

Ultimo, 15 July, 2020

## POWERHOUSE PARRAMATTA PROJECT E.I.S. EXHIBITION

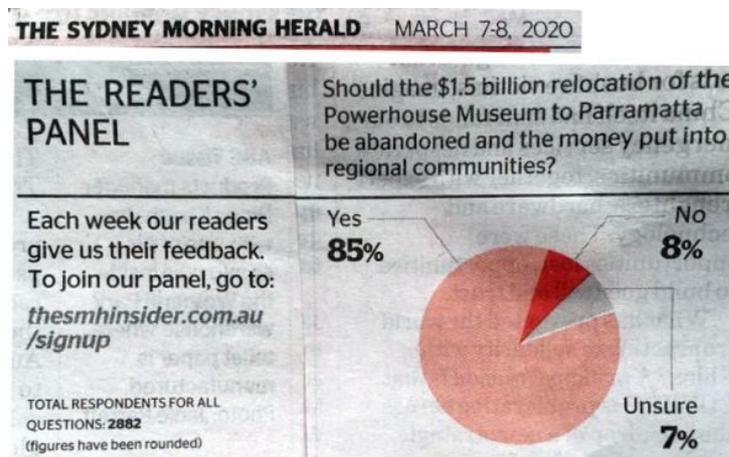
### SUBMISSION

#### INTRODUCTION

As the convenors of the Save the Powerhouse campaign, we strongly **OBJECT** to the Powerhouse Parramatta project (application No SSD-10416).

“Save the Powerhouse” is a community campaign opposing the destruction of the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo and the sale of the site to private developers. The campaign also supports Parramatta residents’ desire to acquire their own world-class museum that reflects the area’s unique culture and history.

**Before commenting we want to express our concern that such an unpopular project (see below) should have proceeded during the Covid-19 crisis when public meetings and discussion, an essential part of democratic public consultation, are prohibited.**



### **PART A: COMMENTS TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THAT THE PROJECT TO WHICH THIS EIS APPLIES IS CANCELLED**

The NSW Government’s original project to move the Powerhouse to Parramatta was supported by questionable business cases (see below).

**Business cases:** *both the preliminary and final business cases failed to follow basic rules and were inaccurate:-*

*- the status quo option was never considered*

- the Government systematically underestimated the costs and overestimated the benefits of the project

Specifically, high cost items including

- collection storage facilities in Castle Hill,
  - maintaining a “cultural presence” in Ultimo
  - flood mitigation measures in Parramatta
- were excluded.

**Despite these deliberate cost manipulations the project benefit/cost ratio forecast by the final business case was only marginally above 1.00 (1.02).**

**The project was withdrawn on 4 July 2020** (see Media release <http://tiny.cc/yourz> ). So whatever new project the Government now aims to pursue in Parramatta, the current Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for “Powerhouse Parramatta”, **which applies exclusively to the RELOCATION of the Powerhouse Museum** (see below) is clearly invalid and should be cancelled immediately, since it describes a project which the Government has dropped.

Refer to

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-10416%2120200602T052935.510%20GMT>

Background and strategic need (3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph)

“...In the State Infrastructure Strategy Update 2014, Infrastructure NSW proposed the development of a Parramatta Cultural Precinct and recommended that, before any further public investment was made in the Powerhouse at Ultimo, urgent consideration should be given to Powerhouse’s potential **RELOCATION** to the Parramatta Cultural Precinct. This was later reinforced in the Cultural Infrastructure Strategy 2016, in which Infrastructure NSW commented that the proposed **RELOCATION** presented “an opportunity to develop a vibrant creative and cultural precinct” in the heart of Parramatta.”

**To be legitimate, the process must be started all over again, with a new business case that must follow, and be based on, extensive and transparent community consultation.**

In addition:

- The E.I.S. was put on exhibition on 10 June, ie before the Government’s withdrawal announcement (4 July). Some who lodged submissions accepting the demolition of heritage-protected Willow Grove and Saint George’s Terraces as the price of obtaining the (“relocated”) Powerhouse for Parramatta, would now reject this destruction in the light of the new, “two Powerhouse Museums “ proposal.

- The benefit/cost ratio must be reviewed, taking into account the new proposal, especially the 2 million per year projected visitation, which never had any foundation but is even **less likely** to be achieved with the 2 museums concept.

