

Fact sheet as at 16 June 2020

This material typically comes from an informal email group that has been functioning since 1 May 2016. Over 100 active members include present and past MAAS employees and volunteers, other Government employees and contractors, a wide range of other people with skills in engineering, architecture and the arts, and general museum members and supporters with many relevant skills and experiences. Volunteers and employees have in the past been ordered to present a favourable view of the 'move' of the museum, and employees feel that if they express dissident views they will be discriminated against for future employment. Museum jobs are scarce and highly sought after, so this fear is understandable. Other correspondents who have Government jobs or ties to Government projects have similar concerns. In a rational democracy, such fears should be groundless, but the irrational and arbitrary decision-making that is demonstrated in these submissions cause people to lose confidence in democratic processes.

Agreed facts, developed 2015-2019

The following FACTS have been consistently asserted over the past four years, not just from the enormous Inquiry into Museums and Galleries, and no contradictory material has emerged despite the fact that they have been brought to the attention of all concerned.¹



1. The idea of moving the Powerhouse Museum was not researched. It was an announced political decision in late 2014. CIPMO, Infrastructure NSW and MAAS museum authorities have clearly stated that their actions have resulted from this announced decision, and there was no pre-announcement research into alternative strategies for the laudable objective of improving the cultural facilities of Western Sydney

'The Powerhouse Museum will move from Ultimo to Parramatta

(Parramatta Advertiser, November 26, 2014 10:35 am)

¹ On Monday 21 January 2019, for example, the Premier, the Arts Minister and other politicians received, by registered mail and by email, a copy of these facts, with a covering letter formally requesting comment or refutation, but again there has been no valid response.

The contents of this sheet were also presented in a 1:1 interview with Ms Havilah at PHM at 12 noon on Wednesday 6 November 2019 and she was invited to present any evidence of error in any point. She has not been able to do so, and neither has any Government politician or agency. It is agreed with Ms Havilah that any communication with her is equivalent to direct communication with the Arts Ministry. The sheet has continually been presented through the normal channels to INSW, Create Australia and MAAS Museum, requesting that all errors be reported to us, with no response,

Full references supporting each fact are available: check

<https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/> or [email tomlockley@gmail.com](mailto:tomlockley@gmail.com).

2. There was no consultation with stakeholders. Even the trustees of the museum and Parramatta Council learnt of the idea from reading about it in the newspapers.

3. This state of affairs has continued: There has never been any later consultation or research into alternatives to moving the Powerhouse Museum to the site chosen by the Government in Parramatta. A sham consultation effort in mid-2017 consisted of asking people what they wanted to see in the new museums and asking for suggestions about the use of the Ultimo site.

4. 'Moving' the Powerhouse is a very bad idea. Of all possible projects for enhancing the cultural facilities of Western Sydney, it is hard to find one that is more expensive, more destructive and more inefficient: The largest objects have to be the last out of Ultimo and the first into any new building at Parramatta, with consequent massive costs for storage and transit. There will be a considerable resultant time delay, unnecessary with almost any other project. The specially strengthened floors (for supporting heavy exhibits) and ceiling (for suspending aircraft and other similar items), as well as the extensive steam reticulation network, will be wasted at Ultimo and have to be replicated at considerable cost at Parramatta.

This process wastes, at the very least, some hundreds of millions of dollars above what would be required for any other cultural / educational project.

5. The magnificent soaring galleries of the existing building cannot be replicated in Parramatta within the proposed new building. The proposed site is smaller than the Ultimo site, and is further compromised by the current plan to build at least one commercial / residential tower on the site and by the unanimously expressed desire of Parramatta Council for the retention of heritage buildings on the site. The unresearched decision to include a Planetarium within the museum added further difficulties.

6. The currently planned process involves a massive degradation of the Ultimo site, again for the purpose of building commercial / residential towers to assist budgeting. There is a calculable value of heritage in institutions such as the Powerhouse Museum, and this has been totally ignored by the Government.

7. The proposal has been the subject of almost universal criticism. The Government was forced to hold a Legislative Council Inquiry which attracted over 150 relevant submissions. Apart from the Government submission, all organizational submissions, including those of the National Trust, only two gave qualified support for the move, and all others completely opposed it. Of the over 100 individual submissions, some from very highly qualified people, none supported the 'move'. Non-Government witnesses were universally condemnatory of the idea. The *Save the Powerhouse* Facebook page exemplifies the views of the general public with over 20,000 people involved in active support. Mr Baird, asked at the Inquiry to name one arts group in favour of the move, did not do so even when given three weeks to research the topic.

