

Message

Dear Rob –

I'm writing to you as my local MP because of my concerns about the Powerhouse Museum move – with its phased closure beginning today.

I know our political outlooks are very different but safeguarding our heritage is something that I believe should be beyond politics. I'm therefore hoping you will be able to do something to prevent the move and hope you will consider my suggestion at the end of this email.

With multiple engineers in my family, I've grown up with and always loved the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS) – and particularly the Powerhouse Museum. The museum and its storage facilities are an enormously valuable repository of Australia's old industrial technology. For engineers, the Boulton and Watt steam engine is priceless and its current position at the Powerhouse ideal – enabling it to be run for all to see. It would be a great shame for the NSW government to risk moving it from its specially built home along with Locomotive Number 1. Similarly, for the aircraft suspended in the Heritage Hall.

The Powerhouse's siting in Ultimo complements its collection: located both within the old tramways power station - an industrial artefact itself – and within an engineering precinct. (It's across the road from the Sydney Technical College, one of the city's oldest training grounds for engineers, and down the street from the University of Technology, a modern centre for engineering education.) Relocating The Powerhouse would therefore jettison the cultural significance inherent in its present location.

That Parramatta should have a major museum is not at issue. But it shows a total disregard for Australia's scientific and technological history to risk damaging fragile objects of major significance in the move, sending some on tour, and placing a majority in permanent storage - with the new museum containing only 25 per cent of the exhibition space of the current museum.

Furthermore, the demolition of Willow Grove and St Georges Terrace, historic buildings in the centre of Parramatta, to make way for the new museum, will help destroy part of that city's heritage. And experts are still warning against placing a museum in the floodplain of the Parramatta River.

Perhaps a way forward would be to establish a new museum at Parramatta on another site close to a university or TAFE that focuses on modern science and technology – as opposed to the Powerhouse's old industrial technology. Australia leads the world in some of these areas – for example photovoltaic and other renewable engineering at UNSW; information technology with companies such as Atlassian; and biotechnology and medical engineering such as hearing implants (Cochlear) and ventilators for COVID-19 patients (produced at the Bella Vista factory of Australian company Resmed and sent all around the world in recent months).

This would give Western Sydney a museum that was unique and important – without damaging the existing MAAS or its reputation. It could help show young people what modern science and engineering are all about, showcase the work of Australian technologists, and encourage students to study STEM subjects (one of the federal government's current objectives).

In the meantime, could you please answer the following questions for me:

- What is the reasoning behind the museum move?

- Why is the government persevering with the move despite advice against it from museum and heritage experts?
- What will replace the museum at Ultimo – commercial and/or residential developments?
- Why has the government chosen the Willow Grove and St Georges Terrace site, which the community value for their historic value?
- Why is the government planning to move the museum to a site that floods, against the advice of museum experts?
- Why will the new museum have so much less exhibition space?
- Why has a museum design been chosen that will make it so difficult to install objects that are central to the museum's collection?
- Why will a block of apartments be incorporated into the design of the museum – an unorthodox arrangement that will blur the line between its public and private functions and potentially set up conflicts between the museum and tenants?
- What companies, including developers, are involved in real estate transactions at Ultimo and Parramatta?

Hoping you are able to protect this museum for us and future generations.

Yours faithfully,

Miranda Korzy

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I would like a response

Yes