*Note: Equally, any future project in Ultimo, including the creation of a rumoured “fashion centre” (see SMH <http://tiny.cc/hl0wrz> ) - that would involve altering the Turbine and Boiler halls and/or remove large objects from these halls and/or alter the Harwood building’s collection storage and curation facilities CANNOT be pursued without a valid business case including genuine, documented community consultation.*

**It is time for the Government to wipe the slate clean, and re-think the whole operation.**

**IN PARRAMATTA** it must –

- respect residents' demands for a world-standard museum reflecting their history and culture, to be built in the Fleet Street Heritage Precinct

- revive the Council's Parramatta River Square project on the riverbank site.  
(These moves would create as many construction and permanent jobs as the cancelled "Relocation" project, at only a fraction of the cost to the taxpayer)

**IN ULTIMO** it must focus on restoring the museum to its former internationally-acclaimed status by –

- implementing essential repairs/maintenance works ASAP

- re-hiring qualified staff with genuine museum experience (as opposed to events and/or art gallery professionals)

## **PART B : COMMENTS ON THE CURRENT EIS AS IF IT WERE STILL VALID**

### **-1- THE PROPOSED BUILDING TO WHICH THE EIS APPLIES IS NOT A POWERHOUSE, NOR A MUSEUM**

Over the five past years, as the Government progressively discovered the difficulties and costs of their initial intention to relocate the Powerhouse to Parramatta, the project continuously evolved. Even its name changed regularly over this period.

From the outset the Government struggled to maintain the fiction that it could "move" the Powerhouse to Parramatta, despite ample expert advice that this would be impossible.

Although it has now abandoned the "move" project (see above) the facilities then planned for Parramatta were visibly not a "Powerhouse Museum", nor even a museum, but a **multi-purpose commercial building**.

***Note: the recent problems of CarriageWorks are a timely warning of the fragility of such ventures.***

#### **-1.1- Not a "Powerhouse"**

Apparently for promotional purposes, the Government created an artificial link between (moving) the Ultimo Powerhouse and the construction of the so-called "Powerhouse Parramatta". **THE TWO ARE UNCONNECTED**

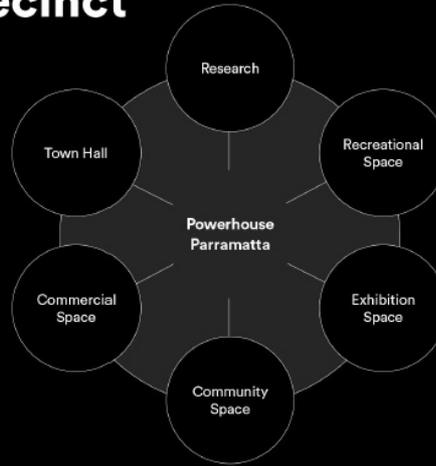
Further, as the Ultimo Powerhouse took its name from the former power station in which it is housed, the Government had no justification for naming the proposed "museum" at Parramatta a "Powerhouse". **The Premier's attempt to reduce the "Powerhouse" name, with its 127 years of proud history in Ultimo, to a mere "brand, is contemptible**

#### **-1.2- Not a museum**

The proposed "Powerhouse Parramatta" is described as a "**diverse precinct**", ie a mixed-use development with **commercial space, restaurants** and 40 **residential apartments**.

## A diverse precinct

The building's typology supports access and increases utilisation through diverse activity



NSW  
NEW POWERHOUSE  
IN PARRAMATTA

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- All exhibition spaces are designed as “flexible”. None is dedicated solely to the Powerhouse collections.

- Only 40% (5,094m<sup>2</sup>) of the 12,643m<sup>2</sup> of presentation space is museum-standard climate-controlled (AA) - see details below.

- No space is dedicated to collection storage, curation and other museum backroom operations.

According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM Statutes), adopted by the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, on 24 August 2007, *“A museum is a **non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.**”*

- The projected building has only one loading dock that the museum functions will need to share with other activities (including waste from commercial spaces, bars and restaurants and apartments)

This is of particular concern since each change of exhibition will require bringing collection items **into** and out of Parramatta as the building has no collection storage facility.

