

I object to this proposal for many reasons – place, purpose, policy, and political manipulation. While the decision has been changed regarding the location of the Powerhouse at Ultimo, I want to voice my objection in case this proposal is revived by the very influential arts lobby.

All great cities of the world have great museums and galleries located in the heart of the city, where people expect to find them and where they add to the cultural vibrancy of the city. The Powerhouse Museum is a state museum for the people of NSW and a significant place for learning, education, and cultural tourism. Its location in Ultimo is “its place”, where its history is connected to its past, purpose, and identity.

Parramatta too deserves a vibrant new museum about itself, not one crushed by the state in an already over-developed city, where local residents and the Council have a greater vision for a public square along the river. It is illogical to demolish some of Parramatta’s remaining built heritage, to replace it with a political museum to manipulate votes in Western Sydney. I wonder why the Art Gallery of NSW has never been identified for relocation to Parramatta? Different class of people? This is cultural vandalism and political manipulation at its worst.

The contemporary and performing arts sector is very influential in NSW politics. They have infiltrated the Powerhouse Museum with handpicked people to implement their philosophy of “contemporary heritage” to advance the contemporary and performing arts sector. They have done it before – it has been a well-planned and successful strategy. The same players used similar tactics at the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre at Liverpool in the early 2000s. The Casula Powerhouse Board of Management persuaded the Liverpool City Council to restructure council run cultural services to enable the Casula Powerhouse to take over the Liverpool Regional Museum on the basis that it would become a stronger “contemporary heritage” museum. They were only ever after the money and some years later it was handed back to Library Services, starved of funding and professional staff, exhibitions, programs, and the collections dispersed. Library Services used the building to relocate the Liverpool Family History Society. This was a good learning curve for their ultimate goal – the Powerhouse Museum at Ultimo.

Some of these people hate Australian history and heritage, that is why they want to obliterate it. They also know that public events and performing arts bring in large visitor numbers, whereas education and knowledge are far less entertaining. But museums have a vastly different purpose and their important educational and preservation roles should not be exchanged for entertainment. Contemporary events, performances, and exhibitions are expensive to produce and have no lasting legacy. Surely we need both edification and entertainment in a well-rounded society.