

Secret 2014 report warned NSW government the Powerhouse Museum needed a major overhaul

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State Political Editor, Exclusive, The Daily Telegraph

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A SECRET report warned the government the Powerhouse Museum was riddled with problems including water leaks, mould, compliance issues and an inability to secure “blockbuster” exhibitions that meant its core functions would be “compromised” without a major overhaul.

The Daily Telegraph can reveal that it was this explosive report — outlining the full list of defects at the Ultimo facility and the cost of associated repairs — that informed the government’s decision to move the museum to a new site at Parramatta.



The secret report found a littyany of problems with the Ultimo building. The report was commissioned in 2014 by the Museum of Arts and Applied Sciences Trust, finding that a renewal of the Ultimo site would have cost \$350.4 million at the time, an assessment undertaken in line with NSW Treasury guidelines.

Sources say the government now believes that the estimated cost of refurbishing the current Powerhouse has risen to more than \$500 million.

An excerpt of the report sighted by The Daily Telegraph is scathing in its assessment of the shortcomings of the inner-city museum, describing the Powerhouse facilities as “substandard”.

“Without fundamental change, the ability of the Museum to carry out its core functions will continue to be compromised,” it says.



The heritage and Wran buildings do not meet current building codes. Picture: Dylan Robinson

The Daily Telegraph has been advised there have been no significant renovations to address the issues cited in the 2014 report.

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The excerpts note an earlier stocktake had found mould on 200 items in the collection and that “ongoing water leaks” had been logged in both the heritage and Wran buildings, which also do not meet current building codes.



The report also identified security risks at the museum. Picture: Jeremy Piper

“Existing infrastructure is reaching the end of its useful life and will need urgent - replacement in the short to medium term,” the report says, noting the main roof is “corroding”.

It finds gallery spaces are “highly compromised” by “structural pillars and beams” making the presentation of oversized objects “not possible” in many spaces and “highly compromised in others”, also noting “noise sharing issues”.



Leaks and mould were found in the gallery spaces.

The report also identifies public safety and security risks at the Powerhouse, noting that public access through the museum's operational thoroughfares is high.

It is critical of substandard education facilities, saying the museum could not fulfil its requirement to provide a comprehensive education program in support of the state curriculum due to a "lack of facilities such as teaching environments and modern technologies".

Substandard facilities also limited the Powerhouse's ability to secure international loans and "blockbuster" exhibitions, it says.



The Powerhouse Museum from the back. Picture: Dylan Robinson

The report notes the museum received "regular customer complaints" about worn seating, worn carpet and "unacceptable odours from the sewerage system" and repeated building leaks.

There is also "regular and persistent" customer feedback that identifies a "lack of any coherent path of travel through the building".

And, cuttingly: "The original purpose of the museum, its subsequent reconfiguration and age of its existing facilities has resulted in a museum which lacks presence, is uninviting and does not deliver a contemporary cultural experience".

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john1 hour ago

If you a building you maintain it. Let us see the report. Sounds like the stadium agreement again



Karyn1 hour ago

If it is that bad, just knock it down and re-build. It can't be that uninhabitable if the plan is to leave certain exhibits there and keep it open to the public.

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RJ1 hour ago

Just the right report needed to sell it off to developers.

More units now on there way.

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ian2 hours ago

The secret report is no longer a secret

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Ian3 hours ago

Why wouldn't this all have been detailed years ago instead of just saying it was so western Sydney could have its own museum which was a ridiculous reason alone for moving something. Why not just build a new museum in Parramatta and leave this one as it is then the city has more cultural venues, unless there's an inner city land grab it makes no sense.

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RJ1 hour ago

It is a land grab, Gladys just needed a way to justify it.

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Tom3 hours ago

I demand the immediate release of this document along with the business cases. If not, why not?

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Maria8 hours ago

Stadiums ,Powerhouse- both renovations are still cheaper than knock down rebuild

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Kristy8 hours ago

I took the kids there a few weeks ago, it was like a rabbit warren and felt like a real fire risk.

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RJ1 hour ago

A lot of the exhibits haven't changed from when it opened in 88.

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Grant8 hours ago

Here we go again.

More political spin from the Tele !!!

Anyone would think all these buildings, museum's and stadiums were deliberately run into the ground over the years or so they would have you think.

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