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POLICY, POWER AND THE CULTURAL AND HERITAGE VALUES OF THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM

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JENNIFER 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 & DEMOLITION.



The fiery destruction of the Garden Palace. Trustees Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences

In Sydney, on the morning of 22 September 1882, a conflagration of enormous scale destroyed the magnificent Garden Palace built to house the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition – the first international exhibition to be held in Australia. It was closely followed by the 1880 Melbourne International Exhibition. Its Royal Exhibition building is now heritage listed and faces Melbourne Museum in Carlton Gardens.



The Garden Palace built for the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition, Royal Botanic Gardens, photograph by Charles Bayliss, 1850-1897.

The imposing brick and wooden structure, crowned by the largest dome in the southern hemisphere, was designed by Colonial Architect James Barnet, and constructed in just 8 months, aided by the first practical use of electric light in Australia.



The Crystal Palace built to house London's 1851 Great Exhibition

Sydney's 1879 Exhibition was inspired by the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations which opened in London's Crystal Palace in May 1851. This was a period of incredible optimism and capacity when Australia took its place in the nations of the world, embracing new technologies and creating new collections for new cultural institutions.



The Opening of London's Great Exhibition by Queen Victoria on May 1st, 1851.

At the Exhibition's opening, a message was sent by electric telegraph to Queen Victoria informing her of the Exhibition's successful inauguration. After all, it was Prince Albert, the Queen's consort, who was the driving force behind the 1851 Great Exhibition.



Statue of Queen Victoria by Marshall Wood under Sydney's Garden Palace dome. The statue was destroyed in the fire.



The Italian Court at the Sydney International Exhibition



South Australian, Tasmanian, Victorian and New South Wales Courts

Sydney's 1879 International Exhibition attracted over twenty nations displaying the best of their technology, industry and art including Great Britain, France, Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy and the United State of America. Asia was represented by Japan, India, Ceylon and the Straits Settlements and, the Pacific by New Zealand and Fiji. New South Wales had the largest display of the Australian colonies.

It was the first time that Japan had presented at an international exhibition. Adelaide's Museum of Economic Botany acquired a substantial number of exhibits from the Japanese display.



Sydney International Exhibition and Gardens, c1879-80, unknown artist. Coll.
The Australiana Fund

The Garden Palace, flags and pennants flying from its dome and towers, dominated the Royal Botanical Gardens and was a huge attraction over the seven months of the Exhibition. Open from 9am to 7pm, Monday to Saturday, 1,117,563 people visited in 185 days – a remarkable number given NSW's population was only 709,453. It was truly the people's palace.

When the Exhibition closed, Sir Henry Parkes, Colonial Secretary, proposed that the Garden Palace be dedicated to public use.

In 1880, the Trustees of The Australian Museum, recommended the establishment of the Technological, Industrial and Sanitary Museum, the forerunner of today's Powerhouse Museum, to be housed in the Garden Palace.

By 1882, the first Curator, Joseph H Maiden had assembled a collection of some 10,000 objects, many from the Sydney International Exhibition and, was setting up the Museum in the galleries of the Garden Palace in preparation for the public opening.



The smoking ruins of the Garden Palace. NSW Government Printer

The fiery destruction of the Garden Palace in 1882 was a catastrophe that deeply shocked the people of Sydney.

Men, women and children lined the streets, balconies and the rooftops, dumbstruck by the ferocity of the blaze. Firemen could only watch and try to save nearby buildings. The Sydney Morning Herald, 23rd September, reported 'Walls were falling, towers toppling over and tumbling huge masses of ruin into the great lustrous sea of red hot metal and burning woodwork beneath.'

Lost in the fire were irreplaceable treasures including the paintings collection of The Art Society of NSW, forerunner of the Art Gallery of NSW; the Colonial collection of statuary; the unanalysed records of the 1881 census; colonial archives and the Linnean Society Museum.

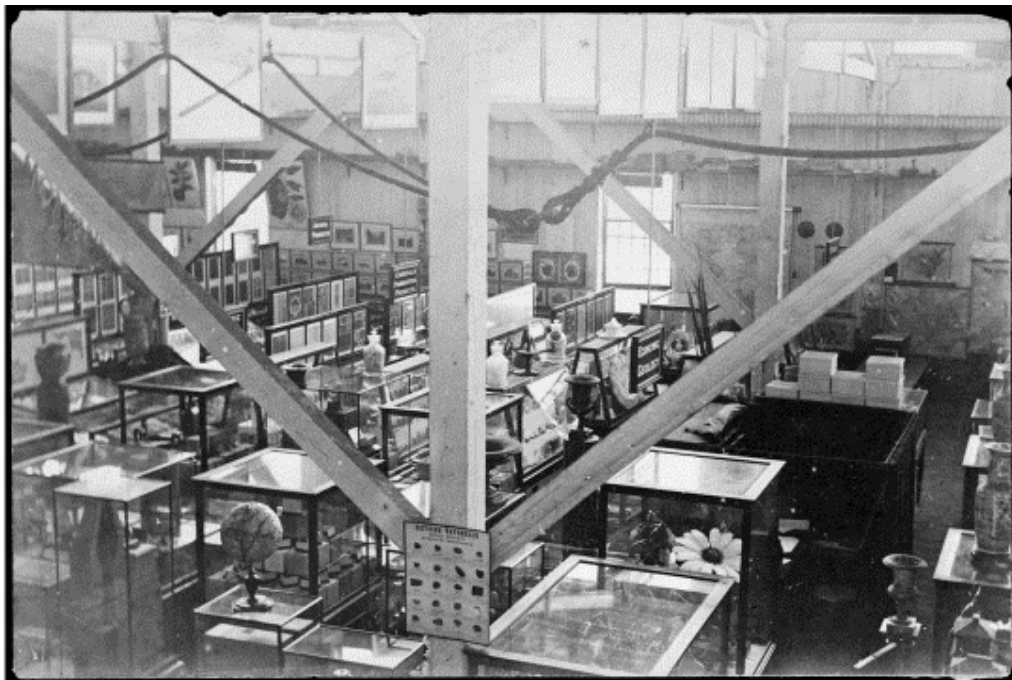
Heartbreakingly, this fire also destroyed the embryonic Powerhouse Museum for practically all its collection and records were gone, including the ethnological collection of rare specimens of Aboriginal objects.

