activated bridge with linear exhibition space and innovative engineering – a cultural spine linking the Harris Street forecourt with the main

Museum entrance to the Hay Street precinct offering easy access across the immediate precinct. This would overcome all the level changes, the narrow and steep pedestrian paths, traffic and trams. How much more welcoming and practical for pedestrians, the elderly, families and school groups!

The colonnade on the forecourt, (now demolished up to the Wran building), defined the space and led the eye down Harris St to Vernon's Post Office. The protruding curve in the colonnade, with the Emery Vincent designed Powerhouse Museum logo, signaled the Museum to cars and pedestrian traffic. The arcade allows wet weather drop off and provides a covered pedestrian footpath. The Harris St bus stop at the Museum's forecourt, is a key public transport element for buses, taxis and for school and tour buses.

As mentioned, the Goods Line is problematic as a main route to the Museum because you land at the bottom of the Museum complex and downhill from the primary high street of Ultimo - Harris Street. Plus there are the urban design failures affecting the Goods Line/lower courtyard - largely the result of the intrusive, overbearing Urban Nest buildings, which make access from George St /Haymarket difficult and dangerous with narrow footpaths next to the tram lines. There is also the problem of the steep awkward stairs from the lower level of the tram line up to the Goods Line level.

The tram line past the Powerhouse's Boiler Hall walls becomes in effect, a railway line which is very limiting for access to further along towards Darling Harbour - compare with the tram line pedestrian facilities and landscaping along George St, through Surry Hills etc – why is this not part of the solution to increasing accessibility in this precinct – pedestrianise the tracks as in Hay St and George St through to the Ian Thorpe Pool – and beyond....

There has always been access to the Museum from the lower eastern courtyard - now overshadowed by the oppressive bulk of the two Urban Nest towers. It is a straightforward solution to renew escalator access in the north end of the Switch House as access and egress for the Museum up to the Harris Street main entry and, conversely to the lower east courtyard and the Goods Line.

None of these access difficulties can justify any inappropriate, heritage-destructive intervention in the Boiler Hall where schematics indicate a possible thoroughfare punched through the north wall of the heritage listed Boiler Hall into what is a site of industrial heritage significance - the original Boiler House, in part under the William Henry St bridge.

This is a preliminary discussion of access and egress matters but it provides a context which shows that improvements in urban design require consideration of the entire Museum site – including the Harwood building, which is key to the renewal of the Museum - but of course this EIS is not about renewing the Powerhouse Museum. It is a scheme for plonking down, at great cost both in \$\$\$ and in terms of our built heritage, a so-called 'Ultimo Creative Industries Precinct' on the site of the Museum.

The bulk in height and width of the Building Envelopes on Harris Street are totally inappropriate as views along Harris Street are obscured and the bulk and height dominate Vernon's Ultimo Post Office.

The building envelopes encompassing the Boiler Hall and Turbine Hall along William Henry St would diminish the heritage impact and scale of the Boiler Hall and Turbine Hall if development occurs within this envelope and outside the dimensions of the Boiler and Turbine Halls.

The curved vault of the Wran Building with its external arcade marries with the building scale on the opposite side of the street – it is a simple proposition to animate the existing Harris St frontage with exhibitions etc instead of the implied destructive demolition and rebuilding of an award winning, purpose-built museum building.

### **Heritage status of the Powerhouse Museum**

I object to the Curio Conservation Management Plan, a document more akin to an undergraduate project and seemingly prepared with an outcome in mind – the erasure of the Powerhouse Museum.

There is scant consideration of the heritage values of the Powerhouse Museum as the Museum is essentially ignored in the inadequate Curio CMP which is, in essence, written as if the Museum was an interloper in the remnant Ultimo Power House spaces.

Nor is there any proper discussion of the Ultimo education and cultural precinct, linking Sydney Technical College and the Technological Museum (former name and home of the PHM) with the Powerhouse Museum and its site in this precinct. The Museum purchased the Harwood Building, former Ultimo Tram Depot in 1964 and it is an intrinsic part of its history and the Museum's operations.

Indeed, the CMP makes for tortuous and convoluted reading as the Curio CMP puts forward multiple 'assessments of heritage significance' by dividing the Powerhouse Museum into separate buildings - each assessed, ignoring the incontestable fact that the Museum unites all these buildings.

Not only does the Curio CMP effectively 'green light' demolition of the Wran Building and Galleria but also demolition of the adaptive reuse of the Boiler Hall, Turbine Hall, Switch House, and Engine House and no doubt more besides.

