

9 The government has ignored massive opposition

The announcement of the move created instant opposition from those who appreciate Australian heritage, but when the implications were examined, it became clear that the economics of the 'move' were disastrous. No profit could be made from the sale of the Powerhouse precinct even with the most drastic demolition. The protests escalated: protesters included

- 11,000 signatories to the petition presented to NSW Parliament, 25 Feb 2016
- - 178 signatories to the PMA's 17 Feb 2016 open letter
- - authors of the 133 submissions to the Upper House Inquiry who oppose the Powerhouse move – representing 94% of all the submissions about the Powerhouse; these include the National Trust of NSW, Museums Australia, the International Council on Monuments and Sites and many other professional, artistic and historical groups
- - countless museum visitors and supporters from across NSW, around Australia and overseas

and members of many organisations including

- The Save the Powerhouse Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/savethepowerhouse/>
- The Powerhouse Museum Alliance <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/>
- North Parramatta Residents Action Group <http://nprag.org/>
- Pyrmont History Group

We call on the government and the opposition to unite, to review the evidence, and to reassess this idea. Our state's policies must be guided by democratic process, and motivated by such things as economic wisdom and appreciation of cultural and heritage values. A spirit of consultation and co-operation among all will achieve great outcomes.

These pages were edited by Tom Lockley, of Pyrmont History Group, drawing on many sources. All questions and comments are welcome, and any errors found will be corrected as soon as possible through the above websites. Best method of contact is tomlockley@gmail.com

POWERHOUSE BULLETIN

May 2018: The Powerhouse 'Move' – what next?

The evidence shows that

1. This was a thought bubble promulgated by the former Premier: There is evidence of **no research into alternatives**
2. There is evidence of **no appropriate consultation** with any stakeholders before announcement of the project as a done deal
3. The **originally announced budget was ridiculous**
4. Later scraps of information that have been released indicate **a huge waste of money** caused by lack of consideration of better alternatives for both locations
5. The **site choice is undemocratic** and ignores the expressed will of the elected council prior to the period of the administrator, not to mention the possible risks of flooding
6. The **Parramatta people do not want the Powerhouse Museum**: they want to choose the most suitable developments for their own cultural and heritage needs
7. **The Powerhouse Museum is a unique item of Australian Heritage** and should not be degraded
8. The **government has not given out any significant information** about their research and planning, thus supporting the opinion that the 'move' is indefensible
9. The **government has ignored massive opposition**, founded on knowledge, fact and research

In this era of fake news, our assertions are backed by FACTS: Check them for yourself

Abbreviations used: MAAS the total museum organisation; PHM: the museum as is at Ultimo; UH: The Legislative Council Inquiry into Museums and Galleries; ev evidence at UH; sub submission to UH od other documents received by UH govt the NSW State Government and its instrumentalities including all UH witnesses appearing on their behalf. **New PCC** the current, elected Parramatta City Council (since 25 Sept 2017); **Admin** the period of non-elected, traditionally caretaker, administration of the Council (Ms Chadwick), **Old PCC** elected PCC before administrator. **PMA** Powerhouse Museum Alliance and associated groups. **NPRAG** North Parramatta Residents Action Group **BCS** the so-called Business Case summary released 27 April 2018 **Tele** Sydney Daily Telegraph **SMH** Sydney Morning Herald

1. No research into alternatives: The Business Cases are supposed to have been prepared according to Treasury Paper tpp 08-5, *Guidelines for the Construction of Business Cases*. This requires Govt first to assess alternatives for achieving their aims: never done. Govt has tried to say that Infrastructure NSW researched this, but they only suggested investigation of the 'move' (paper of Nov 3 2015) and Premier announced the move on 26 Nov. Infrastructure In **BCS**, Infrastructure NSW states *The Business Case takes as its starting point the Government's decision to locate the Powerhouse Museum*, making it clear that they did no research into alternatives. When asked about these matters gov employees say they conducted no such research, the decision was made by gov eg PHM Director Merrillees **UH ev** 17 Feb 17 p17; Arts NSW CEO Samantha Torres, **UH ev** 5 Sept 16 p18

2. No appropriate consultation Even the MAAS trustees were not consulted, just told that the move was happening, eg **UH ev** 14 Nov 16 p34. (Prof. Shine). Some consultation focus groups late 2016 but they and July 2017 meetings were asked simply what they wanted at new Parramatta Museum. Little other evidence of consultation, eg Ms Macgregor discussed move only with W. Sydney Arts and Cultural Lobby who supported move WSA&CL consists of individuals and 13 organisations, mainly art and theatre groups, no museums or historical groups. (**UH ev** 5 Sep 16 p34, **sub** 36 p4). No consultation by Parramatta administrator until well past Dec 2016 (email from Parramatta Council) Harwin (**od** 27 June 2017) promised information bulletins re PHM in Create NSW email but none received. Specially created new.maas.museum website had only seven posts and one link in 8 months, none addressing the 80+ basic questions asked at the 'consultation' meetings. See NPRAG symposium section 6 for comparison.