8. The site chosen by the Government had been specifically rejected by the elected council prior to its dissolution to enable forced council amalgamation. The land deal was finalised by the unelected administrator, and has not been approved by the re-elected Parramatta Council.

And since then the story gets a bit more frightening ...

These facts were confirmed by the mighty Inquiry into Museums and Galleries. Thirteen sittings were held, over a period of over two years, were backed up with masses of submissions opposing the move. The final 72-page report delivered, on 28 February 2019, a Finding that *the Final Business Case for the Powerhouse Museum in Western Sydney Project did not comply with NSW Treasury's Guide to Cost-Benefit Analysis*.

The final response from the Government, delivered 4½ months later, dismissed the Finding in a 131-word response. It was simply a rehash of a few paragraphs of the so-called *Final Business Case Summary*, released over a year before.

It ignored the particulars of the evidence, and stated that the process had been subjected to supervision by six independent reviews involving over 30 independent researchers. Further, *highly qualified consultants in cultural infrastructure, museum logistics, urban planning, construction and operations contributed via peer review processes and governance panels*.

This latter claim has been thoroughly debunked. A committee of seven eminent people was described to the Inquiry, but met on only two occasions in September 2017, with only a few attendees, and here has been no evidence of any effects of their deliberations – and there has been no similar event since. Full details are available.

As regards the *six independent reviews* we asked for details, but none were forthcoming: 'cabinet in confidence'. We feel that as the Government's entire case depends on the work of these groups, it must be available for public scrutiny. So we asked for details of membership, dates of meetings, subjects discussed: again, 'cabinet in confidence'.

Eventually after after a GIPA request, we did get the names of the groups: **#1:** December 2016 – MAAS review report; **#2** February 2017 - MAAS New Museum in Parramatta review report; **#3:** January 2018 - New Museum in Parramatta report; **#4:** March 2018 - New Museum in Western Sydney report **#5:** April 2018 - MAAS Ultimo report **#6:** - November 2018 - New Museum in Parramatta report: everything else was withheld according to the relevant Section 14 (1) Schedule 1, clause 2 (1) (b); Schedule 1, clause 2 (1) (e) Section 14 (2) table clauses 1 (g) and 3 (a).

The documents #1 to #5 are not part of the released documents of the Business Case April 2017 and searches for the exact phrase 'New Museum in Parramatta report' etc elicit no response from the comprehensive collection on the private website

<http://maasbusinesscase.com/>

A final word on the response to the Inquiry:

On 17 July 2019 the Government's response was received, as follows:

Response: *Not Supported. Since February 2016, Infrastructure NSW has undertaken six independent reviews of the New Museum in Western Sydney project, conducted by more than 30 independent reviewers including specialists in design, planning and economics.*

The Final Business Case for the project demonstrates the expertise, time, detail, rigor and due diligence underpinning the planning of this project. Highly qualified consultants in cultural infrastructure, museum logistics, urban planning, construction and operations contributed via peer review processes and governance panels. The document includes an economic appraisal for the project, produced in accordance with NSW Treasury's Government Guide to Cost-Benefit Analysis.

The key parameters of the Economic Appraisal were endorsed by the Project Steering Committee which included a representative from NSW Treasury. The INSW Business Case summary indicated that it provided a sound basis for government decision making.



Mr Harwin's response was irrelevant: This scanty (131-word) response is very similar to statements made in the so-called *Final Business Case Summary* (page 2) issued a year before (2 July 2018): This was an attempt to stifle criticism that the Government was not releasing information, and is a classic example of one-sided reporting, 'spin' and ignoring the valid opposing facts.

Since February 2016, no fewer than six external reviews have been undertaken as work on the New Museum has evolved. The Gateway process managed by Infrastructure NSW involved extensive independent review by multiple experts in cultural infrastructure, urban planning, economic analysis, construction and operation. In addition, as part of the Business Case's development, CIPMO has sought advice from multiple experts in cultural infrastructure, museum logistics, urban planning, construction and operations through peer review processes and expert advisory panels. Infrastructure NSW's review of the Business Case for the relocated Powerhouse Museum, completed in February 2018, concluded that the Business Case had successfully demonstrated the case for change.

Full details can be found on <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/> or the search box at the private website <http://maasbusinesscase.com/>.

Tom Lockley, 0403 615 134, tomlockley@gmail.com, any time for any reason....

THIS PROJECT MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO SUCCEED.