



PRESERVING AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST GARDEN SUBURB

P. O. Box 85, HUNTERS HILL, N. S. W. 2110

9-8-2017 Powerhouse letter F.doc

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, MP
NSW Premier
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001
9 August 2017

Dear Premier,

I write as President of the Hunters Hill Trust to convey our collective outrage at your government's proposal to dismantle the Powerhouse Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS) in Ultimo Sydney. The Museum and its collections are not 'owned' by the government to do as you will - they are our heritage, collectively owned by the people of NSW and held in Trust - a gift from previous generations to future generations.

The government's proposed 'move' of the Museum to Parramatta is ill conceived, short sighted and quite frankly a disaster. It would appear that the government is receiving very poor advice concerning the value of the existing specialist infrastructure and the likely cost to move the vast collections that are on display and in storage in Ultimo. Have you considered the large items of technology, how on earth they are going to be moved, or whether they are relevant or of interest to audiences in Parramatta? Have you personally visited the basement collections and seen the complex storage systems that have been purpose built? Have you visited the conservation laboratories and archives?

The Museum opened as a triumph of museum planning and design after years of detailed work by a team of professional museum experts and, despite the years of neglect and under-funding, it remains a much-loved institution. There has clearly been little consideration as to the value of this museum to the broader community, and its historic links to the Ultimo precinct. It is perfectly situated to give easy access to Sydneysiders, school groups, international tourists and regional NSW visitors in its current location. Many generations of taxpayers have contributed to and donated important collections of material to the Museum as part of the story and history of Sydney on the understanding that their contributions were made to the Ultimo-based museum.

Ultimo does not need a downgraded 'arts and cultural space' when millions of dollars have been committed to 'Sydney Modern' at the Art Gallery of NSW (which could have been built at Parramatta) and we have the MCA at Circular Quay. What the city needs is for the Powerhouse Museum and its wonderful collections relating to science, applied arts, design and technology to be reinvigorated and connected to the arts, design and teaching institutions on its doorstep - plans that had been progressed by the former Director Rose Hiscock before she left in November 2015 in dismay.

Imagine if this vision had been accepted and pursued along with a concept for a cultural facility at Parramatta that could have showcased material relevant to the region from not only the MAAS but also the vast collections from the Australian Museum, the State Library and the Art Gallery of NSW.

The old David Jones car-park site in Parramatta is flood prone and an unsympathetic location and should not be considered as a serious option for the transfer of the museum and its collections, as all Museum professionals would agree. To have committed to buying the site when the Local Government has been run by an Administrator and there is supposed 'consultation' on the future of the Museum is clearly a betrayal of trust. Premier, you do not just dismantle a world-class institution and transplant it to another location. Parramatta deserves its own cultural facilities that reflect the history and character of its region.

As one of Sydney's oldest and most respected heritage organisations we are dismayed at your government's poor treatment of heritage. We note:

- the clear disregard for the Heritage Council advice on the Sirius Building,
- the overriding of State Significant Heritage protections at Windsor with the RMS's proposed 'State Significant Infrastructure' project to replace Windsor Bridge and destroy Australia's oldest town square,
- the short-sighted sell-off of our beloved Sydney sandstone buildings, and
- the proposed ruination of the North Parramatta Heritage precinct for more unsightly high-rise apartments.

Bold steps to restore faith in your government's vision for the future of Sydney and NSW would be to strengthen our heritage protections, respect your Heritage Council's advice, and champion better civic design led solutions that protect our community heritage, our resources and our sense of place created through topography, history and evolution - not by selling our prized assets, allowing wholesale demolition and obliteration of the past and those places and things communities hold dear.

Premier, we hope that you will consider reversing your decision to move the Powerhouse Museum. We do not see this as a 'backflip' as hyped in the media, the community regarded your earlier move to reconsider the proposal as showing true leadership to determine the best plan. We implore you to leave The Powerhouse where it is, and to enhance its connections to nearby learning institutions.

We also encourage you to create a cultural institution for Parramatta that draws on regional stories, communities and sense of place - with strong links to The Powerhouse and other parts of MAAS, if that is determined to be appropriate. Without question, Parramatta's rich colonial, Aboriginal and migration history and the vibrant community arts deriving from this should be located in the North Parramatta Heritage precinct. This would create a far greater visionary legacy than dislocation of the Powerhouse Museum to an ill-suited site that would not pass a serious risk analysis.

The community should not have to keep fighting to protect and maintain our museums, our heritage and our environment - it should be a given. We would appreciate a response to this correspondence and would be happy to meet with you to further discuss this matter.

Yours sincerely

Alister Sharp PhD
President, Hunters Hill Trust

Cc Luke Foley, Leader of the Opposition
Mr David Shoebridge, MLC, Greens