



The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and we show our respect for elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.



Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.

From: Linda Avramides [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 24 June 2020 10:03 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: savewillowgroveparramatta@gmail.com
Subject: Re: I OBJECT TO THE POWERHOUSE PARRAMATTA PROJECT - SAVE WILLOWGROVE

Hello there,

thank you for this opportunity to submit my objections.

I firmly and wholeheartedly object to the Powerhouse Parramatta project.

In 25 June, 2018 it was [revealed that heritage buildings Willow Grove and St George's Terrace would be demolished](#) under the NSW Government's plan to relocate the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta.

For the last two years, numerous impassioned community objections to this move have been tabled to both Parramatta Council and the State Government.

It seems that these strident objections have been conveniently ignored. Why? Do they think heritage is not financially viable? This is short sighted. If the Parramatta heritage buildings were presented as tourism destinations, it would attract more school visits and more tourism.

In fact, the direct global value of *culture and heritage tourism* is well over \$1billion dollars, with that of the Asia Pacific region being approximately \$327 million.

Culture and heritage tourism is already directly responsible for more than 50 million jobs in APEC countries.

Here below are reasons for my objections to the demolition of both WillowGrove and St Georges Terrace:

1. The Social history and the loss of sense of place and character of Parramatta.

This has not been adequately studied and reported on in the Environmental Impact Statement.

The further obliteration of our history signed off by a Council Mayor that seems overly concerned about saving face and has a 'can't go back now' attitude is totally vapid, ego driven and unacceptable.

The general community is absolutely dismayed by its pro-developer 'planning' decisions, (mirrored throughout Sydney, now fast becoming a city of cranes and a historical and cultural desert - as noted recently by overseas tourists) inspired by new State Government planning regulations.

Again, all this is based on the bottom line and the premise that "*heritage isn't profitable*". The Mayor needs to stand up for city heritage.

The Mayor, Cr Dwyer has been quoted as saying: that "Parramatta would be a laughing stock" if council rejected it now. He must stop neglecting the unique face of Parramatta and NSW history.

This is false, he will go down in history if he stands up for Parramatta's important city heritage, unequivocally rejects the demolition package, demands EIS withdrawal and refuses the current civic foreshore design.

If the Council supported the preservation of Willowgrove and St Georges' Terrace, expand on an its already existing history, it would attract more school visits and more tourists.

Here is some background history which serves to illustrate this.

History of Parramatta:

Parramatta is of major historical importance in the founding of Sydney and any building or landmark that reflects this must be revered, maintained and retained.

Tourists flock to the great cities of the world to visit historic monuments and places of significance. Not to see a sea of cranes and developer placards.

Parramatta was founded by the British in 1788, the same year as Sydney and is the oldest inland European settlement in Australia and the economic capital of Greater Western Sydney.

After the penal colony was founded at Sydney Cove in January 1788, the first colonists found the land around Sydney difficult to clear and the soil unsuitable for agriculture.

Governor Arthur Phillip organised exploring expeditions up the Parramatta River. When more fertile land near the head of the river was found, he decided to set up a second settlement.

On 2 June 1791, Phillip renamed it Parramatta, using the locality name used by the Burramattagal.

Various meanings have been ascribed to the name Parramatta, but [Elizabeth Macarthur](#) wrote at the time that it meant 'head of the river'.

It was the first place to be given a name by Europeans that was based on an Aboriginal name.

The name of the settlement was changed to Parramatta on the King's birthday in 1791.

Parramatta's name is Aboriginal and commonly translated as 'the place where the eels lie down' or 'head of waters'.

It comes from the Aboriginal word Baramada or Burramatta. The Burramatta people (Burra meaning place, matta meaning eels) belonged to the Dharug people.

Farming in the area was successful and the produce helped to support the colonists in its early years.

2. The importance of Willow Grove to women's history as a maternity hospital for over three decades for people of Parramatta to the early 1950s.

3. The overall cumulative impacts of further heritage destruction in Parramatta currently been undertaken, make Willow Grove and St Georges Terraces vital to retain for communities' sense of place.

4. Willow Grove and St Georges Terraces are rare examples of architecture that no longer exist in Parramatta CBD and should be retained.

Here is some background history which serves to illustrate this.

History of Willow Grove

Willow Grove was built in the 1870s as a Victorian Italianate two-storey villa at [32 Phillip Street](#). It later became a maternity hospital called Estella. Heritage listed, it is one of the oldest intact residences in Sydney, and its historical and exceptional social and cultural significance is unassailable.

