

## Purely personal: What we should do now

There are two issues:

1. The **abuse of process** by the Government as set out in the fact sheet and supporting document, which is in near-unanimous agreement with the entire museum arts community, and
2. **our duty to do our best we can to retain our heritage** and the rigour and intellectual force of the museum movement.



### Abuse of process: what to do about it?

My attitude is clear: this abuse of proper democratic process is wrong, and we must not abandon the fight to highlight this, taking our cue from the little green frog. The one and a half billion dollars minimum that will be spent in this project could be far better used. Much of it is being spent in destruction, none is so far being spent in building on traditional strengths. We are all tired of writing letters to politicians, but need to keep up the pressure! And this is not the time to give up: I was asked late in 2019 if the opposition to the museum would die down once the project was under way, and I said that the process was so ill-founded that this would not happen.

We need to keep pressure on the parliamentarians, write letters and emails, and to try to get media coverage of our views. Social media is possibly our best weapon..

Please keep in touch through the magnificent Facebook page *Save the Powerhouse* and the *Powerhouse Museum Alliance* Facebook page. 'Follow' Suzette Meade on social media and keep in touch with developments at Parramatta as well as at Ultimo. It isn't difficult to find places to express your opinions, and you will be in good company!

As a result of seven years of protest we have improved the situation: the Ultimo museum was to be razed, and the site used for 'urban renewal' and now at least the buildings are preserved, along with some traditional exhibits. We need to keep working to ensure that proper museums of world class are established.

## IMPORTANT:

The Powerhouse Museum Alliance website <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/> will continue to publish information and is a wonderful record of this entire process. Please check it frequently and **get your name on the mailing list: email the editor, Grace Cochran, [gracecochrane@bigpond.com](mailto:gracecochrane@bigpond.com)**

## Can you help?

I still would love to see a legal investigation of the key 'base case' decision of the Government outlined by Government witnesses at the first Inquiry on 12 September 2018. Treasury procedures state that with these major projects, 'the first option to be considered is the Base Case. That is, what happens if 'the status quo is maintained'. Then alternatives must be considered. The Government stated that the 'base case' was their determination to move the museum, therefore the only consultation needed was on alternatives within this process. It does not meet the 'pub test' for any democracy. I have emailed every possible legal organisation that I can think of to get this tactic properly investigated, not just from a micro-legal viewpoint but also for the implications for democratic process. If someone can find a way that this can be done it would be wonderful.

## Our duty as the adults in the room

A key issue is uncertainty about the future of the traditionally iconic exhibits at THE Powerhouse MUSEUM. There is a tendency for an emphasis on temporary exhibitions rather than these exhibits. There was general shock among the museum community when the Transport Hall was severely modified in March 2021 (and particular disapproval of the inappropriate methods used). It is hoped that 'a line in the sand' has been agreed: Ms Havilah has stated that the magnificent working steam engine collection will remain basically as it is and where it is, in Australia's first, beautifully constructed, industrial power station. It is this combination of factors that puts this collection clearly among world leaders in its class. The idea of having only temporary exhibits in a world-class museum is ridiculous: could we imagine this happening in the Louvre, the British Museum or any of the Smithsonian museums?

Of recent times there are those in the museum / arts world whose disgust is such that they have been inclined to withdraw from the process. They have sought to provide input and to participate in a developmental process, but the fact sheet demonstrates that their views are always ignored, even distorted, and it is hard to maintain a supportive attitude under these circumstances.

Though I have been accused of being an 'Uncle Tom' because of a less confrontational attitude, I do think that we need to keep in touch with what is happening and do our best to assist and foster worthwhile 'museum' developments. Ms Havilah has espoused the idea of co-operating with community groups, and all movement in this direction needs to be fostered. There are some encouraging developments, but they are fragile, and need to be fostered from both sides.

## Some 'housekeeping'

I propose to send out no more general bulletins, unless the Government provides information as requested. But I will still remain active. I will still welcome information, suggestions, opinions etc and will maintain our information files as long as required. If you want to know something, please ask, and I may be able to provide information from my searchable document collection. The private website <https://maasbusinesscase.com/> will not be renewed next June, but I will store the material privately after that. (I was criticised by some bureaucrats for publishing publicly available material on this website, and was asked to remove access to some of this material, which I did. Also Government officials objected to the website name, saying that it looked to be an 'official' site, and it obviously is

not. Government policy is to restrict information. After June 2022 the name will be available to the Government if it does want to make information readily available!)

And the final word ...

I have often said that the anti 'move' forces work cooperatively, on many fronts. We may have slightly differing emphases, but there is a common purpose which we all support. There is no hierarchy, we do not need to thank each other as we all appreciate each other's efforts.

But I must thank the people over the years who have given personal support – people who assisted with mailouts, people who provided information and suggestions, and particularly those who provided support when things got grim. Your tolerance has been greatly appreciated!

Finally, appreciation to the politicians who have participated in the Inquiries to try to highlight the problems of the 'move', including Robert Borsak, Walt Secord and Alex Greenwich and their hardworking staff. Jamie Parker has provided incredible support, and I specially thank the wonderful team of people who work in his office for their consistent and unfailing effort. Senada, of Mr Borsak's office, has also been a tower of strength, and her instant response to my many queries has been greatly appreciated.

There are also several Government MPs who, over the years, have given considered responses to our correspondence, and among these are certainly people who have serious reservations about the 'move' process. I will not embarrass them by giving names, but I am sure that if the matter is ever properly discussed in party meetings, they will make their opinions known. It will be very sad if the small autocratic group of decision makers within the Government are allowed to impose their will on all the members of their own party and on the overwhelming majority of informed Australians.