

Questions for the Government.

Over the years we have asked for numerous pieces of information such as those listed below, with little response. The information required should all be obtainable with a few mouse clicks on the relevant computers. We submit that none could possibly be “ Cabinet in confidence” as only very basic information is requested. Any information on any of these points would have be a major step towards overcoming the secrecy which has been a characteristic of this whole process

1. . Assessment by appropriately qualified people up the **cost** of rebuilding Willow Grove. Mr Borger has asserted that this is no problem because in previous years the Kings School Chapel and the Lancers Barracks building were demolished and re-erected in their new Parramatta sites. These were sandstone block buildings. However our information is that the brick Willow Grove building, with its detailed interior finishing, will be far more difficult and indeed probably prohibitively expensive to reject. The material that is available is seen on <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/project/26576?fbclid=IwAR0bB-du2l8qvLLOoTEoS-6fBmRsQNumHAwb5O2hQsqaoxFSoeAtba7vx1l> , *Site Selection, Deconstruction and Relocation of Willow Grove, Relocation Framework and Methodology Plan*, 8 June 2021, but this does not address costing..
2. Details of the employment contract of Aurecon, the PR firm contracted to undertake the consultation for the EIS for the proposed facility at Parramatta. Previous contracts, such as that of Elton consulting for the 2017 ‘consultation’, have required the presentation of a favourable view of the project rather than proper consultation. Please confirm that this was also the case with Aurecon.
3. Costing for moving the large exhibits planned for the major display. Apparently the exhibits will have to be admitted through the structural exoskeleton of the proposed building, one storey up. The indicative picture from the recent announcements indicate that quite large items will need to be installed:



4. An indication of the school education programs and the cooperation with other educational institutions and the involvement of people with educational and research expertise in the development of plans for the proposed facility at Parramatta, ‘Powerhouse Ultimo’ and MDC Castle Hill. The ‘in principle’ support of the *Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta*, through the *Western Sydney Powerhouse Community Alliance* is noted.
5. Details of the decision-making process for the June 15, 2021 announcement of the new plans for ‘Powerhouse Ultimo’ *The renewal will see Powerhouse Ultimo focus on design and fashion, presenting exhibitions that feature the museum’s significant collections,*

international exclusive exhibitions and programs that support the design and fashion industries. What people with museum expertise were involved?

6. Any information about the consultative dialogue procedures outlined by Ms Havilah on 28 March 2021 in her response to our Bulletin 60. These were **Masterplanning Dialogue**, which aims to ensure the architectural legacy and integrity of the built form is considered in the renewal of the Powerhouse Museum, and the **Curatorial Dialogue** involving consultation with former curators etc. Participants were sworn to secrecy, and to our knowledge, this undertaking has been kept. However we would like to know more about this process. As far as we can see, the curatorial dialogue has involved only a few meetings towards the end of last year, and await with interest news of any outcomes. In particular, we would like to know of the involvement, if any, of either group in the March 2021 demolition of the display cabinets and viewing platform on level one, and in the manner in which this was done.
7. Details of the reasons why the level 1 display cabinets and viewing platform were 'not compliant with fire regulations', and details of any discussion into alternative ways of overcoming this problem rather than the demolition of these massive fixtures.
8. Records of the deliberations made concerning erection of the new storage facility at Castle Hill rather than the retention of the Harwood building at Ultimo, including disclosure of the financial aspects of all options.
9. Records of consultative deliberations made prior to the announcement on 15 June 2021 of 'a new investment of \$480-500 million to transform 'Powerhouse Ultimo' into a dedicated museum to design and fashion.'
10. Records of any consultation with people of museum expertise prior to the announcement of 4 July 2020. This announcement was a great relief to the massive group of people fearing the imminent destruction of THE Powerhouse Museum, but our information is that the decision was made, within a few days, for purely internal political reasons within the government, which is not a good foundation for rational decision making.
11. A clear and unequivocal statement of whether the conditions requested by Professor Glover on 1 September 2016 have been met. In particular, we would like comment on his requirement that the display of exhibits at the proposed facility at Parramatta would indeed be larger than the existing museum at Ultimo. On 21 January 2019 we asked professor Glover if his requirements had been met. He did not respond and passed the responsibility for answering this query to the then MAAS executive officer. Despite constant reminders, no response was forthcoming. The relevant officer left the museum for other employment almost a year later.
12. Regarding the government response to the *Museums and Galleries Inquiry Final Report* issued on 17 July 2019: we seek confirmation that the peer review processes did not exist as described, and an explanation of why this was not detected in the endorsement process by the Project Steering Committee. This involves acknowledgement that appendix EE, *Peer Consultation*, listed in the released 2018 business plan, does not exist. We have repeatedly asked for public acknowledgement of this error, with no success.
13. Research and consultation regarding the proposed Planetarium at the proposed facility at Parramatta, announced 27 April 2018.
14. Research and consultation regarding the proposed Lyric Theatre at the proposed facility at Pyrmont, announced 30 March 2018.
(These two last-mentioned projects have been abandoned, which meets with general approval from the museum experts, However it would be good to see any details of appropriate investigatory procedures prior to the announcements).
15. At some time in about the middle or end of 2017 the Government determined that the Base Case for the project would not be as prescribed in Treasury document *tpp08-13* but would

