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Director, Key Sites Assessments,
NSW Planning, Department of Planning and Environment,
Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124.
Date: 21 July 2022

Attention: Renah Givney
Re: SSD-32927319 Powerhouse Museum Concept Plan Proposal

Dear Minister for the Arts and Director, Key Sites Assessments,

I write as Vice-Chair of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Australia. ICOM is an international organisation committed to the research, conservation, continuation and communication to society of the world's natural and cultural heritage, present and future, tangible and intangible. Around the globe we have 44,686 members. ICOM Australia represents the interests of over 850 local members most of whom work in museums.

As a forum ICOM is the voice of Museum professionals, and in Australia we contribute to recommendations on issues related to meeting internationally accepted benchmarks and standards of excellenceⁱ. Our purpose is to make recommendations on issues relating to Museumsⁱⁱ and as such we can contribute to the discussion about the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, in particular the development of plans for the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo.

We *disagree* with the proposal as presented.

This looks to be the removal rather than the redevelopment of a Museum. The preliminary development objectives to deliver 'an international standard museum that is complementary to Powerhouse Parramatta, Powerhouse Castle Hill and Sydney Observatory'. However, the idea of a 'Museum' is not reflected in the proposal. As representatives of the International museum committee we are therefore concerned as to the future of the collections and the potential loss of access to cultural heritage for the community, comprising the people of Greater Sydney, and broader NSW.

Government, whilst it is a patron of the human and natural heritage of NSW, does not own the collections. The people own museum collections and knowledge about those collections. Government has a moral duty to protect culture, and that protection includes providing a safe location for moveable heritage, the resources and intent to protect and preserve built heritage and the ethical framework to manage and share that cultural heritage.

The *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums* presents a minimum standard for museums and their professional management and we refer to this, quoting pertinent excerpts, in providing a response to the Legislative Council about the NSW Government's vision for Management of museums and cultural projects in New South Wales.

ICOM has determined that a governing body should:

1. Provide physical resources with a suitable environment for the museums to fulfill the basic functions defined in a museum's mission.
2. Develop and maintain policies to protect the public and personnel, the collections and other resources against natural and human-made disasters.

Museums have a responsibility to:

1. Work in close collaboration with the communities from which their collections originate as well as those they serveⁱⁱⁱ.
2. Have a particular responsibility for making collections and all relevant information available as freely as possible.
3. Should ensure that the information they present in displays and exhibitions is well founded, accurate and gives appropriate consideration to represented groups or beliefs.

In reference to the ICOM Code of Ethics the Powerhouse Museum, which has a significant collection, owned by the people of NSW, and on any site must meet the basic requirements of a museum.

It is proposed that there is further consultation about the redevelopment of the Powerhouse Museum and ICOM Australia would be pleased to contribute to this discussion.

Yours sincerely

Alex Marsden
Vice-Chair ICOM Australia

ⁱ This includes cultural heritage and preservation, ethics, disaster recovery, standards for collection management and most recently, the debate about the definition of what a museum is, so that ICOM remains cutting edge in a rapidly changing world.

ⁱⁱ <https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICOM-code-En-web.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/110825_Checklist_print.pdf