The Powerhouse Museum had suffered its First Destruction.



Panorama of the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition site, watercolour by John Richardson. After the disastrous fire, the Museum was re-established in the triple pitched roof building, the Agricultural Hall, bottom right corner.

Undaunted, Joseph Maiden began re-collecting objects for the Museum which was temporarily relocated to the Exhibition's former Agricultural Hall where it opened on 15 December 1883, attracting over 100,000 visitors a year for the next decade.



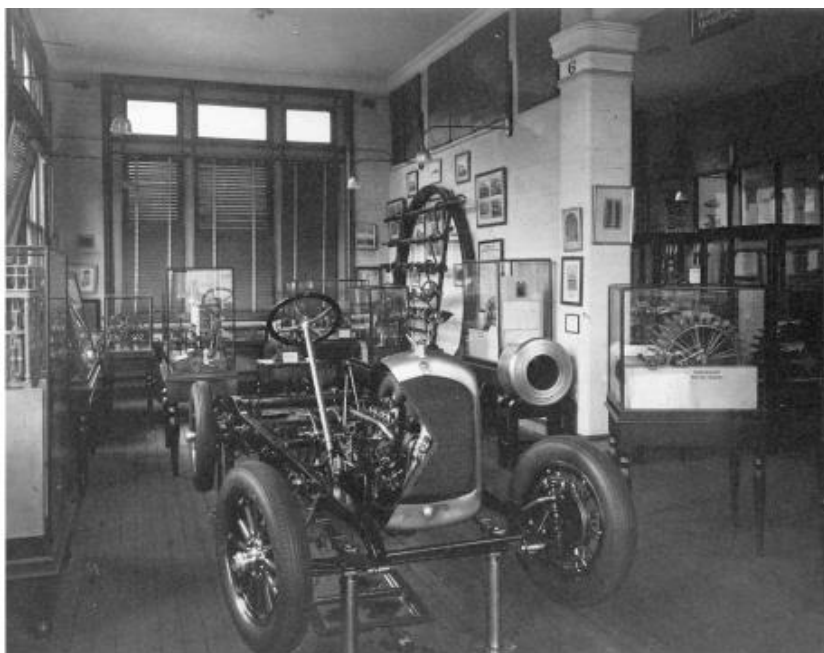
The interior of the Agricultural Hall with Museum displays. The Museum collection grew rapidly, the spaces became overcrowded and 'unsanitary' so a new home was sought.



Left side: The Technological Museum, 1893, Harris St, Ultimo and Sydney Technical College, Maryann St, 1891, both designed by William Kemp.

In 1893, just 10 years later, the renamed Technological Museum, designed by William Kemp, rose like a phoenix from the ashes of the Garden Palace and opened to great fanfare in a new building at 659 Harris Street Ultimo where it became the leading institution in this new science, education and cultural precinct.

This was the FIRST move and transformation of the Museum in response to the needs of a changing city in its 139 year history.



The Museum's 1926 Chrysler sectioned Chassis which worked with a push button, a forerunner of the interactives which are a distinctive feature of the Powerhouse Museum's exhibitions.

The Museum was by then under the Minister for Public Instruction which reinforced its educational role in the Ultimo precinct which was based on the model of London's South Kensington's science, arts and education precinct, a grouping of museums and educational institutions - the legacy of Prince Albert's vision for the influence of the Great Exhibition.

Even at this early stage, the Museum had a state wide role, opening its first branch museum in Albury in 1896, followed by branches in Bathurst, Newcastle, Broken Hill, Maitland and Goulburn - all linked to Technical Colleges.

Building on its Sydney International Exhibition genesis, the Museum continued to pursue an international role. Maiden, then Richard Baker, his successor, sent Museum exhibits of NSW's natural resources to International Exhibitions across the world and, in turn, acquired objects so as to display the best of the world's manufacture.



The *Australian Flora in Applied Arts* display in the Technological Museum, c1916. Richard Baker presented botanical specimens and drawings along with

applied arts from Australia and England decorated with Australian flora motifs - applied sciences meets applied arts. Powerhouse Museum Coll.



By the 1950s, the Museum had outgrown its building and the collection was in crowded, unsuitable storage as shown in these 1980s photos: top: Offsite store at Alexandria; below: Attic store in the Technological Museum, now called the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.

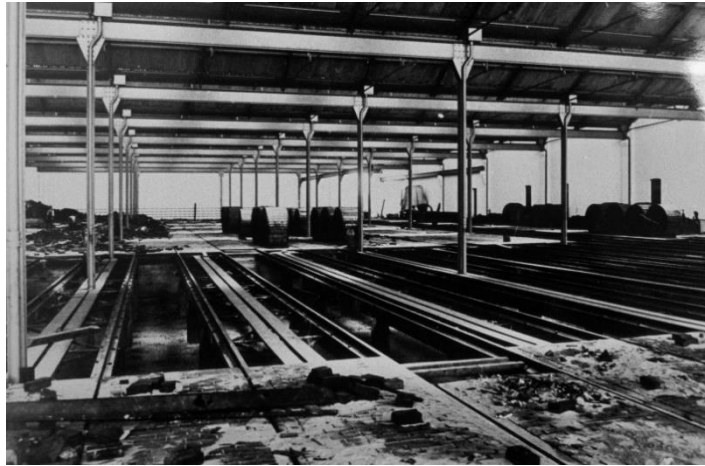
Ninety five years later, in 1988, having outgrown its 1893 home, the Museum was completely transformed through the visionary project to repurpose and develop the former Ultimo Power House and Tram Depot into the Powerhouse Museum.



The Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo, adjacent to Darling Harbour, anchors the cultural and educational precinct it established in 1893 when the Technological Museum opened.

This is the SECOND move in the Museum's 139 year history - from 659 Harris Street to 500 Harris Street - 2 MOVES - not the SIX moves erroneously claimed in the International Design Brief for the Parramatta 'iconic building on a flood plain'- a ruse to give the impression that the Powerhouse is a 'pack it up and shift it museum.'

The first stage of the 10 year project was to renew and repurpose the 1899 Ultimo Tram Depot, now named the Harwood Building in honour of Norm Harwood, the indefatigable Keeper of Transport and Engineering who was a major contributor to the success of the Powerhouse project.



