

Mrs Donna Palmer

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6 July 2020

Planning and Assessment  
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment  
Attention – Marcus Jennejohn  
PO Box 5022  
Parramatta NSW 2124

## **OBJECTION TO THE POWERHOUSE PARRAMATTA PROJECT**

Dear Sir,

### **I object to the Powerhouse Parramatta project.**

I am writing to you to express my strongest OBJECTION possible to the current Powerhouse Parramatta Project.

Whilst a new museum is a good idea, it is hypocritical to build a museum to house history whilst destroying prime history to create it.

It is also very nonsensical to build a museum on flood prone land.

There is a golden opportunity to save beautiful historical properties that are unique to Parramatta, as an added attraction to visitors, giving much more to see and do in the Parramatta City precincts.

My specific objections to the Powerhouse Parramatta Project are as follows:

- 1) The demolition of St. Georges Terraces and Willow Grove will result in the loss of social history and a sense of place that these historic buildings give. Their loss will alter the character of Parramatta permanently and can never be replaced or re-captured when their value is realised later after the fact. At a time when the losses of historically significant buildings has never been higher, it is paramount that such fine examples be retained for future generations to marvel at the architecture and their place in our very short history of European settlement of just over 200 years. These buildings connect people to the closer past and help people understand early ways of life in the Parramatta area and wider Sydney. They also give visitors a sense of pride that the early residents had in their homes and conveys the values of the period, which are still very relevant today.
- 2) The Environmental Impact Study has not adequately studied or reported on the issues of social history and sense of place and character of Parramatta that St. Georges Terraces and Willow Grove give. This is a clear oversight in the EIS, which is a requirement of any such study. It gives rise to concerns that other aspects could have been deliberately glossed over, missed or left out. A study should be just that – a complete study of all facets surrounding the issue, which ensures that all aspects have been covered and that nothing has been overlooked, so that a true objective decision can be arrived at, with the sound reasoning clearly evident.

- 3) Willow Grove has a special place in the history of women, as it was a maternity hospital for over three decades to the early 1950's for the people of Parramatta. The loss of Willow Grove will see this piece of history forgotten and will be a loss to all those families who were born here in terms of discovering their own family history connections. It will be a huge loss to the history of women in that period of Australian History, forever only to be found fleetingly in books and not able to be "experienced" by visitors and historians alike in the present and future.
- 4) The further cumulative impacts of continued heritage destruction in Parramatta, make the retention of St. Georges Terraces and Willow Grove vitally important to be retained for communities' sense of place. The loss of heritage has already been huge in Parramatta. If we don't start to save some, there will be none left very soon. There is nothing wrong with good development, provided it is tempered so that there is still a nod to the past, a connection with history, otherwise it will be lost, and there will be less attractions to be seen for visitors. Visitors want to see the past and the present as well as the future. Without keeping St. Georges Terraces and Willow Grove, there won't be much left to see, and very little or no connection with our vibrant past.
- 5) St. Georges Terraces and Willow Grove are now rare examples of architecture that no longer exist in Parramatta CBD and thus should be retained. Every architectural style deserves a place in each area and a place in history, and prime examples of each need to and should be retained. This allows visitors, students and historians to see and study the different styles and connect with the architecture in a unique setting and context.
- 6) As a keen family historian and local history enthusiast, the loss of St. Georges Terraces and Willow Grove will be devastating, in that our connections with them will be lost forever. My cousin has direct ties to Parramatta and surrounds and we have been studying his family history together. My dear mother-in-law, Geraldine Palmer has been an active member of Parramatta and District Historical Society for decades, and my husband, Stephen Palmer is also a member. Parramatta is a special place to us because of its history and so any further loss of significant history is to be avoided at all costs.
- 7) Demolishing St. Georges Terraces and Willow Grove, when they are both State Heritage Listed properties, makes a mockery of the State Heritage system and sends a clear message to everyone that the current elected people do not care about historic structures. Diluting the State Heritage System powers by demolishing these buildings, leaves open the whole system to abuse making anything possible, even the demolition of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and other much loved historic icons.
- 8) The sheer quantity of objections to this proposal should make it obvious that the majority of people do not want St. Georges Terraces and Willow Grove demolished. Most people do want a new facility but not at the cost of the loss of these two beautiful buildings. It is up to those duly elected and those duly appointed to represent the voice and desires of the majority. The demolishing of these two buildings clearly shows that people in current roles of authority have not been listening to the people. Merely listening to the developers instead.
- 9) There are many better alternative sites for the location of a new museum in Parramatta. It is quite frankly stupid to locate a new museum on land prone to floods. Anyone with any sense knows the destructiveness of flooding on anything not made of brick or cement. Historical items: fashion, furniture, electronics, paper, film, etc., are destroyed by water, heat, light and mould. A location free from these issues is just plain and sensible.

- 10) A project that saves historic landmarks and encourages cultural and heritage tourism (both domestic and international) will have more visitors coming and staying longer, as much as three times as long, to see all the sites and attractions, bringing long term economic wealth to Western Sydney. It is the combination of both old (historic) and new that will capture people's desire to come and explore and stay with more to see than just one new space in Parramatta. Not taking advantage of the bigger picture is simply short sighted.
- 11) Connection of the old sections with the new, using a footbridge to Parramatta Park as well as the cultural ribbon along the river, makes for a great green public space assessable for the expanding population of Parramatta to both recreate and create in. The alternative proposal of a "First Fleet Heritage Precinct", would combine successfully the old and the new creating something to be enjoyed by everyone, not just the locals, becoming a cultural hub and the centre of focus for both old and new. It is a rare opportunity to create a cultural legacy that should not be missed.
- 12) The proposed new building on the site of St. Georges Terraces and Willow Grove is in a high risk flood zone. This poses serious risks to visitor safety. The plans are not consistent with relevant flood polices and plans. It is also inconsistent with Parramatta Council's current DCP and LEP. This development by the NSW Government is deliberately putting the new museum's collection and visitors at needless risk of injury and damage.
- 13) The design of the new Powerhouse Museum is not in keeping with the needs required to preserve exhibits as far too much natural light has been allowed to enter the building in its design, which is destructive to artefacts and is not climate controlled. The specifications for the new build does not take into account collection needs. There are no spaces designated for museum exhibitions, collection management, collection storage space or for a conservation lab. There are no escalators in the eastern building which is contrary to the Stage 2 Design Brief requirements, creating evacuation risks.

In essence, the winning design is so flawed, it should be scrapped. Giving the opportunity to go back to the drawing board and getting the design right, including a new location and saving State Heritage Listed assets that belong to the people.

For clarification, I have not made any reportable political donations. I have no objections to my name being published with my submission.

Yours sincerely,

*Donna Palmer*

Donna Palmer B.Bus (NSWIT), CPA