### **-2- THE PROPOSED BUILDING IS NOT THE ‘ICONIC CULTURAL INSTITUTION FOR PARRAMATTA’ AS PROMISED**

It is only **half the size** of the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo.

# AREA COMPARISONS

12-Jul-20

PROPOSED PARRAMATTA FACILITIES						ULTIMO POWERHOUSE	
Total Site Area				19,896 m <sup>2</sup>	24,378 m <sup>2</sup>	82%	
Total Building Size				24,830 m <sup>2</sup>	42,594 m <sup>2</sup>	58%	
Presentation Spaces							
Location & Level	Space	Size	Function	Climate control	AA Controlled Size		
Ground Floor East	P1	2,759 m <sup>2</sup>	Multi-purpose, for concerts, major events and installations, also designated for large objects but at high risk of flooding. Operable wall to open to the river. No access to loading dock!	A			
Level 1 West	P3	1,486 m <sup>2</sup>	Talks and performance, events, exhibitions, flexible seating bank for 800	AA	1,486 m <sup>2</sup>		
Level 2 East	P2	2,122 m <sup>2</sup>	Large objects, exhibitions, performance, events, adjacent terrace open to the river. Only a hoist for large objects.	A			
Level 2 West	P5	1,486 m <sup>2</sup>	Exhibitions, performance, events	AA	1,486 m <sup>2</sup>		
Level 3 East	P4	2,122 m <sup>2</sup>	Exhibitions, performance, events	AA	2,122 m <sup>2</sup>		
Level 3 West	P6	1,486 m <sup>2</sup>	Immersive screen program, performance, events, flexible seating bank for 800	A			
Level 4 West	P7	1,182 m <sup>2</sup>	Commercial hire, events, conferences, functions, adjacent to a commercial kitchen, a transparent box open to a terrace overlooking the river	A			
Total AA climate controlled space				5,094 m <sup>2</sup>	21,800 m <sup>2</sup>	23%	
Total presentation space (A+AA)		12,643 m <sup>2</sup>			21,800 m <sup>2</sup>	58%	

**Repeated Government/MAAS statements that the Parramatta institution will have more exhibition space than Ultimo are false.**

### **-3- THE PROJECT DOES NOT MEET PARRAMATTA'S ASPIRATIONS**

Public consultation has been minimal, with pseudo consultations organised in Ultimo and Parramatta in 2018.

**The latest trend of biased “have your say” online surveys and “webinars” when the current pandemic prevents conventional public consultation, is flawed and open to misrepresentation.**

Consequently the proposed institution does not reflect the Parramatta residents' legitimate desire to have a museum reflecting their own rich heritage and culture.

- **Parramatta is the cradle of modern Australia.** Despite this, the project has no link with the Old Governor House, the Fleet St Precinct (Female Factory, etc...), the Parramatta Gaol, St John's Cemetery, Elizabeth Farm or the Experiment Farm Cottage yet aims to create inferior copies of Sydney's Ultimo Powerhouse and the Everleigh CarriageWorks.

- At the same time the 30ha Fleet St Precinct, an ideal location for a world class museum that genuinely reflects Parramatta's culture and, is being disfigured by the Light Rail line, jeopardising the precinct's application for **UNESCO Heritage listing**.

### **-4- THE PROPOSED SITE IS COMPLETELY UNSUITABLE**

-4.1- The Riverbank site is too small (see above)

-4.2- Located in the flood plain of the Parramatta River, the site is highly flood prone

Flooding risk is the most compelling reason why the “Parramatta Powerhouse” should not be located on the Riverbank site in Parramatta.



Dr John C. Macintosh of Water Solutions Pty Ltd writes in his submission to the 1<sup>st</sup> Upper House Inquiry <http://tiny.cc/stwfoz> “Potential for LOSS OF LIFE:

In considering the above I conclude that **locating the PHM at the proposed site would result in visitors to the PHM being exposed to unacceptable flood hazard.**”

*Dr Macintosh is a civil engineer with expertise in flooding, its management and hazard mitigation. He has a PhD in river hydraulics, and decades of experience in water engineering.*





*Parramatta, 1988*

#### -4.3- The site includes unique heritage items

The new riverbank site at Parramatta includes heritage-listed buildings Willow Grove and St George's Terraces.

Beyond its heritage value, Willow Grove is particularly respected by the local community as a former Parramatta maternity hospital.