<https://www.facebook.com/savewillowgroveparramatta/videos/710575393107382/>



#SaveWillowGrove





History of St George's Terrace and Potential Archaeological Site

[44 Phillip Street, Parramatta, NSW](#) 2150

The row of terraces at [44 Phillip Street, Parramatta](#) is of significance to the Parramatta LGA for historical and aesthetic reasons and as a representative example of modest Victorian period terraces constructed during an early wave of development in the area.

The group presents as having a relatively high degree of integrity when viewed from the street and strongly contributes to the Phillip Street streetscape and the character of the Parramatta townscape, additionally in unison with other historic buildings near-by.



5. Australian actor, Shane Withington says a 'tsunami of destruction' is coming for Sydney's heritage sites

At the moment, he's campaigning to stop the construction of a light rail station and a new museum in Sydney's west that will, in turn, destroy heritage sites.

"Why is no one stopping the carnage!!!!..."

We're concerned about a tsunami of heritage destruction that's moving west towards Parramatta," Withington said.

"The Royal Oak Hotel was 207 years old. That building was older than Perth and the pub was a First Fleeter. And if that wasn't a piece of heritage worth saving, I don't know what is."

"It breaks my heart to see the footage when **the government moved in in the middle of the night and tore it down.**

"We don't even have access to the convict-made bricks. We're not even allowed to see where the bricks are now."

Shane says he is "disgusted" by the removal of Sydney's heritage sites - arguing that a responsible government should do "all it possibly could" to save them.

Another building in the firing line is **Willow Grove** - which was built in 1870 and functioned as a maternity hospital.

"In 20 days, that's going to be in a rubbish bin, and I'm disgusted by it and I'm not the only one," Withington said.

"It doesn't have to go. Willow Grove was a maternity hospital and a third of the population of Parramatta was born in that building.

"There's absolutely no reason why it should go.

"I weep at the thought of us losing these irreplaceable buildings."

6. Objections to moving the Powerhouse Museum from its iconic inner city location

It has become increasingly clear as reports and documents have become available only under pressure from community, museum professionals and heritage experts that Parramatta is not getting a museum it was promised.

Instead it will be lumbered with a flexible commercial event space with a residential floor that will demolish our already diminishing heritage assets, WillowGrove and St Georges Terraces.

Destroying heritage buildings in order to replace them with a museum does now make sense. It is bizarre.

See below:

a. SMH

"We are about to witness one of the most shameful acts of cultural vandalism in the history of this country - on June 30, the NSW government will shut down the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo, where it has existed for 134 years...

b. Leo Schofield, former trustee of the Powerhouse Museum

We are about to witness one of the most shameful acts of cultural vandalism in the history of this country. On June 30, the NSW government will shut down to the public the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo, where it has existed as both a landmark and an attraction for 134 years, and gradually demolish it to make way for sale of the site to a preferred developer. Thus, yet more of the Sydney we love is being eradicated.

The Powerhouse has earned world renown and respect. It has assembled, through acquisitions and donations, a unique, priceless and irreplaceable collection of objects relevant to the history of Australia in general and to NSW in particular. All aspects of human creativity – in science, technology, industry and the decorative arts – are represented in the collection which is now to be dispersed. Many items will never be seen again and a good deal of the collection will probably be sold off.

This operation has, in my opinion, been deliberately and falsely described as a "relocation". It is no such thing. To me, it is the wholesale destruction of a much loved institution and its replacement with another entity that will bear as much relation to the current museum as a Picasso does to a postcard. Only a miserable group of objects will be displayed in a smaller, uglier building in distant Parramatta.

Greeted with almost universal incredulity when it was announced six years ago, this absurd plan continues to meet with unshakeable opposition from the public and from museum professionals.

In 2016, more than 10,000 Sydneysiders signed and presented to the state government a petition to force the creation of a special, cross-party parliamentary inquiry committee to review the plan. That committee gave it a firm thumbs down.

The government barged ahead anyway. Not even a pandemic has been able to deflect the Premier from this disastrous, profligate course of action.

To the current government nothing is sacred, no beautiful sandstone buildings, no open spaces, nothing that can't be swiftly monetised. Extravagant new infrastructure projects, all inevitably costing double or triple original estimates, have bloomed like flowers in spring. Tunnels have been dug, more and more roads built, historic suburbs bisected, ancient trees felled. Central Sydney has been gifted with an astronomically costly and already outmoded light rail.

All of this frenzied activity now forms part of what is one of the worst planned cities in the Western world and one of the most incoherent traffic systems.

But these failures pale into insignificance beside the Powerhouse "relocation", which is not only physically and environmentally disastrous but also culturally destructive. What we would lose in the Powerhouse as a cultural and spiritual component of Sydney life can never be replaced.