The remnant structure of the Ultimo Tram Depot which housed the trams powered by the adjacent Ultimo Power House.



The former 1899 Ultimo Tram Depot under construction for the Powerhouse Museum project. It opened in 1981 as Stage 1 of the Museum with a preview exhibition showing highlights of the collection.



Stage 1, later called the Harwood building, provides a state of the art facility for collection conservation, accessible storage, library, and offices for museum staff as well as workshops and facilities for touring exhibitions - it is the engine room of the Powerhouse Museum.



The Powerhouse Museum under construction looking across to Sydney's CBD.

The renewal of the Ultimo Powerhouse and its renaissance as the Powerhouse Museum was a 10 year project and involved leading architects, designers, engineers and museum professionals to achieve what was, and still is an incredible synergy between the Museum's

extraordinary collection and the magnificent spaces of the Powerhouse Museum. The Museum has proven to be a fit for purpose museum with a uniquely impressive character & ambience.

The 1988 Museum, designed by Lionel Glendenning, with its new Wran Building inspired by the 1879 Garden Palace, won numerous architectural and museum awards and set the highest standards for museum presentation and experiences.



The Powerhouse Museum has had a profound international impact, especially in terms of architecture, design and museology. It was an inspiration for the conversion of Paris's Gare d'Orsay into Musée d'Orsay – the architect Gae Aulenti was one of the early visitors to the Powerhouse Museum. The Powerhouse presaged Tate Modern – the conversion of London's Bankside Power House and the yet to be completed Studio Gang adaptive reuse of Blackhawk Generating Station into Beloit College Powerhouse. Closer to home, it inspired many industrial building renewals – such as Casula Powerhouse, Tamworth Power Station Museum, Carriageworks, Longreach Power House Museum.

Sir Terence Conran, Trustee of the V&A and later Chairman of the Design Museum visited as well as Daryl Jackson, architect for Museum Victoria and Richard McCormack, President of the Royal Institute of British Architects; The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher visited in 1988 as did Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, designers Marc Newson, Philippe Starck, Karim Rashid, Ron Arad – to name just a few of the many distinguished visitors from across the world eager to experience the award-winning Powerhouse Museum.

And the people of NSW and beyond came in their thousands – almost **3 million** in the first 15 months! And 20 million for the Museum's first 3 decades.

AWARDS: POWERHOUSE MUSEUM 1988

Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) Architectural Awards NSW 1988

Sir John Sulman Award for Public Buildings: Powerhouse Museum
(Government Architect's Office, Lionel Glendenning, principal architect)

ACROD Award for barrier free circulation: Powerhouse Museum

RAIA National Architectural Awards 1988

RAIA Belle Award for Interiors

RAIA President's Award for the recycling or new use of a building

RAIA Sir Zelman Cowen Award: finalist

Awards:

Westpac Museum of the Year Award 1988

Australian Tourism Commission's Best Tourist Attraction in Australia Award for 1988

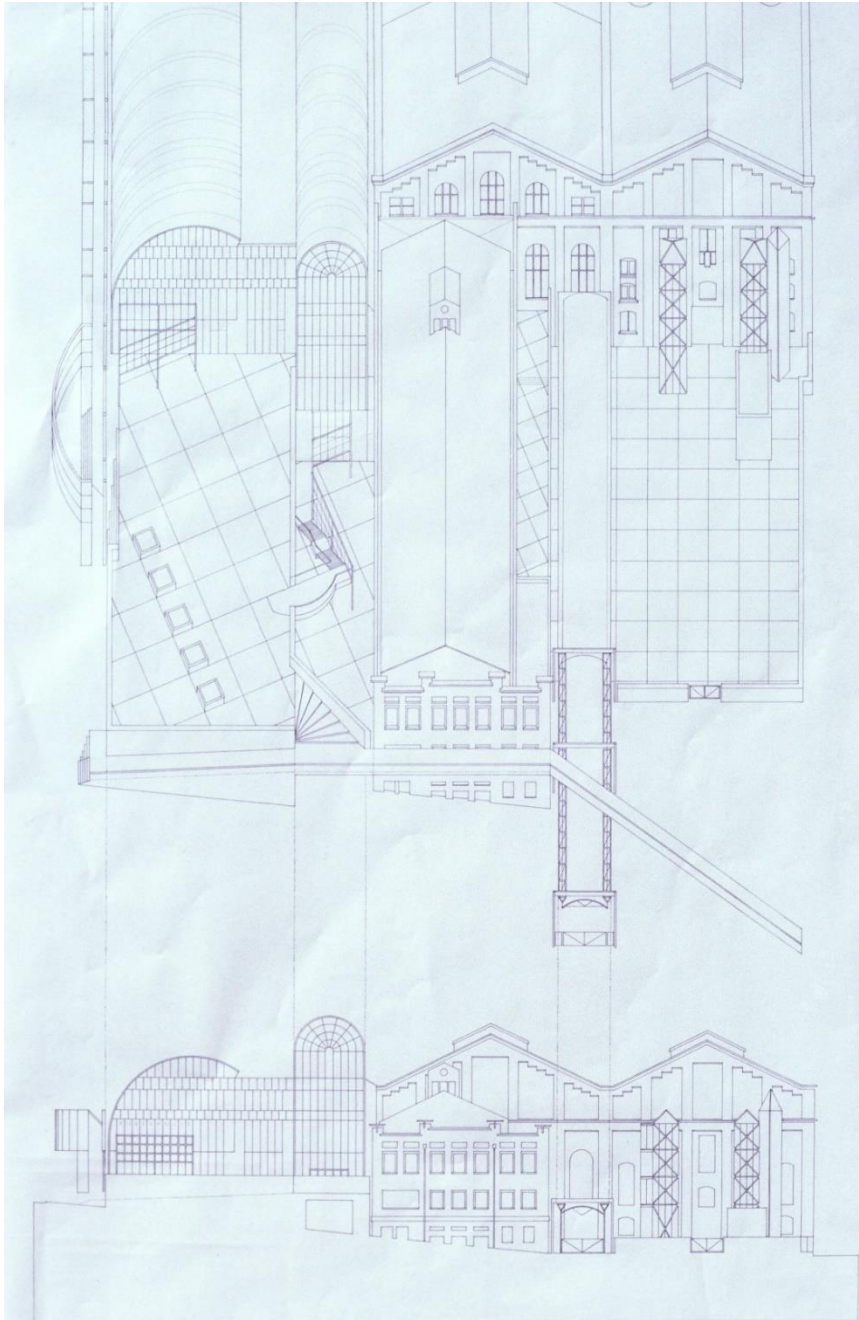
1988 Illuminating Engineering Society of Australia's Meritorious Award for display lighting in NSW

