

**A: THE CASE AGAINST:
THE NSW GOVERNMENT'S PLAN TO MOVE THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM TO PARRAMATTA**

**B: THE CASE FOR:
A DISTINCTIVE, NEW 'CULTURAL BEACON' IN PARRAMATTA**

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The Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo: since 1893

1. The Powerhouse Museum has **a 123-year history in Ultimo**. Founded in 1880 as a legacy of the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition, the Technological Museum opened in 1893 adjacent to Sydney Technical College in order to create an equivalent to London's South Kensington museum and education precinct.

In 1988, the Powerhouse Museum was opened as the magnificent new home for the Museum and now, the Ultimo/Broadway/Chippendale/Surry Hills area is acknowledged as one of **Australia's most exciting creative industries, education and cultural precincts**. The Powerhouse has been a key element since 1883 and, since 1988, has been a driving force in the reinvigoration of the area linked with the ABC, UTS, USyd, UNSW as well as TAFEs, design colleges and studios, and tech start-ups.

2. **Access to the Museum** has been appreciably enhanced by the Darling Harbour redevelopments (1988 and current); the Light Rail with its extension to Lilyfield; and, the Goods Line pedestrian walkway linking the Museum to Central Station and the bus interchange at Broadway.

Sydney's main **transport systems are radial** - the Powerhouse is readily reached by visitors from across Sydney, NSW and interstate. The key school education audience has a range of cost effective choices for transport using relatively direct transport modes. International visitors are a significant audience and can visit easily as part of a day trip to Darling Harbour taking in other sites such as the Australian National Maritime Museum.

Since completion of internal building works in 2015, the invigoration of the exhibition program and the opening of the Goods Line, **visitor numbers to the Powerhouse are up more than 35%**; education visitors to the Powerhouse (and to its historic site, Sydney Observatory) have increased 11%. The

revamped Darling Harbour is expected to attract **40 million visitors** a year - the Powerhouse is a key attraction in this tourism precinct.

3. The Powerhouse is one of the three major NSW museums along with the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Australian Museum. All three, and the State Library of NSW, are **central to Sydney's historic, cultural, civic and tourism heart**.

Since its founding in 1880, it has always operated as **a state-wide museum**, initially with branches across NSW and now with a regional program. It has had a presence in Western Sydney since 1947 at Castle Hill where it recently reopened **an expanded Museums Discovery Centre** with new partners, the Australian Museum and Sydney Living Museums. Until recently the Museum managed the **Migration Heritage Centre** which worked collaboratively with migrant communities across NSW and, especially in Western Sydney.

The Powerhouse Museum is not an '**Eastern Sydney**' museum – **it is a New South Wales museum** which belongs in the city's cultural core in the State's capital. The Powerhouse Museum belongs to the people of New South Wales – not to the NSW government.

4. The Ultimo Power House and the adjacent Tram Depot are **significant heritage** buildings of Sydney's industrial past. The 1988 repurposing of the magnificent halls of the Power House resulted in **the multi-award winning Powerhouse Museum**. The grandeur of the architecture marries heritage values with contemporary design and museum collection technology objects and inspired a raft of similar repurposing projects such as Carriageworks and Cockatoo Island (although these sites do not have the primary responsibility of the management, research and development of significant state collections).

The Powerhouse presages the Tate Modern in the former Bankside Power Station. The **Powerhouse Museum has been nominated for heritage listing**. It won the **Sulman** medal in 1988 as well as a slew of other Australian and NSW architecture, design and museum awards.

The **Museum is 'fit for purpose'** and since its opening has presented the latest in display and exhibition technologies – from virtual reality experiences to immersive screens showing the Great Wall of China from coast to desert, to 3D technologies presenting the ancient Greek Olympic Games. The Museum is **well suited to the latest digital technologies** as are museum counterparts such as NY's Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Design, London's British Museum, V&A, Science Museum – all housed in historic buildings.

