

**“POWERHOUSE ULTIMO REVITALISATION
SSD-67588459
SUBMISSION AND AMENDMENT REPORT OF 3 Sept 2024
KEY POINTS FOR PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS**

-A- SUMMARY

1. **Public Ownership Overlooked:** The government forgot that the Museum belongs to the public, not the administration, who act as caretakers for future generations.
2. **Lack of Public Support:** The project lacks legitimacy due to overwhelming public rejection, evidenced by repeated consultations showing 95% opposition, petitions, and Upper House inquiries condemning it.
3. **Biased Consultation:** Public consultation was skewed. A misleading announcement in March 2024 implied full heritage protection, while the final July 2024 listing included 13 exemptions allowing extensive demolition of historic elements.
4. **Process Violations:** The project's application ignored standard procedures, avoiding a two-stage process and new architectural competition by presenting conflicting narratives about its continuity with prior plans.
5. **Budget Misrepresentation:** The stated project budget of \$250M to the taxpayers is inaccurate. Documents reveal a true cost closer to \$500M, excluding many key expenses.
6. **False Sustainability Claims:** Assertions of “six-star” sustainability are undermined by incomplete carbon impact assessments.
7. **Reduction of Exhibition Space:** The project would slash exhibition space by 75%, a significant loss masked by vague claims about improved “quality” over quantity.
8. **Unrealistic Visitor Projections:** The claim of increasing visitors from 800,000 to 2 million annually lacks explanation and seems implausible given the reduced exhibition space.
9. **Heritage Destruction:** The project would destroy key heritage features, including the Wran Building, the Galleria, and industrial artefacts crucial to the Museum's historical identity.
10. **Extended Delays:** Promises of a three-year closure are false, with the Museum's reopening now delayed until at least 2028.
11. **Lack of Transparency:** Critical project documents remain secret despite promises of transparency, including the Business Case and Conservation Management Plan.
12. **Ignored Expertise:** Expert advice from key figures like Lionel Glendening and Dr. Lindsay Sharp was disregarded, and a noted conservation expert Alan Croker was removed from the project for opposing demolitions.

-B- KEY POINTS

1) **A critical point is that the NSW Government overlooked the fact that the Museum belongs to the people**, not the government of the day. They are only caretakers who hold it in trust for current and future generations.

2) **Only a project resulting from genuine public consultation and is widely supported is legitimate.**

But the project's latest public exhibition in May 2024 attracted 162 submissions of which **only 5 (3%)** supported it. This follows the same level of rejection (around 95% each time) to each exhibition of the various versions of the project, a 10,000+ signatures parliamentary petition, the condemning conclusions of two Upper House Inquiries and a 7,670 signatures online petition.

Despite this, the current exhibition presents again the same project and must be rejected in the same way.

3) The public consultation has been systematically biased –

- An intention to heritage-list the whole “Powerhouse Museum Complex” (**without mentioning exemptions**) was announced in March 2024 (**before the beginning of the exhibition in May 2024**), letting the public believe the Museum was going to be protected by the listing.

- The heritage listing was finally gazetted in July 2024 (**after the public exhibition had closed**) **with 13 exemptions** allowing the destruction of 98% of the architectural reuse of the old Power Station into adaptive museum spaces designed by the 'Architect of Record', Lionel Glendenning.

- The Arts Minister published a media release entitled “*Powerhouse heritage listing guarantees Museum's future in Ultimo*” on 16 September claiming that the entire Powerhouse Museum had **JUST** been heritage-listed when the listing took place more than 2 months previously and does not protect the Museum (see above).

4) **The project application does not follow due process**

Construction DAs are generally conducted in 2 stages in NSW - building envelope then detailed design.

INSWs argument oscillates between two mutually exclusive narratives:

- The “Heritage Revitalisation” is a different project from the “Renewal” and hence the documents prepared for the “Renewal” are superseded and cannot be publicised.