THE ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN CONTEXT OF THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM

Harris Street runs the length of the Ultimo/Pymont peninsula from George St and Central Station to the Harbour opposite Balmain. Harris Street is now a veritable architectural history sequence of heritage and award winning modern architecture:

From William Kemp's Technological Museum and Sydney Technical College; the imposing wool stores on the cliff edge of Darling Harbour - Cockle Bay; Ultimo Power House by Whites (USA) 1899 with later 1960s additions; Walter Liberty Vernon's 1901 Ultimo Post Office; terrace housing; Pymont Post Office/banks/hotels -

to a late 20th /early 21st c sequence of buildings by a group of leading Australian and international architects: Glendenning - Powerhouse Museum; Cox - UTS, Australian National Maritime Museum; Woolley, ABC HQ; Neild, Ultimo Community Centre; Seidler, Ian Thorpe Pool; Gehry, Chau Chak Wing Building; and ASPECT Studio/CHROFI, The Goods Line pedestrian link between the Powerhouse, Central & the Inner West Light Rail.



The axonometric drawing of the Powerhouse Museum above illustrates the relationship of the old and the new. The Garden Palace is referenced in the rotated grid expressed in various elements of the building such as the paving & boardroom entrance, which link the building to the Museum's genesis in the Botanic Gardens on Macquarie Street.

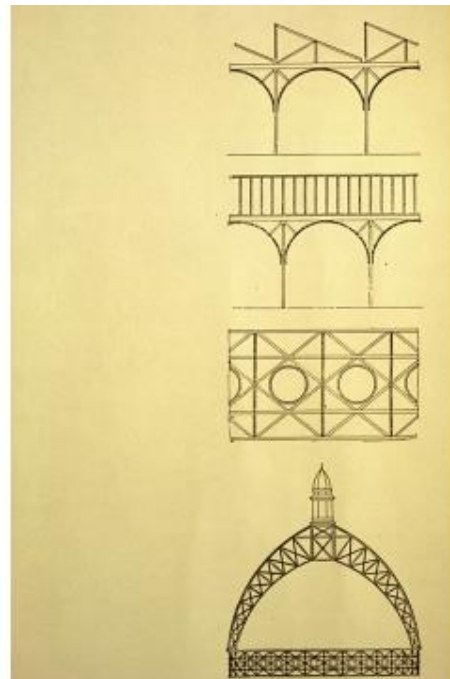


Boardroom model with Entry oriented to the grid linking to the Garden Palace, a building within a building echoing the Powerhouse typology.

The design of the Powerhouse Museum references the institution's beginnings in the Garden Palace, the Ultimo Power House, and the wider context of Darling Harbour - formerly a centre for industry and commerce now a thriving tourism and cultural precinct - a mecca for international and Australian tourists - the Powerhouse a major attraction.



Left: Top: The centre of the Garden Palace's cruciform plan, under the dome and marked by the statue of Queen Victoria. Bottom: Looking down the length of one of the four huge Garden Palace display galleries.



Right: The Garden Palace's arcades, arches and its dome are referenced in the magnificent vault of the Wran building and inspiring Galleria.



The arched, vented roof of the Engine House of the Ultimo Power House was restored and inspired the curved roof of the new building – the Wran building along Harris Street. This distinguishing curved form is now expressed in the lines of Seidler's Ian Thorpe Pool and Woolley's ABC headquarters.



A key to the architecture was the sense of beginning a journey – hence the railway station metaphor, the space-capturing arch of Normanton Railway Station which inspired the vault of the Wran building, the great entry into the Powerhouse Museum.



The Wran Gallery's 1988 opening exhibition introducing the reborn Powerhouse Museum with an exhibition of its historical origins. The much loved Strasburg Clock is silhouetted against the skyscraper. Suspended above is a copy of Lawrence Hargraves' revolutionary box kite - an innovation key to the achievement of powered flight. At Stanwell Park in 1894, the original lifted Hargraves 4.8 metres above the ground.

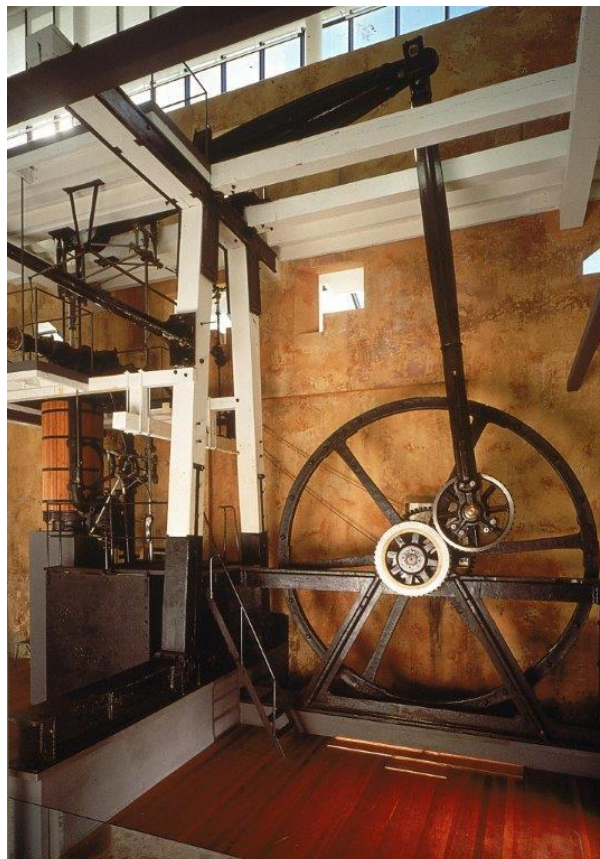


The Galleria: presenting in splendour five of the Museum's most significant artefacts, this is the main circulation path before cascading down into the lower galleries. In plan, the Galleria references the service laneways between the great wool stores of Darling Harbour as well as the laneways of Ultimo.

