

MAAS Project Public Meeting (Parramatta) 26 July

Rough notes by Tom Lockley

Organised by [Department of Planning and Environment with MAAS](#)

General setup

Parkroyal Parramatta; 14 tables of 12 people about 100 to 120 people actually there.

One facilitator per table with two question sheets:

Q1: What would you like to see, do and experience at the new museum in Western Sydney? What would make it an exciting place for you and your family/friends to visit?

Q2: If some Powerhouse Museum presence stays at Ultimo what would you like to see, do and experience?

Opening

Brian Elton MD of Elton Consulting was MC. Welcome to country.

(Key point throughout: The museum was continually referred to as if the decision to move was already made. However when the going looked as though it was getting tough it was emphasised that no action had been yet taken.)

Professor Glover: usual talk about how great the museum was. A unique place at the intersection of science and arts, the only such thing in Australia. Hundreds of thousands of visitors per year. Trust was working with the government to build the new museum.

Was glad to welcome the discussion of the retention of the Ultimo site and the retention of some presence at Ultimo.

MAAS worked with other organisations local and international for projects such as *Egyptian Mummies* (attracted 100 000 + people, won local and international awards. Partnerships fostered. STEAM involved Microsoft and Western Sydney University. Centre for Fashion partnered with Ethiad and others. *Faith Fashion Fusion* partnered with Moslem women and was touring internationally. Similar partnerships with Aboriginals, formalising policies etc. *Sydney Science Festival* on shortly, growing annually. Museum worked with 70 partners with many exhibitions, including *This is a voice* coming soon.

Ms Merrillees also present and presented positive view of museum.

Main expert speakers

Mr Craig Limkin Acting Executive Director, Cultural Infrastructure Program Management Office, Arts and Culture Division, Department of Planning and Environment

Ms Alex O'Mara Acting Deputy Secretary, Arts and Culture Division, Department of Planning and Environment

Both these were present at the last Upper House hearing as support for Minister for the Arts.

Keynote: Mr Limkin

Mr Limkin took the greater part. Opening statement: aims of evening to discuss the new museum and for him to explain the business case process

Business case process

The Business Case is the fundamental bedrock of every decision. This meeting is part of the consultation and information gathering stage. This will be analysed and Mr L's job is to get this analysed and pass it on to the government for them to decide what to do. The government would then make a decision and there would be more consultation after this as to the way the decision was to be carried out. However throughout it was implicit that the decision to move was already made, and that the new development was that we could discuss the retention of some sort of facility at Ultimo.

Addressed some questions already asked:

Flood risk referred to in many questions was being looked at by experts.

Re Cabinet in confidence. 'Like any organisation there are key documents that must be kept confidential'. GIPA (GOVERNMENT INFORMATION (PUBLIC ACCESS) ACT 2009) controlled access. He did not elaborate on this.

New museum would mean a lot to Western Sydney, creating jobs, assisting the growth of the economy.

Wanted input on cost points for entry to the museum.

'That is all I have to say, now ten minutes on each question'.

Group Session

With facilitators at each table. MS M Mr O'M and Mr L and I think Prof G moved around groups and interacted with them.

Summary from facilitators.

The facilitators summarised the discussions and these were wide ranging.

There was a wide range of inputs. I think the theme that came up the most was a desire to keep the PHM buildings and a museum on the site and a preference for the alteration of the Fleet Street precinct for the new cultural site. But the format did not seek for consensus, just input, so though I had a clear impression that this was a dominant view there was no objective evidence. The following is not an exhaustive list, just what I could jot down.

Q1: Parramatta museum: Ideas expressed

- Need to have STEAM emphasis museum / Questacon type facility in Fleet Street area.
- Must be an iconic building in an exciting setting, great architecture (this speaker the only one I think that mentioned the river site)
- Local museum could have textiles emphasis, first and current exports, medical, blockbuster exhibitions, Aboriginal history and astronomy, immersive science experience.

- Re price points strong support for free entry or maybe free days. Museum education to programs be a beacon for the educational process.

Q2 what should be retained at Ultimo

Again, many suggestions

- Kids Museum, Questacon
- Regional art etc Ultimo to be a base for travelling exhibitons
- Keep the train at Ultimo
- Keep Ultimo site
- Local history emphasis both at Ultimo and Parramatta, at Ultimo for example Chinatown.
- Building should not be touched, air space should not be sold.

Q and A

Repeated theme: imbalance of money going to Sydney CBD rather than to centre of population

- Q: Not either but both, Smithsonian style, complex of museums, Fleet Street heritage important
- A Will be taken to government
- (O'Mara I think, notes not clear here) went into demographics etc, business community looking for opportunities and the idea of a cultural precinct appealed.
- Q Site choice?
- A No decision has been implemented so far on land purchase – process informed by Infrastructure report and desire in huge document for cultural precinct in Parra and statement that Infrastructure wanted the museum in Parramatta
- Q David Borger, Western Sydney Business Chamber, (one of the main proponents of the present proposal, not so much a question as a statement of his case)
- Q Discussion of recent article about general financing on MSN: representative of group of councils talked of the disadvantages of just one big project (I did not know much about the article and could not properly follow)
- Q: Will new museum be an iconic exemplar of sustainability
- A Yes
- Q: NPRAG supporting Fleet Street development and projects like national womens history, human rights, adaptive use of Fleet Street (Suzette Meade present but did not speak or lobby as far as I could see. At the last meeting I attended with her she was reluctant to participate, thought that Urban Growth etc were being undemocratic)
- Q Relative lack of young people being involved, shortage of employment opportunities in cultural fields in the area
- A Ms M: agreed and wanted input.

- Q objection to 2900 units (I think on Fleet Street site)
- A: not really given

- Q Blacktown Arts Centre had commitment to consultation from government, had not happened
- A Ms O: would happen, this meeting part of it

NB I do not guarantee the accuracy of these notes. The q and a moved quickly and there may be errors. I hope to have given a flavour of what happened.

Tom L late night of 26 July. Watched Utopia on Iview for relaxation after that.