Driven either by outmoded ideology, ignorance, bloody mindedness, political opportunism or by a malign combination of all of these: the government seems to have clung to the Powerhouse Parramatta project like a passenger on the Titanic to a flimsy raft.

Deaf to argument, blind to a need for fiscal sobriety and dumbly reciting her pro forma mantra, the Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, has declared the Parramatta move to be a project of state significance without giving a single good reason why it should jump the queue in front of social housing, schools, hospitals and regional cultural centres.

We are now up to Business Case Four and have yet not sighted cogent description of the proposal or a plausible cost-benefit analysis that might justify the risible claim of 1 million visitors a year to Parramatta. Two billion dollars are to be splurged on a plan that is not even half-baked. Shall we make that four? Or more?

The chosen site in Parramatta is manifestly unsuitable. It is flood prone. There is no room for expansion as none is contemplated. When throughout the world, cultural institutions are expanding into satellite spaces, repurposing old buildings or creating new homes for expanding collections – we are shrinking them.

No thought has been given to alternative sites such as the White Bay Power Station. Just grab a bit of existing state land – carve off a slice off the Botanic Garden for the wretched Sydney Modern, which is not a gallery but a function centre in drag; level a prime site in the heart of Chinatown for whoever puts their hand up for it.

According to staff, the Premier has only set foot in the Powerhouse once. She is said to have found it "boring" – which is perhaps why she left the running of the Parramatta folly to her quondam minister for the arts, Don Harwin.

Harwin actually took the job seriously. But duchessed by a handful of powerful figures in the cultural world and ever willing to lend an ear to any scheme that might dilute general opposition to the Ultimo eradication, he became a prime target for the self-interested vultures who descended on the site at the prospect of dismemberment.

A lyric theatre, a fashion museum, a centre of baroque excellence, these and many more claims were made for a piece of the corpse. The public still has no idea of what is imagined for Ultimo or, for that matter, for Parramatta where the current chief executive – whose expertise is confined to the world of contemporary visual arts and who has no significant experience with museums – paints only the fuzziest picture of her vision. Which is perhaps why it is shaping up to be another Carriageworks.

The inescapable fact is that apart from Berejiklian and the Mayor of Parramatta, there is little or no support for the scheme. There is however unequivocal enthusiasm for something in Parramatta that does not involve the obliteration of the Powerhouse in Ultimo.

Leo Schofield was a trustee of the Powerhouse for 10 years. He is a former member of the executive of the National Trust (NSW) and a former chairman of the federal government's committee on new uses for its heritage properties.

https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/government-barges-ahead-with-cultural-destruction-20200619-p5543a.html?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1592701008

c. Members of the Powerhouse museum:

"A shameless land grab. Nothing to do with culture or even Parramatta. Really angry about this as a member for many years with my kids."

"It'll be terrible for the museum. A number of the exhibits cannot be moved without destruction. The proposed relocation site floods often. Every assessment of this proposal has been scathing."

d. Kylie Winkworth, collection management & assessment expert:

"It's a completely porous building, open to the river, with multiple doors and access and no foyer. And no parking whatsoever, but still with the fantasy that they will have high-rotation, multiple events, performances and commercial activities, plus support for 40 apartments and a school boarding house."

e. Linda Morris, Sun Herald:

THE POWERHOUSE'S 'FARCICAL MOVE'

"It looks like a long winter for the government as public anger grows over the Premier's decision to push ahead with the Powerhouse's relocation to a flood-prone site at Parramatta. In the latest news, government papers indicate the opening date for 'Powerhouse Parramatta' has blown out to 2025, with unforeseen costs also hitting the budget. Slammed 'as an entertainment pleasure palace, sucking up increasing amounts of Treasury revenue and public goodwill' rather than a museum."

<https://bit.ly/3hJ6rEK>

f. Henry Ergas, *The Australian*

"The project which necessitates the demolition of 'one of a kind' historic Willow Grove and St Georges Terrace is proposed to be a 17 storey building (western building footprint). Yet despite its huge massing and scale, to 'make matters worse' the building also 'lacks adequate storage, with the result that fragile artefacts will either have to be shipped back and forth over long distances or be permanently consigned to offsite storage. That failure is merely a symptom of a decision-making process that has been flawed from the outset. Rather than basing the decision on careful evaluation, the government first committed to a decision and then sought to justify it."

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/commentary/full-steam-behind-tragedy-as-powerhouse-museum-downsizes/news-story/d7111091419136343a0cb963743b5f4e>

g. Elizabeth Farrelly, *SMH*

It's called a "move", this project to reinstate the Powerhouse on the flood-prone south bank of the Parramatta River. But that's not really accurate. The only thing that will relocate intact is the name. Everything else – building, site and priceless collection – will be broken up, separated, decontextualised, diminished, disrespected and mothballed.