On the left is No 1 Locomotive was made by Robert Stevenson & Company, Newcastle-on-Tyne England in 1854 and worked on NSW's first railways for 22 years. To quote Tim Fischer, 'To see New South Wales's first ever steam locomotive is to behold an icon of rare beauty.' *Steam Australia*, Tim Fischer, NLA Publishing, 2018, 2019. On the right, the view from the Boulton and Watt viewing platform to the Boardroom profiled in the arch of the Galleria.



In 1982-83, Dick Smith made the first solo circumnavigation of the world flying his Bell 206 B Jetranger Helicopter which he later presented to the Museum.



The 1785 Boulton & Watt beam engine: the 'Mona Lisa' of the Industrial Revolution - operating on steam to bring industry to life. This internationally significant, priceless engine has been in the Museum's collection as an educational exhibit for 127 years after a working life in London of 102 years. This 'living' artefact

is the beginning of the story of The Steam Revolution which was the launching pad for the Industrial Revolution – the foundation of the modern world. This exhibition **CANNOT** be replicated in the cut down Parramatta museum.



Now opposite the Boulton and Watt is the blank wall of the UTS/PHM Collaborative Theatre, a lecture theatre for UTS students, which has taken over prime exhibition space and blocked a key visitor path. In the last decade, the Museum's exhibitions have been cut by 40%. This is the erosion of the Museum to suit the Government's goal to 'move' it

The 2009 removal of the Museum's exhibition, *Inspired, design across time* -over 200 years of design & decorative arts complementing the Museum's impressive technology exhibitions, removed the visual representation of the innovation of members of the Lunar Society: Matthew Boulton's and Josiah Wedgwood's achievements were displayed side by side along with the best of Australian colonial cabinetmaking and silversmithing. This was a rare statement of the power of creative and innovative minds combined with skilled and inventive hands – only possible in the Powerhouse Museum – applied arts and applied sciences – and easily reinstated if the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo were to be renewed, not destroyed.

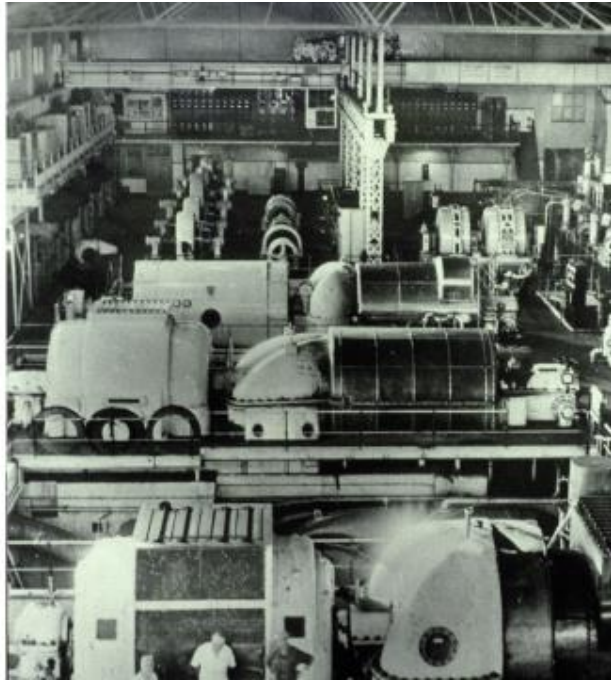
Unique to the Powerhouse Museum is the marriage of one of the earliest and most imposing power stations in Australia with the pre-eminent technology collection in Australia. From the Galleria, visitors move through the former Engine House, Turbine House and Boiler House and learn about the astounding array of objects illustrating technological advances leading to the digital age. **This museum context is irreplaceable.**



The exterior wall of the Turbine House, now the eastern wall of the Galleria - the Museum's columns are derived from this profile. Visitors move through & down into the heart of the Museum.



View through an original Ultimo Power House window from the Boulton and Watt into the Engine House; Right: Replica UPH light, wall hatch & 1988 freestanding bespoke air conditioning - an innovation to ensure high standards for the enormous spaces & for condition stratification.



The original Engine House of Ultimo Power House (UPH) with the later Turbine House in the foreground. The gantry cranes are original to the Ultimo Power House and there are 3 in total in situ. Two were made in USA in 1899 and one in Australia in 1929.



Adjacent to the 1785 Boulton and Watt beam engine, powered by live steam, the Engine House is the perfect location for the Museum's *Steam Revolution* exhibition. This is an installation photo documenting the engineering challenge to power these valuable engines, and the priceless Boulton and Watt, with live steam generated in a boiler in the Museum's basement. The cut down

Parramatta museum will not have live steaming on this scale if at all.



The Steam Revolution exhibition - unique in the world for its use of steam to bring the eleven engines to life - an evocative soundscape in motion. A vivid introduction to the history of innovation in steam power, visitors are exposed to a range of working mechanisms. This exhibition **CANNOT** be replicated in the cut down Parramatta museum.



From *Steam Revolution* (left) into the Boiler House (right) where Transport themes are explored in the massive volume and imposing remnant structures of the Power House.



The cavernous vault of the Boiler House of the Ultimo Power House, 1980s.



The Museum's 1944 Catalina flying boat, Frigate Bird II, wrapped and safely installed after an incredibly complex installation of the largest plane, indeed largest object, to hang in any museum in the