- The “Heritage Revitalisation” is a continuation of the previous Government's “Renewal” and hence the Applicant may dispense with a two-stage Application and a new architectural competition. Consequently the same architectural team may be used and a new design competition and a new brief are not required.

5) **The statement by the Arts Minister that the project budget is \$300M (of which \$50M would be contributed by philanthropy) is not correct.**

Documents contained in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) show that the project budget is 350M and that this figure covers only 85% of the estimated building costs and excludes GST and fit-out, exhibit exile and return and new exhibition installation costs.

The final cost to the taxpayer will not be \$250M but close to \$500M (**double!**).

6) **The claim that this project (and Powerhouse Parramatta) are 'six star' sustainable projects is entirely false** as the Slattery's so called 'embodied carbon' report, amended since the EIS original version, demonstrates: there is no calculation of all types of embodied carbon - in existing facilities (to be demolished), in future new build and in much expanded inter-site transport - as required by the Planning Secretary's rules and regulation

7) **The project would reduce the museum exhibition space by 75%**

- The Powerhouse Museum has (demonstrably) 21,080m² of exhibition space over 5 levels and successfully held 25 different exhibitions concurrently when it opened in 1988.

- NSW's 6,850m² figure is obviously a great underestimation but **is also directly contradicted by MAAS CEO, Lisa Havilah's statement** of 10 May 2023 that *"the current Ultimo exhibition space (is) 15,318m²"*.

- The "Revitalisation" documents show that the total proposed exhibition area is 5,100m² (**24% of the existing 21,080m²**).

This is the direct result of the removal of all intermediate floors which reduce the Museum to only 3 oversized caverns more suited for contemporary events and commercial use than for the exhibition of the diverse Museum collections.

- NSW's excuse that *"a quantitative comparison between the existing areas of the museum and the proposed areas does not pay sufficient regard to qualitative considerations of the spaces..."* - without elaborating on what they mean by quality - is ridiculous. How could non-measurable improved **"quality"** ever compensate for a reduction to a quarter of the easily-measurable surface **quantity**?

8) The "Revitalisation" documents state that the Museum will increase its visitation from 800,000 a year to 2,000,000, although they do not explain how this figure was obtained (buried in the secret Business Case?)

A Museum with only 5,100m² of exhibition space could not receive 2 million visitors a year (even if it remains open until midnight!).

9) The project would destroy the museum's heritage significance and its Wran legacy.

The project calls for –

- The demolition of the southern end of the Wran Building and Galleria.
- The conversion of the Galleria into a staircase encased behind brick walls.
- The significant alteration of the arched roofs, the signature of the award-winning Wran conversion heritage.
- The dismantling of the 'Steam Revolution' display and of the live steam generation system and the removal of its 19th-century original floor.
- The removal of the Harwood building from the project with an uncertain future.
- The hiding of the museum from Harris Street behind a row of shops severing the Museum from Ultimo, its historical base since 1893 and the source of many of its collection's industrial artefacts.

10) The Arts Minister's promise that *"...conservation works are expected to take UP TO three years"* is already empty.

A recent Arts Minister's media release states that *"Restoration and construction work is expected to be completed in 2027"*. This excludes fit-out and exhibition installation.

The Museum is not scheduled to open before 2028 at the earliest, **4 TO 5 YEARS AFTER CLOSURE.**

11) **Documents essential to the evaluation of the project are kept secret** despite the Arts Minister's repeated pre-electoral promises of transparency. They include the Business Case, the Architect Design Brief, the Future Exhibition Programming and the Conservation Management Plan.

12) **Expert advice has systematically been ignored**

- Lionel Glendening, Architect of the adaptation of the Ultimo Power Station into a world-class museum, project for which he was awarded the Sulman Prize, and Dr Lindsay Sharp, who led the project during its design and development and became the Museum's Founding Director were never consulted.
- Alan Croker, the author of the acclaimed Opera House and the White Bay Conservation Management Plans, was originally contracted to design the Powerhouse Museum CMP but his contract was terminated before the document was completed, seemingly because he opposed the extent of the proposed demolitions.