Part of the collection will go to Parramatta, but since every space in the new building is designed to double as an event space, the chance for any permanent display is slim. Meanwhile, the Ultimo site, excepting space for a small fashion museum, will be sold. The Powerhouse itself will be a thing of the past. A memory.

This isn't something you do with museums. In the history of international museology – excepting the deliberate destruction of totalitarian regimes – institutional destruction of this kind is virtually unheard of. Yet here we are in this bizarre glass bead game that consistently values appearance over fact and form over content.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/powerhouse-museum-will-run-out-of-puff-in-parramatta-20200618-p553yc.html>

h. Greens MP David Shoebridge, *The Guardian*

The parliamentary upper house committee has recommended the museum should be "restored to its former glory" at its current site in Ultimo through a significant injection of funds. It argues this would lead to greater patronage and that the government business case for moving it was "inadequate" and did not consider the option of leaving it at the current site.

The chairman of the committee, Greens MP David Shoebridge, said the move would be a disaster....

Shoebridge said: "This was always about a property deal pretending to be about cultural institutions."

The Berejiklian government has proposed to move the Powerhouse to Parramatta and is likely to sell large parts of the Ultimo site for redevelopment, with the exception of the original power station building, which it has said will become [a museum of fashion](#).

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/feb/28/relocation-of-powerhouse-museum-condemned-by-nsw-opposition-inquiry>

i. [Terry Gainey, Twitter](#)

"Move a fantastic museum from Pyrmont, put all the wonderful displays in hidden storage, destroy beautiful Parramatta heritage buildings, open a horrendous piece of "winning" architecture on flood prone land, call it "Powerhouse" convention centre.

Mad. Vandalism. Sad. Not wanted."

j. [Cathy Olive Burgess, Twitter](#)

"Why move, it works wonderfully well where it is. Schools coming to Sydney for day excursions miss out they won't have the time get to Parramatta. It is a huge waste of money to move it."





7. Objections to the destruction of the Fleet Street Heritage Precinct

This is a historically significant Parramatta site and must be preserved.



Fleet Street Heritage Precinct

Shane Withington says, "It's Macquarie Harbour, that history, that architecture, in the heart of Sydney.

"And now they're going to cut down 2,600 trees and put a train line through the centre of it. It's madness.

"It is truly unique and irreplaceable, and these sites should be embraced by our government. They should reinterpret them and celebrate the fact that we have them."

History of Fleet Street Heritage Precinct (Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct)

The Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct is a heritage-listed conservation site in Parramatta, in the City of Parramatta local government area of New South Wales, Australia. The site was used as the historically significant Parramatta Female Factory from 1821 to 1848. After its closure, the main factory buildings became the basis for the Parramatta Lunatic Asylum (now the Cumberland Hospital), while another section of the site was used for a series of other significant institutions: the Roman Catholic Orphan School (1841–1886), the Parramatta Girls Home (1887–1974), the "Kamballa" and "Taldree" welfare institutions (1974–1980), and the Norma Parker Centre (1980–2008).

Designed under the influence and direction of Francis Greenway, James Barnet, William Buchanan, Walter Liberty Vernon, Frederick Norton Manning, Henry Ginn, and Charles Moore, the imposing Old Colonial, Victorian Georgian, and Classical Revival sandstone structures were completed during the nineteenth century.

The precinct was added to the Australian National Heritage List on 14 November 2017,[1] and its constituent parts (with separate listings for what was then the Cumberland Hospital and Norma Parker Centre) were added to the New South Wales State Heritage Register on 2 April 1999.[2][3]

In a young country that is laughingly short of culture and history, we seek to replace what little heritage we have left, with buildings that are soulless and cookie cutter.

To make a fast buck out of what was once our history. Once these buildings are gone, they are gone.

My background

In 1982, I left university and obtained my first job as a cataloguer at the Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences.

I have many fond memories of the original museum and over the years, loved watching it evolve into a magnificent cultural institution, in its new guise as the Powerhouse Museum, soon becoming a famous Sydney landmark and tourist destination.

This world renown and iconic Sydney tourist heritage destination must not be demolished or moved. It must be preserved and revered.

I wish to confirm that I have not made any political donations to any political organisation.

Kind Regards,

Linda

RANDWICK HERITAGE
Action Group

[RHAG](#)

Linda Valentina Avramides
Coogee 2034 NSW

--

Sent from Gmail Mobile