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To Whom it May Concern.

Dear Mr. M Jennejohn.

I am opposed to the current strategy or a cut down version of the Ultimo Powerhouse Museum being relocated to the riverbank at Parramatta for a number of reasons.

- The elected Paramatta Council had planned and approved a River Access from the Parramatta City Centre to the Parramatta river which retained number of heritage buildings and allowed for public access to the river. (The River Foreshore Strategy, final report by McGregor Coxall on 18 February 15). In this strategy Willow Grove was part of the walkway linking Civic Centre to the river foreshore. The Baird government devised the plan to build a substitute museum, smaller than the existing museum and located in a flood prone section of the Parramatta River. The Council in their meeting on 14 January 2016 rejected this proposal and urgently sort to have it be put elsewhere in Parramatta. Several alternatives were suggested and identified. At little cost to the NSW Government.
- In the last "One Person Council Meeting" in August 2017, just weeks before the local Council elections were to take place Amanda Chadwick made a raft of decisions beyond her administrative powers including approving land sales including the David Jones carpark and its surrounds for the proposed relocated Ultimo Museum site. All this despite over 4,000 signatures opposing the deficient proposal.
- There was two-year Upper House Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into the government's decision to relocate the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta. The outcome was that the report urged that the billion-dollar plus project be immediately abandoned as it raised doubts concerning the adequacy of the new museum's international design brief. It recommended that a new satellite museum be constructed in Western Sydney and Parramatta be given its own world-class institution. This is my preferred option.
- The site for the proposed Museum should not be in a flood prone river area. This site is a one in ten-year major flood risk and smaller river floods at least once every year (there a numerous records I can provide to support this statement).
- With the Government recently adopted the commonsense position to continue with the original Museum. I do not know what small portion of the existing site will remain however the items exhibited should be appropriate to the building they are housed in, being a former centre of historic technology.

- The heritage buildings being destroyed in Parramatta will be gone forever. The only way that the history of Willow Grove and St George's Terrace can remain part of Parramatta's heritage is to leave them where they are and repurpose them to suit current community needs. Anything else shows the absurdity of the MAAS Powerhouse exercise. Other heritage buildings, and significant trees, have already been destroyed in Parramatta during the construction of the light rail.
- With more information being obtained regarding the new museum the less it appears to be a museum at all. The proposal planned at this time will see it used as retail and function venue more than an arts and cultural drawcard. The museum's chief executive officer Lisa Havilah has revealed how the facility would be used for conferences, 40 apartments for scientists visiting the Westmead Hospital precinct, a 60-bed dormitory for school students, a retail and food hall and some exhibition space. The word 'museum' was only included in the last criteria dot point on promotional material regarding the new Parramatta facility. Hardly an endorsement of a new museum.
- The design process and selection of the winning design appears flawed. It was revealed that retaining the heritage buildings was not a pre-requisite in the design instructions. The six finalists were not shown to the community, as is the usual procedure, but chosen in secret. The community has not had the opportunity to see all the entrants or know if other proposals accommodated the heritage buildings. The finished design has not been well received as it is seen as unsympathetic to the surrounds and has already been described by some as "the milk crate on stilts". The proposed new museum is not expected to be built before 2024 or probably 2025. The new football stadium was also foisted upon Parramatta with a cheap design which does not sit well beside World Heritage listed Parramatta Park. Parramatta residents still do not have the replacement swimming pool that was promised after the enforced demolition of The Memorial Pool in 2017. Only now is a replacement being proposed for completion in 2 or 3 years, with the State Government merely offering to fund half the cost of the new pool to replace the one they destroyed. As a result of this, the State government has little creditability judging by their past performance.
- The cost involved in the new museum is apparently \$1.5 billion at a time when that money could be better spent. Parramatta does not need a relocated museum as it has sufficient Colonial and Aboriginal history for its own unique museum which NSW does not presently have. There is the Fleet Street Heritage Precinct less than a kilometre away where a Museum reflecting the history of NSW from its Aboriginal history onwards would be ideally suited. Many people of the area feel that Parramatta should have its own museum, and there have been numerous people asking for this. With Parramatta being the "Cradle City" of Australia, it has enough of its own history. A more appropriate site would be the Fleet Street precinct, which does not flood and is surrounded by Australia's earliest settlement buildings.

- The Parramatta Powerhouse Museum sounds more like a commercial and residential development with some display space. The word museum is barely mentioned in the promotional material. The Ultimo museum is a fantastic, character filled venue and so it should remain. Rushing this project through while everyone is preoccupied with COVID19 appears very opportunistic and does not reflect a level of transparency that I should expect from our Premier Gladys Berejiklian and the State Government.
- An elected council had been dismissed, an unelected appointee making decisions contrary to the wishes of the previous council and the people of Parramatta. The State Gov't who dismissed the council then making the project State Significant thereby cutting out any form of democratic process and the recommendations from parliamentary committee being ignored. It is hoped that the wiser political heads can appreciate the level of concern about this matter and adopt a strategy that will win the support of Parramatta and western Sydney's desire for unique and relevant World class facilities for their area.
- The Parramatta and wider community continues to object to this proposal (as preposed). The level of concern and support against this second rate development has grown rather than diminish. Despite the Departmental heads having thrown everything within their power to RAM the project through.
- There is a vision that is supported by the people of Parramatta and surrounds of Western Sydney. Developing an Employment Hub for small business, Culture, Education and Heritage facilities within a precinct for the North Parramatta area

I therefore believe that this of Inquiry has before it a once-in-a -lifetime opportunity to place before governments a strong case for creating a completely new kind of museum in North Parramatta.

1. In the light of the above statements I recommend:-

- That the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo be retained on its present site**
- That no part of the Powerhouse permanent collection be moved to another venue in Parramatta;**
- That the heritage buildings on the riverside site in the Parramatta CBD be retained and conserved;**
- That the Fleet Street precinct be designated as a future location for a museum campus and that suitable studies be put in place to achieve that purpose.**

Regards,

Mr Laurie Bennett

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