The re-imagined and developed Museum **is less than 30 years old** with innovative and environmentally sustainable engineering services to the highest standards. Built for an **asset life of 100+ years**, Infrastructure NSW's review says the buildings are in good condition. The Museum had a \$25m refurbishment in the last 5 years. The published projected income from selling the Ultimo site will **not even go close to defraying the full cost** of this relocation plan and will be negated by the destruction of the existing Museum and facilities

Order of Costs and Risks: Summary

This plan was announced **without** a comprehensive business case or transparent evidence convincingly arguing the case for this unprecedented action – the uprooting of NSW's major technological, design and history museum – and its on-site collection and research facilities to an as **yet unsecured site on a smaller, flood prone, less accessible site 23km away** from its central Sydney precinct – its home for 123 years.

5. The KPMG Business case said to be released in November 2016 is **apparently only about one option** - moving the Powerhouse Museum. You could not pick a more complex, site-specific, heritage significant, precinct embedded museum to move in all of Australia – indeed it would be right up there in degree of difficulty with similar international museums.

In fact, the Powerhouse Museum as such cannot be moved as its title and character are intrinsic to the Ultimo Power House buildings. If this proceeds, this will **destroy the Powerhouse** – a museum **and valuable brand** that has hitherto been and could continue to be a recognised world leader.

6. Initial cost estimates from Infrastructure NSW of \$150 – 200 million from the sale of the site at Ultimo are **manifestly inadequate** to build a comparable museum at Parramatta. The Powerhouse has 35,000sq m of interior floor space of which 16,000 sq m is exhibition floor area. Furthermore, the Powerhouse has vast interior volumes from the original Power House halls and, the new Wran building – all with complex **technology objects 'built into'** the Powerhouse Museum fabric such as the Catalina flying boat suspended in the Boiler Hall.

Adjacent to the Powerhouse Museum, is the **integral Tram Depot** (8,000 sq m) with its state of the art collection management, conservation and storage facilities, research library, exhibition workshops, back of house facilities etc. The cost of relocating these facilities, as well as safely moving that extensive part of the collection (240,000 items) stored in this part of the Ultimo site, must also be added in.

In addition there will be **substantial staff costs** – effectively 3 work forces: to move and rehouse the collection; to plan and deliver the new museum; and to keep the Powerhouse open and successful for up to 10 years.

Several respected museum professionals estimate the total cost for this project could be upwards of **\$800 million to \$1 billion dollars**.

7. There is **inherent and irresponsible risk** in arbitrarily deciding to relocate what is a priceless and world class collection, not only because of its more than half a billion dollars value but also because of the **cultural significance of its collection** ranging from internationally significant to national, state, regional and local significance.

The riverside site selected in Parramatta is **flood prone** – to entertain the idea that it is a safe and suitable site for such a significant institution and collection is **foolhardy and unacceptable**.

This is a collection held **in trust for the people of NSW** – it does not belong to the Government and it should not be put at risk or made less accessible as a consequence of poor advice and uninformed strategy.

8. Also not costed is the **economic and cultural loss of benefactors** and donors who have been longstanding supporters of the Museum and who have now said they will redirect their benefaction to interstate or national museums. This will result in **the loss of gifts and bequests worth many millions of dollars**.

Since 1984, objects worth at least \$20 million have been donated to the Museum. Recurrent funds only accounted for \$6 million worth of acquisitions. If there is not active and generous public support and benefaction, **the collection will wither and die**. While new supporters may be found in new audiences, it is long standing and faithful benefactors who are the basis for a museum's success.

9. **Visitor projections** for the relocated museum **were not explored** before the announcement yet this is a critical source of revenue. Based on current visitor breakdowns, it is **likely that 40% of tourist visitors will be lost** as the new site is distant from Sydney's tourist attractions. It is also likely that the pattern of Sydney residents' and education visits will change markedly given the greatly **reduced access from north, south, south west and eastern Sydney as well as regional NSW**.
10. There was apparently **no community consultation with the people of Parramatta and Western Sydney** seeking their input as to what type of museum/cultural infrastructure they would like to see developed as a 'cultural

beacon' for their region. **It is unknown if the population of the region will be a major source of visitors** to a relocated Powerhouse. A museum/cultural attraction **informed by the desires and needs of the people of Western Sydney** cognisant of the region's distinctive history and contemporary cultural diversity would be ahead of the game in terms of community ownership and participation.