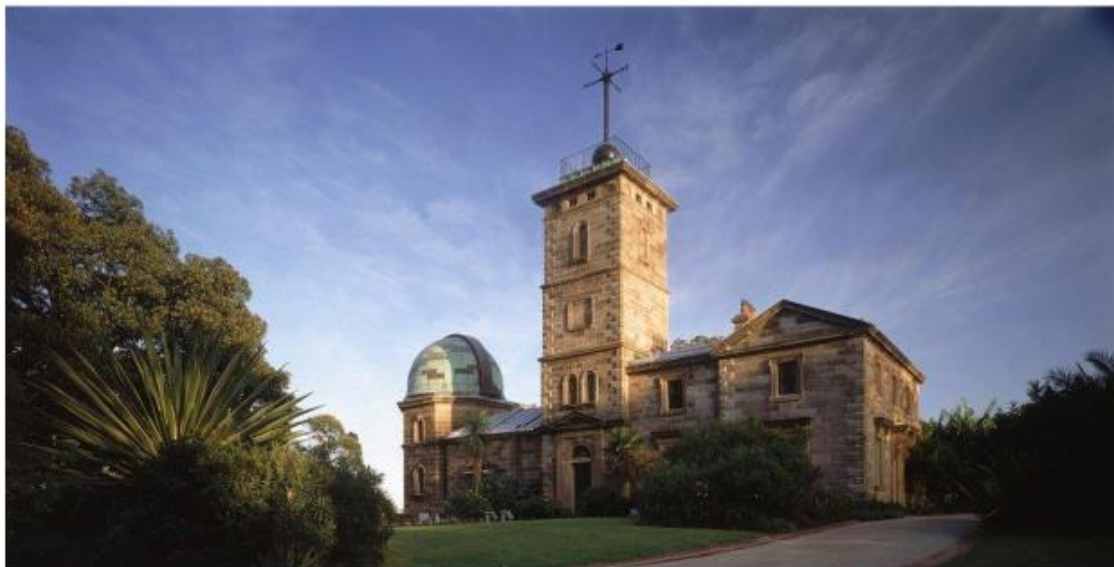
world. To remove it is unthinkable and will involve demolition of the heritage fabric of the Museum and an insupportable level of risk. Behind is the Beechcraft Queen Air - the first air ambulance to be operated in NSW by the NSW Air Ambulance Service, again, a tricky installation and an even riskier removal.



The most magnificent display of planes, trains, and spacecraft - unrivalled in the world. This spectacle is not just an immersive experience - but a layering of stories across time and space told through objects and interpretation. The Catalina leads a flight of planes, 9 -15m above the floor in the majestic volume, 20m high - above Locomotive 1243 and the Governor's carriage. In the left is a rocket engine of the type used in NASA'S Saturn V Moon rocket on loan to the Museum. Under the loan agreement, it would have to be returned to the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum if it is removed from display for any length of time - as would be the case if the Parramatta move proceeded. This awe inspiring exhibition CANNOT be replicated in the cut down Parramatta museum.



Behind Central Station's 'Destination' Board is the exhibition, *Space: beyond this world*, possibly still the only space exhibition to represent the achievements of the USA, the then USSR and China in space exploration. This exhibition CANNOT be replicated in the cut down Parramatta museum.



The Space exhibition, along with the Museum's timekeeping and navigation collection, link the Powerhouse Museum to its branch, **Sydney Observatory**. This is especially so for the exploration of space via astronomy. The Powerhouse showed its display innovation when, even before the internet, it worked with NASA to provide a live feed of images from the Voyager 2 space probe's historic encounter with Neptune, screened in the theatrette inside the Space Shuttle reproduction. This will not be replicated in the cut down Parramatta museum.

The Powerhouse Museum is born of the Industrial Revolution.

This epic period in our history gave rise to International Exhibitions showcasing the achievements of the cultivated Mind and the skilled Hand in the displays of the manufactures of nations from across the world and close to home.

Designing and making is the paramount theme throughout the Museum's collection. An example is the legacy of master glass engraver Frank Webb who was sent to Australia by his London-based family firm, Thomas Webb to demonstrate at the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition (see below: Thomas Webb display at centre rear). He was very successful and stayed in Australia, continuing to exhibit internationally while operating a glass engraving business in Sydney.





Glasses engraved with Australian flora by Frank Webb, 1912 in the Museum's collection along with his engraving tools. Trustees Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences

Frank Webb's use of Australian flora as a design source was championed by the Museum's second Curator/Director, Richard Baker and is a major theme in the Museum's history and collection, firmly founded in the leadership role of the Technological Museum and then amplified in the Powerhouse Museum. To remove or diminish the Powerhouse Museum in its Ultimo precinct is to destroy its 126 year defining association with this significant creativity and innovation precinct.

The current retrospective exhibition of the exuberant designs of Jenny Kee and Linda Jackson, *Step into Paradise*, is a powerful statement of the inspiration of the landscape, flora and fauna of Australia on our creative culture - and our identity. This is a significant legacy of Richard Baker, one of the earliest champions of Australian flora in the applied arts.



This group of Venetian glassware was made by the Venice and Murano Glass Company c.1885 and exhibited at the 1888 Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition. The Museum purchased it in 1889 as an example of high quality international manufacture.

Trustees Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences



Display about violinmaking including on the left, the work of Australia's most distinguished maker Arthur Smith. The Museum has an outstanding musical instrument collection - technology for art's sake. Trustees Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences



Science and Design on the Powerhouse Museum's Wran building.

From its inception, the Museum has been about creativity and innovation in the applied arts and applied sciences – now explored in the context of history and contemporary life – for the Powerhouse Museum is a history museum – it tells stories through its collection 'to encourage the development of design, artistic and technical skills to enrich the quality of life for all.'

Over its long history, the Museum has made outstanding acquisitions which epitomise the very best of innovation in designing and making, particularly in the lead up to the 1988 opening when the generosity of sponsors, the Patrons of the Powerhouse and donors enabled the Museum to acquire high quality objects across science, technology, social history, design and decorative arts.



Regency Egyptian Revival style chair and settee designed by Thomas Hope, England, 1802; Peacock conservatory ornament, modelled by Paul Comolera, made by Mintons, Stoke-on-Trent, England 1875 – acquisitions sponsored by

the Patrons of the Powerhouse; *Pink Diamond*' costume designed by Catherine Martin, 2000 for the film *Moulin Rouge*.

The incredible richness and diversity of the Powerhouse's collection is testament to the public support it has received over its 139 year history. Generations have endowed the Museum - it is truly the people's museum. The Museum and its collection are held in trust for the people of NSW and do not belong to the government of the day.



This Type 37A Grand Prix Bugatti racing car won the 1929 Australian Grand Prix, Phillip Is, driven by its owner, Arthur J Terdich. Designed by Ettore Bugatti, Molsheim, France. Purchased 1984 with funds raised from sponsors. Trustees, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences



This Enigma ciphering machine, German, 1940 (left) is hugely significant in the development of computers and the digital age. The Powerhouse has an

outstanding collection ranging from early computers - such as the rare Apple I designed by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, made by Apple Computers, 1976, Palo Alto, Calif, USA (right), - to robotics to 3D design. Trustees Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences.

