

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Parramatta Powerhouse, Willow Grove and St. George's Terrace
Date: Tuesday, 21 July 2020 9:46:06 PM

RE: Parramatta Powerhouse, Willow Grove and St. George's Terrace

To: Marcus Jennejohn at Planning NSW.

Hi Marcus,

Firstly, thanks for the opportunity to allow the public to provide feedback on this project. I will start this e-mail by saying that I oppose the proposed Parramatta Powerhouse project on the grounds of the proposed demolition of the heritage-listed items "Willow Grove" and "St. George's Terrace".

As a Sydney resident with an interest in all things regarding development, transport, environment and heritage I am supportive of many of the LNP State Government's plans as I believe that they have and will play an important part for the future growth of the state for the better of its citizens. This includes the likes of the Sydney Metro Project, which relieves strain on the Sydney Trains network and provides rail access to new localities, invigorating and creating new town centres and community hubs as well as the expansion of the Sydney Light Rail to areas which are in need of such connections such as Randwick and the University of NSW. Further to this is the recent announcement that the Springwood to Lithgow corridor modifications are near completion which will finally standardize this section of the rail corridor with the rest of the network to allow all electric rollingstock to traverse that section of the corridor for the first time, including the new intercity fleet.

On matters of environment I was pleased to hear of the recent announcement that the NSW Government has acquired the Narriearra Station, which is the largest purchase of private land for a National Park in the State's history, which will help protect the more than 25 threatened species which live within this station and the critical habitat within.

On matters of heritage, the State Government has taken many positive actions. One in particular which stood out was the transfer of the Strickland House Estate at Vacluse in late 2018 to the National Parks and Wildlife Service so that this estate was protected in perpetuity. This water side property includes a 1856-57 State heritage listed mansion "Carrara" built for the first Mayor of Sydney, John Hosking. Further examples included the addition to the State Heritage Register of the Strathfield mansion "Mount Royal" and associated school buildings (Australian Catholic University) and Anthony Hordern's mansion "Shubra Hall", part of the Croydon Presbyterian Ladies College.

On matters of transport and heritage the NSW Government's establishment of Transport Heritage NSW in 2013 has been an absolute game changer in the way it has brought together various bus, rail and tram preservation groups and lead to the restoration of and return to operation of numerous steam locomotives including this year, the iconic steam locomotive 3801 as well as return of heritage electric trains in 2016 - Red Rattler F1. Through its annual Transport Heritage NSW grants program, it's made important projects by the various connected preservation societies a possibility. reality.

Given the good work done by the government in the various matters above, it was incredibly disappointing for me to see the plans to demolish the historic old Heritage listed home "Willow Grove" and "St. George's" Terrace Parramatta for the new Powerhouse

project. This decision being such a heavy contrast to the various positive actions and contributions the government has done for heritage as listed above. The old home "Willow Grove" is of particular significance. I've always admired the presence of this old home and how fortunate it is that something like this has managed to survive right in the heart of Parramatta, considering that virtually all other historic buildings around it were pulled down over the years. I also learnt about some of the interesting history about this home, including it's uses over extended periods as a hospital, with some of it's patients including those who had served in World War I. "Willow Grove" was also used for maternity purposes which saw several generations born at this house over several decades. I learnt that it's extended use for hospital purposes was one of the key reasons as to why this building continued to stand while others around it were torn down and replaced. I also learnt that for similar reasons, this is why so many people are passionate about saving this building, because they recognize it's significant history, connections to the past and community and they enjoy it's architectural contribution to the streetscape of the Parramatta CBD, even still retaining a portion of it's original front fence and garden.

Given it's rich history and the fact it is a rare survivor within the Parramatta CBD, Willow Grove's heritage listing is well earned and the building deserves to be retained and incorporated into any of the proposed new designs for the new Powerhouse. There is much to be gained by incorporating this building into the new development. Firstly, many in the community rallying for the preservation of Willow Grove will feel that their voices have been heard by the Government - this coming at a time with the COVID-19 crisis where more than ever, people turn to the Government for support. Also, there are many creative ways in which Willow Grove could be incorporated into the new development. Some of these could include:-

1. Function/Reception/Community Hub

- Willow Grove could be used/hired out for social gatherings, functions, fetes and any other community purposes, all within a heritage setting. It could also include games rooms (snooker, table tennis, etc).

One example of a heritage house used for reception purposes is Lauriston House at Dundas:-

<https://lauristonhouse.com.au/>

2. Restaurant/cafe

- Willow Grove would provide for a fine dining or cafe experience within the confines of an old heritage home, right in the heart of Parramatta. This could including seating inside and outside the house (within the garden).

