

*P r e s e r v i n g A u s t r a l i a ' s O l d e s t G a r d e n S u b u r b*

*P.O. Box 85, Hunters Hill, N.S.W. 2110*

8-7-2020 Powerhouse Museum 7\_2020.docx

The Hon. Anthony Roberts, MP

Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing, and Special Minister for State, Leader of the House

GPO Box 5341

Sydney, NSW, 2000

Dear Minister Roberts,

Thank you for your new response to our correspondence of 30thth June. The Trust's membership will be thrilled with the decision to save the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo.

To pick up on some of the themes captured in your first response - you are correct that the Hunters Hill membership was not alone in the concerns we expressed about the Powerhouse Museum project. The chorus of anger and disbelief was growing and has not completely settled, given the Government's original position which ignored the voices of the community as well as a range of experts across disciplines from museology and heritage to engineering and science - locally, nationally and internationally. How much money has been spent trying to justify the flawed Powerhouse Museum move?

**As a community that values history, heritage, access to culture and education and a strong sense of community we are now seeking for you to advocate (as our local representative and a Member of Cabinet) for the Parramatta project to be paused and reconsidered in light of the strong local opposition to loss of the heritage that their community cherishes. Now is the time to seek genuine community input.**

We offer the following insights and members of our Committee would be happy to discuss our position with you further:

**Benefits of keeping the Powerhouse in Ultimo**

* The world significant collections will not now be subject to unnecessary risk through dismantling and moving them from their current carefully designed, climate controlled and engineered locations within the purpose-built world-class, Sulman Award winning museum facility.
* The Museum's significant storage, conservation and workshop facilities in Ultimo will (we assume) be preserved, thereby protecting the world class collections into the future.
* The exorbitant and rising cost to destroy a museum and its purpose-built facilities will hopefully now be contained by removing the loss of investment in Ultimo and the cost of trying to move collections and replace specialist facilities.
* We trust that the Government's previously stated commitment 'to ensuring creative spaces remain embedded within the Ultimo community and developing a precinct-based masterplan for the old Powerhouse site' will now not be progressed any further. The city does not need another creative space when the Art Gallery and the MCA are both located in the city already and there are many other creative spaces.

**Issues with the proposed facility at Parramatta as designed**

* The size of the Powerhouse Precinct building at Parramatta has been continually misrepresented in public statements and media releases as larger than the real Powerhouse Museum at Ultimo. It is not. Expert analysis has shown that the Powerhouse Precinct building at Parramatta will have just 25% of the PHM’s international museum standard climate-controlled exhibition space.
* The 'purpose-built facility' at Parramatta will not be the largest museum in NSW, as claimed. Parramatta was promised a museum but it will not be a museum. The Powerhouse Precinct in Parramatta is not the science museum concept endorsed by cabinet in April 2018. It is not a museum about science for families. It appears to be designed to support the night time economy of Parramatta, as an entertainment zone for large events and temporary exhibitions.
* You described the new facility at Parramatta as 'the centrepiece for a new Arts and Cultural precinct' - but the design, as is, destroys State Significant Heritage of great local community significance, thereby eroding that community's sense of history, place and belonging and the cultural contribution of the existing heritage. It is not necessary to destroy the things that communities cherish in order to build new civic contributions.
* The brief for the Parramatta project may have had the heritage and cultural significance as a fundamental feature, but the brief and the location are clearly flawed because the outcome is loss of heritage and a facility that is not a museum. Something very different could be created that maintains heritage cherished by the community, and adds contemporary facilities.
* The Government has many options to create cultural facilities in Parramatta and so it is unclear why a deal was done to purchase a site that is flood prone and abysmally inadequate for the original intent of 'relocating' the Powerhouse Museum. The additional cost to protect the site from flood will add an exorbitant amount to the cost and put any collections that may be displayed there at risk - along with visitors. No government in the world would, at this point in history of climate change, plan to build a cultural centre on a flood plain. Did you see the site when it was flooded this year?

To conclude - the Government has chosen the wrong site to build a world class museum in Parramatta. It is a flood prone location and heritage should not be demolished to build a museum - a place of learning where history and knowledge are valued. If the new facility is now an arts and events space - then it can be reduced in size to maintain the heritage that the community wishes saved.

We will continue to advocate for Parramatta heritage to be saved and for Western Sydney to get a cultural institution that reflects local stories and community aspirations.

Yours sincerely



8 July 2020

Alister Sharp PhD

President Hunters Hill Trust