Asked in February 2019 whether this building would have to go to make room for the proposed "Powerhouse Parramatta", Premier Gladys Berejiklian replied "We've never said it will go as part of the Powerhouse Museum...We've always said of course **our intention is to save it**" ( <http://tiny.cc/q4wfoz> ).

This was also confirmed by (then?) Minister for the Arts Don Harwin, Interviewed on ABC Breakfast in April 2019: ( <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ro1bdvd186Q&t=10s> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtwJCwJRy5M&t=3s> )

*Wendy Harmer "All right then, they will be demolished"*

*Don Harwin "No we haven't said that at all"*

*Robbie Buck "...the Australian Historical Society...(is) suggesting these buildings...will be demolished"*

*Don Harwin "Well I regret to say that **they haven't done their homework**"*

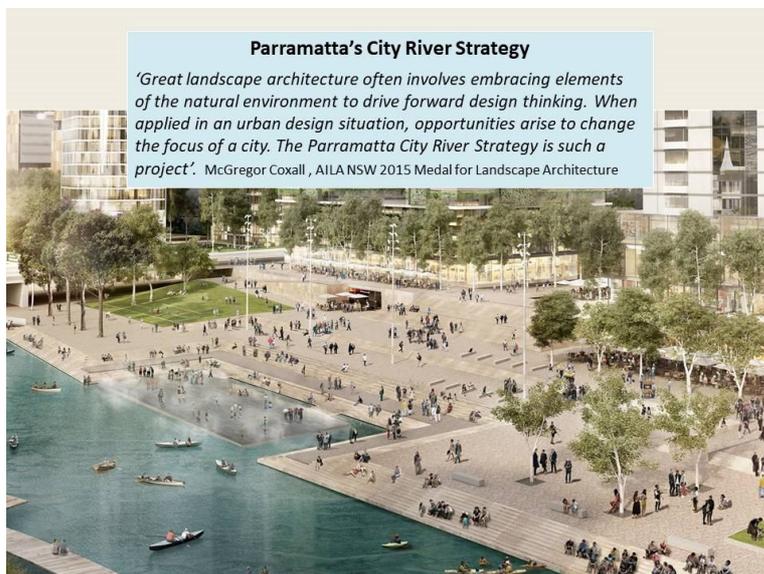
However, when the winning design for the project (Moreau Kusunoki and Genton) was announced, the Government revoked repeated promises to preserve Willow Grove and St George's Terraces.)

ABC's Robbie Buck,(19 Feb, 2020) also revealed that "*The stage 2 design brief prepared by Create NSW...did not push for the retention of the villa (Willow Grove) but instead **urged each designer to consider its removal***" making it plain that **the public was cynically misled.**

**Given the Premier's and the Minister for the Arts' repeated promises to preserve Willow Grove and Saint George's Terraces, it's ironic that construction of a new so-called cultural institution would start with bulldozing existing culture and heritage buildings**

#### -4.4- The site was earmarked by the Parramatta Council for its River Square project

This visionary project, which preserved heritage-listed Willow Grove and Saint George's Terrace, created a "large multi-purpose riverside public space designed to accommodate up to 10,000 people for celebrations and major public events" which could have been connected to the Riverside Theatre complex across the Parramatta River.



**-5- THE PROJECT DOES NOT REPRESENT VALUE FOR MONEY**

For the following reasons, the current project does not represent value for money for the NSW taxpayer.

- The project favoured by Parramatta residents on the Fleet Street Heritage Precinct would cost only a fraction of the unwanted “Parramatta Powerhouse” project.

- A total \$38.7 million has been spent to date on consultants fees without any construction work starting **This would have built three new regional museums in drought-stricken regional NSW.**