The Curio CMP fails to acknowledge the peer recognised success of the adaptive reuse and contemporary design of this important industrial heritage site to create an award winning Museum visited by more than 20 million visitors in its first 20 years.(att Awards Powerhouse Museum 1988 – 2008)

The muddled thinking of the Curio CMP, indeed of this entire Concept DA, is underscored by this example from Part C Section C, Wran Building, Opportunities and Constraints where a 'Constraint' is identified:

- *The facades of key State Heritage Listed buildings on the site, such as the Engine and Turbine Halls are obstructed both physically and visually by the Wran Building and other 1980s additions to the site. This configuration restricts the ability to interpret and*

*appreciate the heritage buildings as they relate to one another and from different key external viewpoints. Opportunities to improve the visual access to the heritage listed buildings in the future would be encouraged. p276*

And earlier noting on p275 in 15.3 Heritage Significance - Discussion that:

*'It is also important to note that whilst the construction of the Wran building was innovative for its adaptive reuse of the site at the time, it also impacts the visibility and readability of the heritage buildings within the site.'*

There are two glaring inconsistencies about these two comments.

Firstly, and historically, the Harris St-facing facades of the Engine House and Turbine were mostly obscured by buildings along Harris St and William Henry St. The Turbine Hall was also set down on the site so the main views of the former Power House were from Darling Harbour and the lower courtyard as today. Also, the Ultimo Power House faced William Henry Street (Administration Building, Engine House, Boiler Hall). It never faced Harris St.

Secondly, the current DA shows a 30m+ high Building Envelopes for redevelopment – totally out of scale and running the length of Harris St from Macarthur to the Post Office's curtilage, a monstrous development which would completely obscure any views of the Turbine Hall and Engine House from the direction of Harris St – and views of the Vernon Post Office.

In fact, the 1988 adaptive reuse design of Powerhouse Museum's Galleria and Turbine Hall (top level) celebrates the exterior wall of the Turbine Hall along the length of the Galleria. Indeed the Galleria - focal point of the Museum – is derived from the Turbine Hall windows arch geometry. The Galleria leads to views of the Engine House - not only from the Turbine Hall but also from viewpoints in the exhibition structure for the 1785 Boulton and Watt engine. This exhibition was designed by Powerhouse Museum architect, Lionel Glendenning to achieve both key views of the workings of this priceless engine and, views into the Engine House and down the wall of the Turbine Hall. All this adaptive reuse and heritage interpretation is lost on the authors of the Curio CMP and Ethos Urban who were not interested in the heritage significance of Powerhouse Museum.

Given this failure of the Curio CMP to properly consider the heritage significance of the Powerhouse Museum, one of NSW's four major collecting institutions along with the Art Gallery of NSW, the Australian Museum and the State Library of NSW, please see the statement below:

### **The Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo**

The Powerhouse Museum is born of the Industrial Revolution, an epic period in our history, which gave rise to International Exhibitions showcasing the achievements of the Cultivated mind and the Skilled hand in the displays of the manufacture of nations' industries from across the world and at home.

The Powerhouse is unique for the synergy between the Museum's extraordinary collection and the magnificent spaces of the 1899 Ultimo Power House, one of Australia's earliest and most imposing industrial buildings, and the contemporary architecture of 1988 that is the Powerhouse Museum today. The Museum has proven to be a well-purposed, award-winning museum with impressive flexibility, character and ambience.

A legacy of the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition, the Powerhouse is about creativity and innovation in the applied arts and the applied sciences, explored in the context of history and contemporary life. The Powerhouse is a history museum.

At the Museum's heart are stories of people designing and making across time and space, across cultures, across the arts and sciences. The collection represents ideas becoming reality to meet human needs – whether a fragment of a Coptic textile from 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, a steam engine from the 19<sup>th</sup> built to power agricultural machinery or glasswork by an Australian maker.

Since 1893, the Museum has been a leader in the science, education, design and cultural precinct in Ultimo which was established on the model of London's South Kensington museums, education and cultural precinct: Science Museum, Natural History Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum, Royal Albert Hall, Royal College of Art, Imperial College London – a precinct that is the legacy of the inaugural 1851 Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations – the initiative of Prince Albert.

At a time when we are searching for new ways to stimulate the economy, to encourage participation in science, to spark creative and design thinking to solve wicked problems, to foster innovation and to reshape our manufacturing industries.....at this time, the renewed Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo is ideally placed, intellectually and physically, to fulfill its purpose to be a place of inspiration to encourage aspiration.

See att paper, J. Sanders, 'The Powerhouse Museum: Its Place in the World, Our Nation, New South Wales, Our Neighbourhood and, Our Hearts and Minds' OR 'The Powerhouse Museum: A Tale of two Destructions: Conflagration followed 137 years later by Expropriation and Demolition'. Presented at A.ICOMOS 2019 Sydney talk Series No 6 'Policy, Power and the Cultural and Heritage Values of the Powerhouse Museum', J.Sanders and K.Winkworth, 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2019.