The opposition to the Premier's announced plan to 'move the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta' **is not an opposition to cultural development at Parramatta**. All against the move – from community groups such as Save the Powerhouse with more than 50,000 followers; to individuals voicing their views in the press, signing the 11,000+ signatures petition presented in Parliament; signing the Powerhouse Museum Alliance's Open Letter www.powerhousemuseumalliance.com; to organisations such as the Design Institute of Australia, Good Design Australia, Engineers Australia; Australian Society for History of Engineering and Technology, Migration Heritage Project, Illawarra; National Trust NSW; Ausglass; to museum and heritage professionals including nine former museum directors and, Museums Australia, as well as the Professional Historians Association – **all support** the Premier's desire to build a **'cultural beacon' in Parramatta** and **all oppose the relocation and destruction of the Powerhouse Museum**.

Furthermore, as is being aired at the current NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into museums and galleries (<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=2403>), there is increasing recognition that there are **many community and volunteer run museums in Regional NSW which are in dire need** of funding and support which makes it **difficult to justify the forecast expenditure of up to \$1 billion** involved in moving the Powerhouse and building a new museum on a smaller site 23km from its established precinct. More than **169 submissions**, by individuals, professional and volunteer organisations, were made to the Inquiry: of the 136 which addressed the term of reference re the plan to move the Powerhouse to Parramatta, **128 (94%) were opposed** and **8 submissions (4.7%) were in favour**; 33 (19.6%) submissions did not address this question specifically.

B: THE CASE FOR: A DISTINCTIVE, NEW 'CULTURAL BEACON' IN PARRAMATTA

The Premier's desire to build a 'cultural beacon' in Parramatta is laudable. However, this can be **achieved without the relocation and destruction of the Powerhouse Museum at Ultimo**. A museum is strengthened by the depth and breadth of its audiences and its benefactors and is sustained by the permanency of its presence in the community.

A range of models have been proposed as **alternative visionary, cost effective and constructive ways to build culture** in Western Sydney. Proponents range from

knowledgeable and experienced museum professionals to residents of Parramatta to the heritage and museum groups in Western Sydney to concerned citizens of New South Wales and beyond.

The basis for any development of cultural infrastructure should be **consultation with the communities** of Parramatta and Western Sydney. This is 'museum planning 101'.

Models:

1. **Museum satellites, branches and campuses:** There are many proven international and national models of museums and galleries successfully reaching wider audiences and flourishing in new locations by opening **satellites or 'campuses' in collaboration with local communities** to enhance and promote the cultural, education, economic and tourism dimensions and aspirations of the locale and its people.

This model should be adopted as the model for building a 'cultural beacon' in Parramatta **if the imperative is to involve major state cultural institution(s)**.

Not only does the Powerhouse Museum have the collections, scholarship and history to expand in this way, so too do the Australian Museum and the Art Gallery of New South Wales. And Parramatta is not the only locale that is deserving of new cultural development. **Such models are a boost to cultural tourism and cultural capacity**- the depth of experience which major institutions bring to such projects develops local capabilities and expertise and, brings skills in presentation and interpretation to enhance the partner museum.

2. **Museums which are home grown:** the second proven model for cultural development – the locally founded, grown and nurtured institution, developed in collaboration with local communities so that it reflects their history, experiences and aspirations – should be investigated if the intent is to build a 'cultural beacon' that is **wholly distinctive to Parramatta and Western Sydney**.

A museum which **celebrates the cultural context distinctive to Parramatta and Western Sydney** would be a 'cultural beacon' **unlike any other** in the state and, rare in Australia with the region's **Indigenous heritage and contemporary culture**; its **colonial heritage** that was critical to the colony's survival; the rich tapestry of **migration and settlement stories** that distinguish this region - from the **1821 Female Factory where convict women** began their lives in the colony to the **Scheyville migrant camp** - the second largest non-English speaking migrant camp in the country, to the **diverse contemporary migrant communities** which contribute to the region's distinctive character and life.