One heritage listed house used in this way is Bellevue Cottage at Glebe Point:-

<https://www.facebook.com/bellevuecottagebyantoineglebe/>

Another example is Stannum House at Tenterfield in country NSW, which is used as a bed and breakfast with conference facilities, cafe and lounge all with Wi-Fi internet access.

<http://stannumhouse.com.au/>

I truly believe that there is great opportunity across NSW, with Willow Grove being a particularly fitting example, where heritage houses within town centres, CBD's, etc can be creatively and adaptively re-used in a way to allow more community access to them, while in the process providing new and exciting business opportunities to generate jobs, encourage tourism and create new community hubs. As more high density development is

built, more and more people will value to have access to these historic buildings or "historic house and garden" settings where they can casually walk right through the entry gate, into the house, order something to eat and drink all the while sitting and relaxing within the formal reception rooms with Wi-Fi access while doing so. A perfect break during work lunch breaks, after work and weekend gatherings or any time during the week.

3. Library and/or Heritage Info center

- Specifically, people visiting the house could perhaps gain access to records of people treated or born within the house during it's period of use as a hospital and learn more about it's fascinating history. This part of it's history is also another key reason why people are passionate about preserving this building - it's links to the wider community.

Any of the above 3 options could potentially be combined with each other, given the size of the home.

How the Building could be retained as part of the new Powerhouse development:-

1. Willow Grove and it's garden setting could become a "quadrant" within the development as a whole. The old house and garden setting will form for a great retreat, right in the heart of the busy Parramatta CBD, especially in combination with it's potential uses for function/reception/community or cafe/restaurant purposes.

2. The building Willow Grove could be retained with air space above it redeveloped

3. The building Willow Grove could be incorporated inside the new development. With this, the facade of the new development, which would be at the street/fence boundary line could feature the prominent use of glass to allow plenty of light in and the old home Willow Grove could be a "heritage building within a much larger new building".

Something like this has been successfully executed for the new Western Australian Museum in Perth which opens later this year. Within it's interior, it incorporates 5 distinct heritage buildings. A key part of this project, as noted by the project director for the museum was to make very strict conditions that as part of the project the "heritage had to be retained and enhanced"

Information of this project in a recent article:-

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-19/wa-museum-old-buildings-revealed-in-new-development/12458014?fbclid=IwAR05JCaQIMUpqxqHCQH7RDu4F82e-3pGYpzG62Edc6efYgSL_CeESF3R1jxY

The above 3 options as to how the Willow Grove home could be physically retained would still allow for the options previously mentioned as how the building could be used - for function/reception/community/cafe/restaurant/library purposes or heritage hub could still all apply.

Beyond it's important history as an excellent intact example of late 1800's Victorian gentleman's residence, Willow Grove holds an important link to the past and I believe that some of the suggestions above would only further enhance it's presence and the way it can benefit the community. Importantly, through the retention of Willow Grove, the building can essentially act as a bridge not only to the past, but also as a bridge between the new powerhouse development and the community. The old and the new co-existing together.

Although current plans specify that Willow Grove is to be demolished, I strongly urge retention of the heritage-listed buildings on site - particularly Willow Grove. I believe that many of the objections that exist to the new Powerhouse will likely disappear if the decision is made to incorporate this building and the community will feel as though their voices have been heard by the Government. It's unfortunate that this situation has spiralled out to such an extent that out of sheer desperation the community has worked with the CFMEU to place a Green Ban on Willow Grove in an attempt to help save it from demolition. People have done this because they know that something that is historically and architecturally important will be lost and that there will be nothing that can make up for its loss. Further to that, there is frustration that one of the key purposes of a museum is to protect, preserve and present history to people. The construction of a new museum is something that should be celebrated however there would be a permanent sting left with the fact that its construction wiped away something historically important, much loved by the community, which could have been retained.

The retention of Willow Grove not only opens pathways for community engagement, but also very creative ways in which it can be incorporated and I believe it is an opportunity not to be missed. The retention of Willow Grove would also mean that the Government of the day will also leave behind a wonderful legacy of not only listening and engaging with the community in matters they are passionate about, but also contributing an iconic new development to Parramatta, while simultaneously preserving Willow Grove for both current and future generations to enjoy this heritage building.

Once again, thank you for the chance to provide feedback on the project. I hope that this may be of interest and feel free to share/use this e-mail as you wish. I have never made any political donations and am simply grateful for the chance to provide feedback.

I apologize for the length of the e-mail.

Thank you for your time.

Kind Regards,

John