be 'the Government's decision to locate the Powerhouse Museum on the Riverbank site in Parramatta'. We would like to see the rationale for this decision and its justification in terms of proper democratic process. We would like to see any approval of this matter by a qualified independent authority, giving the rationale for this decision. It certainly could never pass a 'pub test'. **This matter is crucial.**

16. On 29 August 2017 Mr Harwin announced that an 'expert advisory committee' had been established to provide 'guidance directly to the project committee'. He listed the members of this committee, but it is clear that the group did not function as outlined. **We have repeatedly asked for the record to be modified so as to reflect the true position, without response.**
17. We would like to receive information about the six review panels that remain as the only possible basis for the Government's response to the first Inquiry that the project has been properly assessed. They (apparently separately) reported at some date in December, 2016 (#1 'MAAS review report'), February 2017 (#2 MAAS New Museum in Parramatta review report'), January 2018 (#3 'New Museum in Parramatta report') March 2018 (#4 'New Museum in Western Sydney report') April 2018 (#5 MAAS Ultimo report') and November 2018 (#6 'New Museum in Parramatta report'), There are no details about terms of reference or membership of review panels (though they are claimed as being 'independent' no person we have contacted has named any person that participated). There are no references of meeting dates and no indication of terms of reference, procedures followed or outcomes of these reports. Yet these review panels have justified the Summary Business Case issued 4 April 2018 (when only 5 reports had been received) and the Government's Inquiry response on 17 July 2019, (seven eventful months after the last review panel). A GIPA application for further information yielded only the names of the investigations and the months in which a single document was produced (as above) and absolutely no other information even after the Government's original refusal was appealed to the
18. We have repeatedly sought information about any other independent review of the total project with no response, and hereby formally ask again. Further, in the released Business Case papers released on 12 June 2018, the contents document lists *Appendix EE, 'Consultants and Peer Review Schedule*. We have repeatedly sought this document, and require the release of the document or an admission that it does not exist.
19. We ask again for an acknowledgement that the statement by Ms Torres (inquiry 14 November 2017) and others that 'it is uncontested that government accepted a recommendation from Infrastructure NSW to relocate the museum from the current site in Ultimo to a site in Parramatta' is wrong. INSW took its involvement from the Government decision to this effect. (Document entitled *Final Business Case Summary*. Issued 4 April 2018).
20. We ask again for an acknowledgement that the elected Parramatta Council, before its dissolution (12 May 2016) had repeatedly stated their preference for the Riverside site to be kept for an open park area rather than high rise. Statements that the council had recommended the use of land for the proposed facility at Parramatta are incorrect. The land purchase as a site for the proposed facility at Parramatta was approved by the nonelected, government appointed, administrator of the council on 31 July 2017, 'as a matter of urgency' only 58 days before the end of her tenure (25 September 2017) and the resumption of a democratically elected Council. **The Government's claim that the Council supported the erection of the museum at this site is demonstrably wrong and should be corrected.**
21. Finally we seek the release of documentation supporting the strong recommendation of Ms Macgregor for the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum that underpinned the initial

announcement of November 26 2014. We believe that this recommendation was totally flawed and is responsible for the initial decision, which has been the basis for the long process of trying to get a rational and appropriate basis for this huge project.