There are many examples of successful community driven cultural development such as **Bendigo City Art Gallery – a thriving, locally enriched institution with an interstate and international reach**. Closer to home are Campbelltown City Art Gallery, the Penrith Regional Gallery and Lewers Bequest at Emu Plains and Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre at Sutherland which reaches a wide audience through exciting programming, excellent partnerships and wonderful surrounds. Further afield are **regional museums** like the Museum of the Riverina, Murray River Art Museum and the Orange Regional Museum – all **locally grown**.

To relocate the Powerhouse would be to simply **'plonk' it onto a site** – it will **never** be a museum that has grown out of and is reflective of and responsive to its historic and contemporary cultural context.

3. **A Model for Parramatta's potential arts, heritage and cultural precinct: The Fleet Street Precinct** encompassing the 1821 Female Factory and Cumberland Hospital site - on the Parramatta River, opposite Parramatta Park and First Government House - should be **the site for a home grown, distinctive 'cultural beacon'**. There is a strong lobby for such a transformation led by the North Parramatta Residents Action Group (www.nprag.org) and a range of heritage, museum and cultural voices from Western Sydney and beyond.

The site has been nominated for National Heritage listing and is being considered for world heritage listing. It would be **a unique heritage context** for mixed arts, cultural and heritage uses along with commercial and residential. The site **is owned by the Government** and is currently the subject of contested development proposals devised by UrbanGrowth.

This precinct offers an ideal opportunity to develop a distinctive cultural experience which could **draw visitors from across Australia and beyond** as does the Port Arthur convict site in Tasmania, Sovereign Hill, Ballarat and Colonial Williamsburg in USA. <http://www.parragirls.org.au/asylum.php> has images of this significant heritage site.

A Museum of New South Wales: This historic precinct is the ideal context to develop **a museum which explores themes central to the story of Australia:** Indigenous heritage and culture; colonial histories; migration and settlement stories spanning across NSW over more than 200 years; and, contemporary cultural diversity. The Parramatta and Western Sydney region is, in many ways, **a palimpsest for the nation**.

This museum could be a **collaboration** between **Parramatta/Western Sydney communities and the Powerhouse Museum which is NSW's 'de facto' history museum** and has collections and research to be the basis for such as museum.

Other state cultural institutions and heritage organisations would also be key contributors.

The precinct's cultural facilities could include a **'white box' exhibition gallery** for presenting a range of locally curated exhibitions and events as well as touring state, national and international exhibitions.

4. **Centre(s) for Innovation and Creativity:** A sciences and the arts education and interactivity centre has been proposed by a number of museum professionals as well as by Western Sydney University. The WSU Vice-Chancellor (and MAAS Trust President), Professor Barney Glover announced plans to build a \$51 million science and technology centre at Werrington. (Penrith Press, June 29 2015). Such a centre could be developed in partnership with the Powerhouse Museum and have satellites linked to Western Sydney University campuses across the region giving it great reach and impact.

This could be a **landmark collaborative project** involving all the major museums and galleries as well as the Botanic Gardens NSW and National Parks NSW, working closely with the various faculties and campuses covered by WSU.

There should be very healthy **family and education audiences** if the popularity of open days with a science theme at the Castle Hill Museums Discovery Centre (formerly Powerhouse) is any indication.

5. The Riverside site currently identified for a relocated Powerhouse could instead be the site for a **riverside cultural and entertainment precinct**. A 'white box' gallery with complementary multifunctional cultural and performance spaces could be the anchor for a mix of entertainment, good food and outdoor riverside experiences that would significantly add to **the day and night vibrancy of this area and link with the Riverside Theatre and commercial precinct**. Exhibitions, experiences and events curated by all the NSW's cultural institutions could contribute to the program as well as a **vibrant sequence of home grown exhibitions and performances** etc showcasing local and regional artists, makers, designers, actors and musicians.

This would be a **far simpler and less costly development** – one in sync with the original ideas for the site and one which could be developed cognisant of the flood risks as it would not have the unacceptable collection risks and liabilities that a 'relocating the Powerhouse project' would entail. Such a development **would not preclude the cultural development potential of the Fleet Street precinct** which has unique heritage strengths and a location that complements the **extraordinarily rich historic and built landscapes of the City of Parramatta, especially Parramatta Park and the Parramatta River** - already a much valued locale for community life. It is this distinctive history which places

Parramatta at the centre of the history of the Cumberland Plain and, as the threshold for the exploration and settlement of NSW.