3: Initially announced budget was ridiculous

The original gov idea guaranteed that all proceeds would be used for the museum and any surplus for arts support in Parramatta. This was repeated by Deloitte document *Building Western Sydney's Cultural Arts Economy* (2015) sponsored by Sydney Business Chamber (Western Sydney) Both gov and Deloitte thus reveal incompetence, because the maximum value of the cleared site was estimated (Jan 16) at \$250 mil (Andrew Zhang, Manager, Hookers Real Estate, Pyrmont, using comparison with other available sites; gov value similar). **PMA** experts calculate cost of removing and storing the material from PHM at at least \$200 million. Demolition costs about \$10mil. (**PMA** experts). Land alone at Parramatta cost \$140 mil so the project was in debt already. The building estimate for the new building is now estimated at about \$1 billion (**BCS** p7). Amount realised from sale of site for development has since been reduced by commitments to maintain an arts presence at the Ultimo site so the initial finance arrangements are even more ridiculous.

4. A huge waste of money revealed even by later announcements Display of heavy items eg train, suspended planes, requires especially strong buildings not required by other ideas eg those listed in section 6. The large items will often have to be last out of PHM and first into Parramatta museum with consequent years of building delays. A perfectly functioning steam reticulation will need to be rebuilt. *The pointless, costly and risky move of 240,000 objects from Ultimo to Castle Hill is a scandalous waste of money for no public benefit or cultural outcome.* (K Winkworth, World-recognised Museum authority)

5. Site choice is undemocratic Old PCC was steadfastly opposed the use of the recently 'acquired' site for the relocated museum (see **Old PCC** Resolution 16308, 14 December 2015; Resolution 16353, 14 January 2016; and Resolution 16646, 9 May 2016). The fact that the 9 May 2016 meeting, was the last meeting of the elected council, demonstrates the importance placed by the elected council on the views expressed. Land was 'acquired' under Administrator 31 July 2017. No record of approval of, or even discussion of, the acquisition can be found in council minutes etc on the **New PCC** website since the restoration of democracy. After over a year as administrator, in June 2017 appointed an Expert Steering Committee, none of whom had significant museum experience and they approved the purchase plan with no recognition that it contradicted the views of the elected government.

6. The Parramatta people do not want the Powerhouse Museum.

The HillPDA study February 2017 (page 4) and Deloitte Review of Heads of Agreement July 2017 cited by Administrator does not canvass any alternatives to that already 'announced' by gov. 'Evidence' submitted by Govt and Council is not based on valid empirical studies of attitudes. Best consultation to date is NPRAG Oct.2916: combined cultural associations of Parramatta recommend the development of the authentic 'Fleet Street' area into a multipurpose cultural precinct, and local choice of arts facilities: supported eg by **UH Subs** 21, 117, 142, 142b and 149. Specific projects suggested include migration (13, 21, 37, 51, 149), early history (**NPRAG** and subs 21, 42, 119, 143), 149 with special emphasis on Aboriginal history (21, 31, 51, 149), a Qwestacon or multipurpose display area (36, 51, 149, 143, 96b, 142b).

7. The Powerhouse Museum is a unique item of Australian Heritage.

The first building housed the first industrial-scale generator power built in 25 months, finished December 1899, while simultaneously 10 km of tram tracks were laid and 100 trams put on the line, training everyone in new technology. Standards of original building, subsequent additions and award-

winning conversion only 30 years ago are magnificent. No heritage classification was sought as no-one could have believed that this magnificent building was under threat. G Quint, National Trust advocate, applied for **PHM** heritage listing Sep 2016 which has not been yet been considered under this government. Heritage values are not assessed by gov in their **ev** or **subs**.

8. The government has not given out any significant information Letters to the government and to government and opposition members typically ignore any questions asked and simply reply with a standard letter saying how good the 'move' idea is. At **UH** Government witnesses have refused to give basic information claiming it is Cabinet in confidence' (37 times in **UH** evidence alone). 'Cabinet in confidence' traditionally applies to discussions made within the cabinet, leading to the convention that Cabinet speaks with one voice, having deliberated the matter in question and determined a policy. Govt has extended it to denying information about the business case itself, and the consultant's terms of reference and reports that contribute to the business case, and even to material such as the vital logistic information provided by Peter Root Associates to assist consultants.

What has to happen

1. Australia's only museum of applied arts and sciences stays where it is: in the most accessible site for the city the state, the country and the world. It retains its iconic traditional exhibits, in its unique heritage building, with appropriate facilities and funding.
2. The basic fabric of all Powerhouse Museum buildings, including the Harwood building, is preserved.
3. Parramatta gets a magnificent new museum and/or other cultural facilities on a site that is democratically approved and of a type that is properly researched and democratically selected.