

Powerhouse Museum Relocation

Submission to Major Projects NSW

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Comments on issues associated with the project:-

1. Demolition of heritage properties, Willow Grove and St George's Terrace

- The demolition of two heritage properties is not acceptable.
- How can you justify creating a museum to display Australian heritage which depends on the destruction of two heritage buildings ?
- Surely the heritage buildings could be incorporated into the new museum ?
- The consultant's reports included with the DA application strongly support the retention of the heritage buildings. Parramatta Council and NSW Heritage are opposed to the destruction of these properties.
- Willow Grove apparently underwent a major restoration in recent years, so how can you justify wasting such an effort ?
- I have no problem with removing the modern additions to Willow Grove.
- Claiming that you would retain a few artefacts and have an interpretative sign is never a substitute for the actual heritage item.
- As the Government apparently now owns these properties, I assume this was to make removal from the Heritage Register easier.
- I recall some years ago that the original railway station at Chatswood was unnecessarily demolished. It was justified by saying that important heritage aspects of the station would be retained, including the signalling equipment. The reality was that one window was installed in an alley behind the station where no-one would notice and with no interpretation. The only other "interpretation" is an outline of the Station Master's House in the pavement with no actual heritage items or photos.
- I have grave fears that the two heritage properties in Parramatta will be "accidentally" damaged by a bulldozer on a Sunday morning and it will be claimed it was a mistake, but as the building have been seriously damaged, they will have to be demolished. If such a situation did happen, then I strongly consider that the person responsible and the persons who engaged the demolition contractor should be made to personally pay for a full restoration of the properties. For example, check what happened to the Regent Theatre in George St, Sydney.

2. Permanent display of heritage items

- The proposed museum spaces are described as adaptive spaces.
- The proposals do not clearly describe what will be displayed and where.
- It is essential that Australia's technology heritage is on permanent display for all to see and learn from.
- I have visited many technology museums around the world, including in; Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Czech Republic, Croatia, Greece, Turkey, Malta, Poland, Estonia, Russia, USA, Canada and several others. All of these have a variety of displays, ranging from large significant heritage

items relating to the country, smaller heritage items, to educational displays and adaptive areas. Interpretative displays are no substitute for the actual items. People want to see these items for many different reasons and do not want to rely on one person's opinion of some aspects of the item. For example, my background is in mechanical engineering and metallurgy and so I am particularly interested in the materials used to make machines in relation to the age of the machine. These aspects are rarely covered in the interpretation of the object, but I can usually learn something from observing the object.

3. Display of large items

- It appears that the proposed building will not be able to accommodate many of the large and very significant items on display in Ultimo.
- These include the Bolton & Watt engine, Locomotive No. 1, the Catalina and others.
- As the custodians of these items, how can you justify these items not being preserved and on public display ?
- I could not find a clear statement of what will become of these items. There was some mention of consolidating at Castle Hill, but this was not clear and there other hints about dispersal of other items.
- I could not find any mention of operating machinery and nothing about a boiler to operate the steam engines as is the case at the current Powerhouse Museum.
- From the access dimensions to the Display Spaces it seems it will not be possible to move in large objects.
- I am very sceptical of promises to temporarily remove large technology heritage objects from public display. For example, the steam ferry, South Steyne was temporarily moved from Darling Harbour while work was carried out on the pier, but it has never been returned to public access and is now inaccessible and deteriorating. Another example of incompetence is the fitting of a new boiler to locomotive 3801. How can a new boiler be manufactured in Europe, shipped to Australia, returned to Europe, shipped to Australia and then not used ? I previously worked with a group of people who could have designed and fitted a new boiler to 3801 in a fraction of the time and for a fraction of the cost.

4. Bolton & Watt Whitbread engine

- The Bolton & Watt engine has world significance as described in the consultant's reports and must be suitably displayed in steaming condition for all to see.
- Last year I visited the Engine Museum in Bolton, UK which has a large display of historic engines operating on steam. I discussed the B&W engine in Sydney and they were of the strong opinion that if it could not be conserved and displayed properly in Sydney, then it should be returned to its ancestral home in Bolton where it could be displayed and steamed.
- If the engine is not displayed in operating condition with live steam, then I consider a strong case will be mounted to have it returned to the UK.
- It appears that the proposed new museum will not have any provision for live steam displays. I consider this to be an essential part of presenting heritage, steam powered, objects as it demonstrates how machinery actually works with respect to sight, sound, smell and performance, as well as maintaining the skills of machine operators.. A description of a static exhibit only tells a very small part of the story.
- I would strongly object to the engine being dismantled and placed in storage in a non-operating condition.

5. Location of site

- I fully support the construction of a museum and cultural venue in Parramatta, but definitely not at the expense of the current museum at Ultimo and heritage properties in Parramatta.
- Having visited many technology museums in major cities around the world, I find that most are conveniently located near the city centre. As such, I usually plan two different visits per day including a half day visit to the technology museum. If I was visiting Sydney and staying in the city, I doubt that I would travel as far as Parramatta as this would mean committing most of a day to one activity.
- There is a lot of discussion about demographics and Parramatta being the centre of everything, but nothing about visitors to Sydney wanting to go to a technology museum.

6. Flooding risk

- The reports clearly show there is a high risk of flooding at the Parramatta site and even as recently as February 2020.
- While the building might survive some flooding, it is much too high a risk to have valuable heritage objects anywhere near such flooding.
- During a flood event there could also be a higher risk of loss of power leading to loss of air conditioning and heritage objects being exposed to damp conditions.