MAAS New Museum Western Sydney summary of consultant & related costs		
Source	Amount	Purpose
2015-16		first year of funding (\$10,000,000 over 2 years) relating to the museum’s proposed relocation
MAAS annual report	\$3,380,000	
2016-17		business case for the New Museum project
MAAS annual report	\$2,859,000	
2016-17		ancillary costs in relation to the business case
MAAS annual report	\$2,790,000	
2016-17		diverted to the Department of Planning and Environment to address the extension of the business case
MAAS annual report	\$3,261,000	
2017-18		collection relocation and Parramatta expenses
MAAS annual report	\$2,790,000	
2017-18		expenses for the New Museum Parramatta
Dept of Planning annual report	\$5,770,000	
2018-19		employee related costs for the collections relocation
MAAS annual report	\$2,986,000	
2018-19		equipment related to the collection relocation
MAAS annual report	\$1,207,000	
2018-19		“New Powerhouse Museum” for Parramatta design competition
Dept of Planning annual report	\$11,322,000	
2018-19		Creative industries precinct at Ultimo
Dept of Planning annual report	\$2,353,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$38,718,000</b>	

*Kylie Winkworth, 02 Dec, 2019*

- Official project cost estimates increased from an initial \$150-200 million (Mike Baird, 2015) (projected to be entirely covered by the sale of the Ultimo site) to \$645 million (Don Harwin, 2019), to approaching \$1 billion and all experts predict the final cost will reach at least \$1.5-2 billion.

- The final business case (carefully massaged) benefit/cost ratio of 1.02 will inevitably fall below 1.00 once the visitation figures are revised.

- Finally, the Government has a consistent history of project cost overruns

Save the Powerhouse		NSW GOVERNMENT'S PROJECTS COST OVERRUNS				14-Oct-19	
	Original Budget (M\$)	Latest Figure (M\$)	Cost Blow-out (M\$)	Cost Blow-out (%)	Status	Ref/Remarks	
Light Rail	1,600	2,700	1,100	69%	Under construction	<a href="https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/sydney-light-rail-cost-blows-out-to-at-least-2-7b-after-settlement-20190603-p51tvc.html">https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/sydney-light-rail-cost-blows-out-to-at-least-2-7b-after-settlement-20190603-p51tvc.html</a>	
Sydney Modern	344	344	0	0%	Planning	<a href="https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/sydney-modern-project-under-budget-but-late-20190901-p52muw.html">https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/sydney-modern-project-under-budget-but-late-20190901-p52muw.html</a> <i>Remark: Currently still shown as being on original budget but re-tendering as selected contractor Lendlease pulled out</i> <i>Believed "to (head) to \$600 million" according to Shadow Art Minister Walt Secord</i>	
Moore Park Stadium	729	729	0	0%	Demolition underway	<a href="https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6295959/nsw-govt-looking-for-new-stadium-builder/?cs=14231">https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6295959/nsw-govt-looking-for-new-stadium-builder/?cs=14231</a> <i>Remark: Currently still shown as being on original budget but re-tendering as selected contractor Lendlease pulled out</i>	
Walsh Bay	129	245	116	90%	Planning	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/jul/09/price-tag-for-sydneys-walsh-bay-revamp-blows-out-as-artists-concerns-grow">https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/jul/09/price-tag-for-sydneys-walsh-bay-revamp-blows-out-as-artists-concerns-grow</a>	
Fish Markets	250	750	500	200%	Planning	<a href="https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/sydney-fish-market-redevelopment-costs-blow-out-by-500-million-20190919-p52su4.html">https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/sydney-fish-market-redevelopment-costs-blow-out-by-500-million-20190919-p52su4.html</a>	
Powerhouse Museum	150	645	495	330%	Planning	<i>Remark: Most experts agree that current budget is grossly underestimated with number of cost items not priced. Estimated final cost expected to reach \$1.5 Billion +</i>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,202</b>	<b>5,413</b>	<b>2,211</b>	<b>69%</b>			
<b>\$2.2 Billion overrun on just 6 projects of which only one reached construction stage</b>							

The project that was merely perceived as an enormous error until a year ago has now become a case of potentially corrupt mismanagement.

## CONCLUSION

The Government withdrew its ill-conceived project to move the Powerhouse Museum from Ultimo to Parramatta on 4 July, 2020. Consequently

- the present E.I.S. is irrelevant and must be withdrawn
- it is now time to pause and re-think entirely the cultural institution to be built in Parramatta.
- this must be done in genuine consultation with Parramatta residents and the proper processes (business case, etc...) must be followed.

Meanwhile the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo must be restored to its previous successful status after years of gross deliberate neglect.

Any significant modification of the site, such as establishing a fashion centre, as proposed by Minister Harwin, must be supported by a business case, following appropriate community consultation.

Save the Powerhouse