These are **all models which should be considered as potential options** (none mutually exclusive) for cultural development in Parramatta and/or Western Sydney.

All involve **the foundation step** in any cultural development: **community consultation**; all have the potential to respond to and reflect the **distinctive character** of the region both in terms of heritage and history and, contemporary life; all have the potential to be more **cost effective and community supported** than the current ill-advised plan to **'move' the Powerhouse Museum** – thereby **destroying it**.

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Brief Resume: Jennifer Sanders BA Hons Anthropology, USyd

Jennifer Sanders had a long and distinguished career at the Powerhouse Museum where she was Deputy Director, Collections, Content Development and Outreach from 2001 to February 2009. Appointed to the Powerhouse in 1978, Jennifer was a curator then senior curator, decorative arts and design for a decade.

A key member of the team for the Powerhouse redevelopment, in 1988 Ms Sanders was appointed Assistant Director Collections responsible for the Museum's curatorial, registration, preservation and regional NSW outreach programs and, for several years, exhibitions, education, publications and library services as well. In 2001 Ms Sanders was given responsibility for the NSW Migration Heritage Centre and later also Sydney Observatory and the Powerhouse Discovery Centre at Castle Hill. Ms Sanders regularly deputised for the Museum's Director.

From 1999 to 2008 Ms Sanders was a member of the National Cultural Heritage Committee and, in 2001 she was a member of the NSW Centenary of Federation Committee (archiving, cataloguing, and preservation of historical materials). From 2007 to 2012, Ms Sanders was a member of the External Advisory Panel, Design Research Institute, RMIT University, Melbourne and Chair, Design Archives Advisory Panel, RMIT University.

From 2009, Ms Sanders has undertaken museum, curatorial and heritage consultancies. She was awarded a Churchill Fellowship in 1981 to study public access to museum collections in North America and Great Britain; a J.Paul Getty Trust Scholarship to attend the Museum Management Institute, Berkeley, CA in 1987; a Toshiba Fellowship in 1991 for a study tour of Japan; and a Centenary of Federation Medal in 2003.

Appendices and notes:

1: Selected references:

- <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/find-out-more/>
gives a news chronology from 2014 to the present (on the left)
<https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/find-out-more/a-news-chronology/>
- and also a tab about the Inquiry (on the right), with links to all the submissions and transcripts, ie.
<https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/find-out-more/upper-house-inquiry-museums-and-galleries-submissions-and-transcripts/>
- for Parramatta North Heritage Snapshot, see:
<http://www.urbangrowth.nsw.gov.au/assets/Projects/Parramatta-North/Documents/UR4602-ParraNorthHeritageDoc-Sgl.pdf>

2: Attachments: Attached to the covering email are 3 Word docs:

- NSW Govt Upper House Inquiry: Submissions of specific relevance to the Powerhouse Museum.
- Upper House Inquiry, Museums and Galleries: submissions, schedules and transcripts
- Submission Statistics analysing all submissions submitted as at 4 Sept 2016

3: Reports

Two reports which advocated the Powerhouse relocation are:

- **Deloitte Report: Building Western Sydney's Cultural Arts Economy 2015**

Recommends relocation of the Powerhouse Museum to Western Sydney - *'the full sale proceeds of the existing site in Eastern Sydney being quarantined to establish the new museum in Western Sydney with any surpluses used to fund future Powerhouse Museum programs in Western Sydney.'* p58

'We also recommend that the new Powerhouse Museum include establishing formal links with the University of Western Sydney, the local Cultural Arts industry and existing cultural venues.' p58

Commentary:

This report also includes a table 'How State and Local funding compares' p19.

In the case of the Powerhouse Museum, this table has a misleading conclusion. The attendance figure for the Powerhouse is estimated as 917,833 (this is actually the 2011/2012 figure not 2012/2013 as titled in table.) The Museum's 'NSW Investment' of \$38,800,000 is divided by 917,833 attendees at all sites to reach a subsidy per attendee figure of \$42.27. However, this omits the museum's equally

valid off site figures of 483,063 (touring exhibitions etc) which, when included, change the subsidy to \$27.69 per attendee for a total of 1,400,896 visitors. It would be worth checking to see if the other state cultural institutions 'subsidy' figures were also calculated without including off site visitor figures.