The November 2014 announcement by former Premier Baird that the Powerhouse would be 'moved' to Parramatta has seriously weakened the standing of the Museum as a permanent institution, independent of government whim and interference. Donors are changing their intent and their wills and promised gifts and bequests are being given to interstate and national museums and galleries. Donors have unsuccessfully asked for their gifts to be returned. This is unconscionable as donors are the lifeblood of any museum.

From 1984 to 2016, the Powerhouse received benefaction of gifts of objects and sponsored acquisitions of objects worth more than \$20 million. Over this same period, government funds of approx \$6 million were expended on collection acquisitions. It is vital that a public museum has the support of benefactors to build its collection.



Australian designer Marc Newson's *Lockheed Lounge* designed in 1986, made by Eckhard Reissig, Sydney, 1990.

Australian Marc Newson is one of the world's most innovative designers and the Powerhouse has the finest and most comprehensive collection of Marc Newson's work. In 2001, the Powerhouse staged the first major retrospective exhibition of Marc's career, *Marc Newson: design works*. Marc has given prototypes and design archives to the Museum but is now a strong opponent of the 'move' to Parramatta.

The Museum's leading role in the Ultimo cultural and education precinct for 126 years was significantly enhanced when the Powerhouse Museum opened in 1988, 100m from Kemp's 1893 museum; the

Museum anchors the Haymarket/Chippendale end of the cultural ribbon that encircles Darling Harbour with the Australian National Maritime Museum to the north; the Museum is easily accessible for people from across Sydney and NSW via the Goods Line, especially school students and international visitors - bus, rail, tram, international & domestic airports; the just announced technology district next to Central Station, led by Atlassian, is the perfect complement to the mission, purpose, programs and collection of the Powerhouse Museum.

The Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo could not be more compatible with the contemporary aspirations for this cultural, education, design, science & 'tech' precinct. Since 1882, the Powerhouse Museum's primary focus has been creativity and innovation.

The February 2019 Report of the Legislative Council's Parliamentary Inquiry into Museums and Galleries is blunt in its assessment - '...the decision to relocate the Powerhouse Museum has been based on poor planning and advice, a flawed business case and insufficient community consultation. Nothing so far has demonstrated the necessity or purpose for relocating this world renowned cultural institution, an institution that is much loved and internationally well regarded.'

The Government's 'move' plan will result at Parramatta in a 'museum' half the footprint of the Powerhouse with far less of the display volumes, less collection on display - all on a flood prone riverbank. It is plan concocted with only lip service to community consultation - the Parramatta City Council Cultural Plan 2016 seeks an iconic gallery and exhibition space and to celebrate the region's Aboriginal and Colonial history and, its contemporary cultural diversity and creative energy. This is not a fit with the 'move the Powerhouse' plan. The Powerhouse Museum is embedded in the Ultimo Power House, the Ultimo precinct and the city of Sydney. The Powerhouse will cease to exist in any other location, building or context. The Government's plan is destroying the Powerhouse Museum and its 139 year contribution to NSW's culture.

The Government's plan for the Powerhouse provoked a petition of more than 11,000 signatures, over 250 submissions to the Inquiry - the vast majority against the move and, a roll call of letters and public statements from across NSW, Australia and internationally supporting Western Sydney's cultural development, and decrying the plan to 'move' the Powerhouse to Parramatta - an impossibility given its heart is the former Ultimo Power House.

From the Royal Society of NSW, the Australian Institute of Architects NSW, the Australia International Council of Monuments and Sites, Engineers Australia NSW, National Trust NSW to the Design Institute of Australia, Harden-Murrumburrah Historical Society and Orange and District Historical Society - all and many more support the Powerhouse Museum's future in Ultimo.

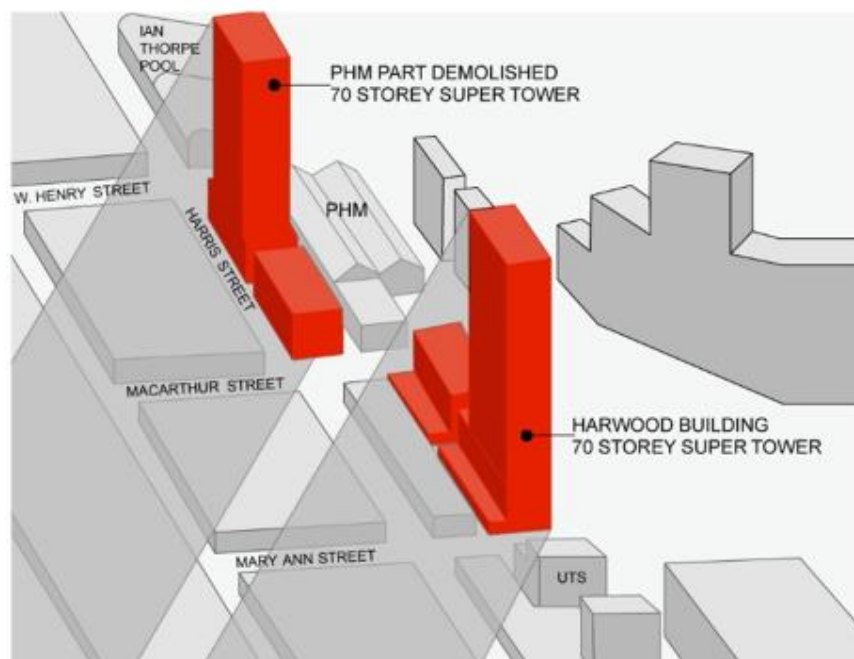
Sir Neil Cossons, former Director of the Science Museum, London and an admirer of the Powerhouse Museum said, "Loss of the Powerhouse

would seriously diminish Australia's cultural life and reputation" when informed of the Powerhouse to Parramatta plan and its consequences when the Inquiry Report was released.

Yet, unbelievably, just 31 years after the Powerhouse opened, for **the SECOND time in its long and distinguished lifetime the Museum is facing destruction.**

This time it is the NSW Government destroying the Powerhouse Museum – a Museum championed by Sir Henry Parkes and endowed by generations of the people of NSW – **The People's Museum.**

This time there will be no rising from the ashes to greater museological heights.



The consequence of Crone's diagram of the Powerhouse Museum site should the Government's 'move' plan proceed and development of the remnant Powerhouse site be deemed 'state significant.' Another Star Casino fiasco!

