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(Sydney Morning Herald)

Powerhouse proposal a monumental folly

I served for a decade on the board of trustees for the Powerhouse Museum from 1988. Over that period, Trevor Kennedy and I helped raise millions for the new museum, specifically to enrich an already irreplaceable, if somewhat eclectic, collection of 400,000 objects.

Imagine then, how dispiriting it has been to watch the gradual stripping of funds from the Powerhouse culminating in the absurd and profligate proposal to relocate this historic institution in western Sydney ("Powerhouse move could cost up to \$1 billion", September 6).

Can de-accession of holdings and donations be the next move in the interests of "efficiency dividends", whatever that phrase may mean.

In the torrent of weasel words spewed out by government to justify this folly, one finds scant mention of the word "collections" nor of the cultural and tourism value of restoring the Powerhouse to its rightful place in the cultural heart and affections of Sydney.

It's difficult to view the proposed move to Parramatta as anything other than yet another trophy disposal of a taxpayer-funded public asset to developers.

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The NSW government's proposal to relocate the Powerhouse Museum is a bit like a proposal to move the British Museum from central London to Watford. Except for one thing. That would never happen in England. If this travesty is allowed to happen here, then it is for the developers who want the site for some appalling multi-storey block of units to stump up the billion-dollar cost of the relocation. Not the NSW tax-payers as outlined by this Baird government.

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