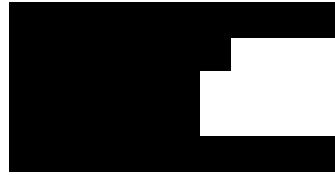


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18 July, 2020

Marcus Jennejohn  
Planning and Assessment  
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

Dear Mr Jennejohn,

**Re: major-projects: Powerhouse Parramatta, SSD-1046**

I am writing in response to your request for comments on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed new Powerhouse Museum in Parramatta.

Circumstances have changed since the NSW government announced on 4 July, 2020, that the Powerhouse Museum will remain in Ultimo.

I am arguing that the current Parramatta project and its EIS, that includes even a 'branch' of the Powerhouse Museum, is now invalid and must be cancelled, and other more appropriate options considered.

**Issues: Environmental concerns, associated with audiences, constituents and stakeholders.**

- These aspects have not been identified specifically in the EIS Requirements, but they are essential to any project that is to do with museums, galleries and cultural centres. Collections and exhibitions representing the work of people, past and present, their stories and achievements, provide a framework for understanding our broad society, and can be a stimulating background for contributions to the future. Audiences and a range of stakeholders support institutions that provide professionally-presented examples and experiences.
- My observations apply to the very wide range of such people associated with the Museum that was going to be destroyed in Ultimo, as well as those continuing to express the particular needs and preferences for Parramatta.
- From the outset, it has been clearly demonstrated that there was never adequate or appropriate consultation regarding the purpose and process of making decisions for the rationale and future of either location.
- Those involved in decision-making for Ultimo and Parramatta did not have cultural benefit in mind, but rather property development and political gain. Parramatta Council records from 2014-2016 show that the NSW state government totally over-rode the Council's own long-standing plans for the Riverside location. See: <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/what-the-experts-say/parramatta-council-minutes-document-early-concerns-for-proposed-relocation-of-the-powerhouse-museum-tom-lockley/>
- The subsequent business plans were appallingly inadequate and mis-calculated. And the realities of moving a long-established (albeit under-funded for many years) state museum from its appropriate site in Ultimo, including issues of heritage and collection safety, as well as access for audiences from Sydney, NSW, Australia and overseas, were not understood and, in fact, largely ignored
- The Powerhouse Museum must continue to represent relationships between science and technology, decorative arts and design and social history, in Ultimo.

### **Total Parramatta project review: cancel current EIS**

With the recent decision made by the government to 'keep the Powerhouse in Ultimo', and the green bans placed on the heritage buildings in Parramatta, it is clear that the EIS as it is now, must be cancelled, and the whole project reviewed. Instead, please consider:

#### **1. Museum of NSW History:**


- With its long and continuing Indigenous and migrant history, Parramatta is in a strong position to establish and support a Museum of NSW History at the significant Cumberland Hospital/ Fleet Street Heritage Precinct .
- This option is very strongly supported by Parramatta residents, and those from elsewhere who recognise the wider significance of the site and its potential for collection, exhibition, stories and events, which can be informative, engaging and stimulating for contemporary audiences. And access is improving.
- Instead of relocating even part of the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta, this site could be a very appropriate alternative investment by the State Government, as it is a legitimate state project. It would be possible for other state and regional museums to contribute touring exhibitions, or lending objects, as appropriate.
- (See 'Waves of People', a 2017 report on a history of Parramatta, which could provide a strong argument for a better focus on the development of its own galleries and museums. Click on: '[Waves of People](https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/find-out-more/2584-2/)' or go to <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/find-out-more/2584-2/> )

#### **2. Art/design cultural centre in the Parramatta CBD:**

- The Parramatta Council could now retrieve the current city site formerly acquired by the state government, and use it for its own purposes.
- On or near this site, a smaller building that did not include demolishing the neighbouring heritage buildings, or destroying the earlier Council plans for the Riverside and Civic Walkway, could be developed by the Council as an art gallery/cultural precinct to complement the performing arts sites on the opposite side of the river. It could also include science-based exhibitions and experiences.
- The flexible intent of the current architectural design and exhibition/event program, could suit this kind of locally-oriented community cultural centre. It was NEVER going to be appropriate for the purpose of the Powerhouse Museum.
- It is difficult to comprehend why, if Parramatta is the 'centre of Sydney's population', that it appears to be the only outer city centre that does not have its own art (science) precinct/gallery – think Manly, Mosman, Blacktown, Casula, Penrith, Hazelhurst, Fairfield, Wollongong, Gosford...
- Parramatta has audiences from many different backgrounds and experiences who would appreciate opportunities to see exhibitions of local artists and designers, and encourage local participation.
- And this venue would be appropriate for touring exhibitions from other state and regional centres, as occurs elsewhere: this could include special exhibitions from collections from eg: The Powerhouse Museum, the Art Gallery of NSW, and others.

#### **3: A crucial question remains: who will make these decisions? Please: people who know!**

Yours sincerely,



**Grace Cochrane AM**

Former senior curator, decorative arts and design, PHM; currently member/web manager of Powerhouse Museum Alliance: <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/>