These figures also compare apples and oranges as the state museums, library and gallery all have responsibilities for significant valuable collections – and their acquisition, research, interpretation, preservation and exhibition. They are not performance venues or functions locations.

This Report also labels the state museums in the Sydney CBD as the 'Eastern' cultural institutions ignoring the fact that all fulfil a state-wide remit and, attract audiences to Sydney from across NSW and beyond as well as providing programs that reach state, national and international audiences. Nor was there any recognition of the collaborative programs that the Powerhouse Museum has been involved in over many years with Western Sydney and regional NSW community and volunteer run museums, community groups and council run museums and galleries.

Apparently no heritage groups or organisations, nor community or volunteer run museums in the Western Sydney were consulted during the preparation of this report about their aspirations and needs to develop cultural facilities and experiences in the area. Yet the region's history and heritage is one of its distinctive strengths. Indeed, the National Trust NSW, custodian of several of the most important heritage sites in Parramatta/Western Sydney was not consulted in the preparation of this Report.

This Report was 'A collaboration between the Sydney Business Chamber (David Borger, Director, Western Sydney, Sydney Business Chamber) and the Regional River Cities of Parramatta, Penrith and Liverpool.'

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- **Infrastructure NSW: 2014 State Infrastructure Strategy Update** and see earlier **2012 Infrastructure NSW Recreation and Baseline Report** prepared by PWC which defines the cultural precinct in Sydney CBD as beginning with PHM to Darling Harbour, Walsh Bay, Sydney Opera House and to Macquarie Street.

The 2012 report identified as a key project the investigation of options to expand the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. See p120 2014 Strategy Update.

The 2014 Report leaves out the Powerhouse and Darling Harbour and starts at Walsh Bay. It recommends '*Urgently consider relocation of the Powerhouse Museum to the Parramatta Cultural Precinct*'.p114 . The report maintains that '*the Powerhouse Museum is relatively remote from the proposed CBD cultural precinct. It occupies a constrained (but very valuable) site...*' p123.

Commentary:

The report fails to acknowledge the Powerhouse Museum's flagship position in the education and creative precinct of Ultimo where it has been since 1893, neighbouring UTS and adjacent to the tourism precinct of Darling Harbour, in a cultural ribbon which includes the Australian National Maritime Museum as well as Darling Harbour attractions and the planned Indigenous Cultural Centre at Barangaroo Head Land Park.

This report also includes misleading figures for the MAAS (Powerhouse) in a puzzling pictogram selective representation of visitor numbers to a number of cultural and sporting venues (apples, oranges and potatoes), p119. The Powerhouse Museum is credited with .5 million visitors (annual period unspecified). However, in 2013/2014, the Powerhouse had a total of 1,046,998 visitors (on and off site) and 2,773,772 web visitors. The AGNSW was credited with onsite and off-site visitors. The State Library and Australian Museum were each credited with their online visits but no off or on site visitors. No allowance was made for the differential of entry fees.

This report goes on to say that the Powerhouse Museum is '*relatively remote*' and not on any cultural ribbon. It says that the museum occupies '*a constrained (but very valuable site) adjacent to Darling Harbour and will require significant reconfiguration to remain at its current location and comply with exhibition and security standards....*'p123.

This is an astonishing and unsubstantiated statement given that the museum recently had a \$25m refurbishment; has a Masterplan developed to a final stage to develop the Ultimo site; and has been perfectly capable of presenting an amazing range of ambitious and high security international, national as well as Powerhouse-developed exhibitions at the Powerhouse Museum since its 1988 opening.

From its 10 March 1988 opening to 30 June 1988 the Museum attracted the extraordinary number of 800,000 visitors and then 2.1m the next year and 1.8m the following year and 1.5m the next – a pattern of visitation diminished when admission charges were introduced in 1991. And this is well before the recent opening of Goods Line pedestrian link, the Light Rail and the redevelopment of Darling Harbour. The Ultimo site is not constrained and inaccessible for either visitors or museum operations.

JS 1st February 2017