## **UPDATE TO THE HERITAGE STATUS OF THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM**

On 8 October 2020, the following proceedings took place in the Inquiry below at which Mr Frank Howarth, Chair, Heritage Council NSW appeared:

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

Thursday, 8 October 2020 Legislative Council - CORRECTED

Extract p30 (my italics)

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But the Heritage Council was not in a position to assess the heritage significance of the Wran and the Harwood buildings because they did not have sufficient information before them. That would be a fair reflection, wouldn't it?

Mr HOWARTH: Yes. I am assuming the committee was aware from the currently published resolutions that the Heritage Council has considered the Harwood Building. Its most recent meeting decided that it was not of State heritage significance. *With respect to the Wran Building, we are waiting on a commission study that is being processed by Heritage NSW to look at the architecture of the last part of the twentieth century so the Wran Building can be put in some context of the wider post-modernist architecture in particular across the State.*

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In fact it is a part of the State's heritage that is inadequately protected—that late twentieth century architectural heritage. It is part of what you said has been given inadequate protections.

Mr HOWARTH: No. What I said was that it is under-represented on the State Heritage Register. They were my exact words. *The study is to determine if there are buildings of significance in the latter part of the twentieth century and specifically where the Wran Building—as it is called—sits within that particular canon.*

The study referred to by Mr Howarth was released on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022 following my request on 28 April 2022 – see below:

The report on 'Architectural Heritage in NSW of the Last Quarter of the Twentieth Century' is now available on our website at <https://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/search-for-heritage/publications-and-resources/> and can be downloaded as a PDF. (Report by Robertson and Hindmarsh Ltd is dated 13 February 2022) (email from Heritage NSW 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022)

However, on reading the report, Appendices A and C are missing as Heritage NSW explains below:

The Heritage Council of NSW commissioned the report to guide Heritage NSW in their consideration of the architecture of this period. The Heritage Council of NSW is delighted to be able to share the main volume of the report (with Appendix B) on the Heritage NSW website. Appendices A and C, however, are reserved for internal Heritage NSW use. (email from Heritage NSW, 3 June 2022).

The Report's Contents p3 details that the reserved appendices contain the following:

Appendix A pp115 - 119, the final list of 33 places recommended 'that are likely to be of State heritage significance.' (p5)

Appendix C pp128 - 219, Representative Places - Summary Sheets for each Representative Place, is also not included in the provided study. (p5)

I note that in the Contents p4, Appendix C Representative Places, all 33 places are listed and the Powerhouse Museum is included at C30 as 'likely to be of State heritage significance.'

Essentially, the Heritage NSW report referred to by Mr Howarth, Chair, Heritage Council at the Inquiry on 8 October 2020 is now complete and available but key parts are being withheld – the summary sheets for each of the items on the shortlist – of which the Powerhouse Museum is one. (see p4,5)



This information from Heritage NSW contradicts the current EIS text about the heritage status of the PHM - no doubt because Government intends to demolish the major 1988 elements of the Powerhouse Museum. NOTE that *the entire Museum* received the Sulman and additional architecture, design, engineering and museological awards.

For your information, the Powerhouse Museum is on the Report's Sites Shortlist (total 33) as below:

Recreation & Tourism: Museums, Galleries, Libraries:

- C27 Kempsey Museum and Visitor Information Centre
- C28 State Library of NSW
- C29 Orange Library and regional Gallery
- C30 Powerhouse Museum
- C31 Australian National Maritime Museum

I object to any further 'progress' of this Concept DA on the basis that the report commissioned by Heritage NSW, on behalf of the Heritage Council, lists the Powerhouse Museum as 'likely to be of State heritage significance.'

No civilised society destroys museums.

Yours sincerely

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**Credentials:**

I write as the former Deputy Director, Collections and Outreach, Powerhouse Museum from 2001 to February 2009. I began my career at the Museum in 1978 as museum assistant, curator then senior curator, decorative arts and design. I was a key member of the Powerhouse Museum redevelopment team before taking up senior executive positions in 1988 - Assistant Director, Associate Director then Deputy Director. All these roles always had responsibility for the Collection, Registration and Conservation and for periods, Exhibitions, Education, Library, Sydney Observatory, Museums Discovery Centre, Regional Services and the Migration Heritage Centre NSW.

1981: Churchill Fellowship to study public access to museum collections in North America and Europe. 1987 Museum Management Institute, Berkeley, USA. 2001: NSW Centenary of Federation Committee (archiving, cataloguing, and preservation of historical materials). I was a member of the National Cultural Heritage Committee from 1999 – 2008, From 2007 - 2012, I was a member of the External Advisory Panel, Design Research Institute, RMIT University, Melbourne. I am now a heritage and museum consultant. 2018, selected for Royal Collections Trust Study Program.

In 2001 I was awarded the Centenary of Federation Medal. I am a member of ICOM, TICCIH, AMaGA and the National Trust. Founding member Powerhouse Museum Alliance.