To conclude and to paraphrase architect Aldo Rossi's writing on the city,

"One can say that the ~~city~~ **MUSEUM** itself is the collective memory of its people, and like memory, it is associated with objects and places. The ~~city~~ **MUSEUM** is the locus of the collective memory."

To which one can add this quote from Lionel Glendenning,

'The pattern of our urban environment is imprinted on our brains – our memory. To remove great architecture and our shared cultural heritage is to commit a collective cultural lobotomy on us all.'

Thank you,

Jennifer Sanders

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Jennifer Sanders had a distinguished career at the Powerhouse Museum. As senior curator, she was a key member of the Powerhouse development team, and from 1988, a member of the Museum's Executive. From 2001-2009 she was Deputy Director, Collections and Outreach. During 1999-2008 Jennifer was a member of the National Cultural Heritage Committee. From 2007-2012, she was a member of the External Advisory Panel, Design Research Institute, RMIT University, Melbourne and Chair, Design Archives Advisory Panel, RMIT University. Since 2009, she has undertaken range of heritage, museum and curatorial consultancies.

Below is the editorial from the October 2019 issue of The Burlington Magazine, the world's leading monthly publication devoted to the fine and decorative arts of all periods. Established in 1903, it is the longest running art journal in the English language.

The Burlington Magazine

October 2019, No. 1399 – Vol 161

EDITORIAL: MICHAEL HALL

Powering down in Sydney

Sydney's museums and art galleries are going through a period of upheaval. In August the Australian Museum, the oldest public museum in the country, closed for a year, principally to allow storage areas to be converted into new galleries for exhibitions. In early 2020 an even more venerable building, the convict barracks of 1811–19, which forms part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site on Macquarie Street, will reopen after a year's closure during which the museum it houses is being transformed into 'a new immersive visitor experience'.

Even these substantial projects are outshone by the saga of the extension of the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Known confusingly as 'Sydney Modern' (it is entirely separate from the city's Museum of Contemporary Art), this will provide galleries for temporary exhibitions as well as the museum's contemporary and indigenous art. A stand-alone building, it will occupy a site in the Royal Botanic Garden to the north of the museum that includes the roof of a decommissioned Second World War oil store, part of which will be converted into gallery space.

When announced in 2013, the building had a budget of AUS\$400 million, revised upwards by \$50 million a year later.

In 2015 the commission was awarded to the Japanese architects SAANA, who had to scale back their design when two years later the budget was reduced to \$344 million. Suspicions that this level of funding was inadequate were reinforced when the contractors withdrew. Nonetheless, in September it was announced that a new contractor had been signed up, that the existing budget was confirmed and that construction will begin later this year, although the building cannot now be finished in time for the Art Gallery's 150th anniversary in 2021, as originally hoped. 2022 has been pencilled in.

In other times for the city's museums such problems might have loomed larger were it not for the bitter controversy that has overwhelmed the Powerhouse Museum, which, it now seems certain, is to be moved by the Government of New South Wales out of the centre of Sydney to the western suburb of Parramatta, fifteen miles away.

Together with the city's observatory, the Powerhouse Museum forms the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, one of the many institutions founded in the nineteenth century on the model of the South Kensington Museum, London. It contains the principal public collection of historic decorative arts in New South Wales, which are seen not in the context of the fine arts (like the equivalent collections in Victoria and South Australia) but in that of technology and manufacturing. Since 1893 the museum has been in the inner western suburb of Ultimo, close to Darling Harbour. In a pioneering move, the turn of the century Ultimo Power Station and adjacent tram depot were converted into a much-admired home for the museum, opened under its new name in 1988.

For the past two decades, the Government of New South Wales has been developing Parramatta as a metropolitan centre. From the outset its ambitions for the suburb included a new cultural quarter, of which a museum would form part. Several candidates have been suggested: a museum of migration, perhaps, or one for indigenous and Pacific cultures, either of which would be appropriate for such an ethnically diverse neighbourhood.

However, in 2014 the Government rejected such ideas in preference for moving the Powerhouse Museum into a new building in Parramatta. The objections were obvious. The chosen site – on the banks of the Parramatta River, in an area prone to flooding – is smaller than that in Ultimo. The cost of the move, together with that of a new building (needless to say, the Government wants an ‘iconic’ building by a star architect), is astronomical – over one billion dollars. Part of this will be met by the development of Government land close to the Parramatta site as a sixty-storey tower of apartments and partly by the sale of the highly valuable Ultimo site, with the exception only of the power station building, which is to become an as-yet undefined ‘cultural hub’.

In the face of passionate protests, the proposal was examined as part of a parliamentary enquiry into museums and galleries in New South Wales.⁽¹⁾ Its report, published in February this year, could hardly have been less equivocal:

The committee has recommended that the NSW Government not proceed with the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum from Ultimo to Parramatta. Instead, the NSW Government should focus on restoring the Powerhouse Museum at Ultimo, by providing a significant injection of funding for refurbishment and expansion. In terms of plans for Western Sydney, the NSW Government should consider establishing a Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences satellite site, and/or establishing a world class cultural institution in Parramatta that reflects its own extraordinary history.⁽²⁾

Nonetheless, the Government set the report aside and announced that the Powerhouse’s main building would close in July 2020, followed by the exhibition galleries in June 2021, leaving the museum without a physical home until its new building opens, supposedly in 2023. Even people who might have been prepared to consider a properly argued case for the move have been shocked by the Government’s intransigence in brushing its critics aside. Its behaviour has been facilitated by the museum’s antiquated governance, which severely constrains the trustees’ independence.

To the outsider visiting the museum today, it all seems so sad and unnecessary. In 2015, in an admirable redevelopment inspired by Manhattan's High Line, a former freight line running from Central Station to Darling Harbour was remodelled as an attractive urban walkway known as the Goods Line. It passes not only the Powerhouse but also buildings for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, the Ultimo campus of TAFE New South Wales (a centre for vocational education) and Frank Gehry's business school for the University of Technology. This ideal, accessible setting at the centre of a youthful, lively educational and media community makes it all the more shameful that the Powerhouse Museum is now to be so pointlessly and wastefully uprooted.

1. For the case made by the objectors, see <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/>, accessed 16th September 2019.

2. For the full report, see <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2403/Interim%20Report.pdf>, accessed 16th September 2019.