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RACISM, elitism and vandalism – politicians come out swinging over the latest Powerhouse Museum development.

The war of the Powerhouse Museum has become heated, with local and state government along with the business chamber trading barbs after a decision to pull bipartisan support was made.

Twitter was the chosen ground for Sydney Business Chamber, western Sydney director David Borger, calling out both sides of government, stating the west is paying for arts they are unable to access.

“Who’s robbing who? Peter (inner Sydney) is accessing 90 per cent of the good stuff and Paul (western Sydney) who lives too far away is paying 50 per cent.”

“Keep the good bits for the white people of global Sydney and throw western Sydney a few crumbs,” he said.

Mr Borger made the comments after Labor pulled its support for the Museum of Applied Science’s (MAAS) move to Parramatta from its current base in Ultimo, and said the government should bring the museum in its entirety to the west.



David Borger @BorgerDavid · Apr 5

Replying to @benji_driver @PhilipThalis and 5 others

Ben you are a good man - nothing personal but mate look at it - who's robbing who? Peter/inner sydney is accessing 90 per cent of the good stuff and Paul/western sydney who lives too far away is paying 50 per cent...PAUL IS SCREWED



Mr Borger’s tweets on April 5 have added fuel to the ongoing debate.

Opposition Leader and Auburn MP Luke Foley made the decision to remove his party’s support for the move late last week, claiming that they expect a “pale imitation” of the original plan. “Chopping the Powerhouse up into small pieces, strewn across Ultimo, Parramatta and Castle Hill, will deliver the worst of all worlds,” he said.

“Labor will not support the dismembering of the Powerhouse Museum. Either move it entirely to western Sydney, or leave it where it is.”

AT WHAT COST?

“Restrained anger”.

Parramatta Lord Mayor Andrew Wilson said the move by Labor to pull support had him in a state of amazement, claiming the flow on from the relocation would put other projects in the firing line.



Parramatta Lord Mayor Andrew Wilson was “amazed” by Labor’s decision. Picture: Joel Carrett

They’re not just killing one project, they’re killing two, they’re killing the entire arts and culture precinct in the city, he said. “The renovation of Riverside was part of the museum move deal, so Riverside Theatre would have to be scrapped.”

Cr Wilson said he had made several attempts to speak with Mr Foley but was unable to arrange a meeting. “I’ve been trying to talk to Luke Foley for months, and with two million people tied up in this investment, to be unable to arrange a meeting is pretty telling,” he said. “He has turned away from the west, which is amazing since he is a man representing Auburn, which is in walking distance of Parramatta.”

A spokesman for Mr Foley called any talk of Mr Foley abandoning the west “laughable”. “Luke Foley remains absolutely committed to delivering for western Sydney on many fronts,” he said. “To say he is turning his back on the region is frankly laughable when so many of Labor’s policies are focused on helping the region grow and its residents thrive.”

ALTERNATIVE SITE

QUESTIONS have been raised about the suitability of the riverside site for the museum, fuelling critics pushing for the relocation of the museum to be scrapped.

The spot has been called a “flood risk”, and too small for the entirety of the Powerhouse site; with the Parramatta spot more than 2000 sqm less than the current Ultimo site. It is estimated to cost up to \$800 million in construction costs and \$200 million to relocate the 240,000 items from Ultimo.

North Parramatta Residents Action Group (NPRAG) president Suzette Meade said they are offering an alternative. “NPRAG have been in conversation with Sydney University’s architecture and planning faculty on alternative master plans for Cumberland hospital grounds in North Parramatta for a few years,” she said. “It’s very exciting now we have post grad students working on plans that include a campus, cultural and community uses.”

Greens MP David Shoebridge said Fleet St at North Parramatta was one of the area’s extraordinary heritage precincts, alluding to the fact it should be capitalised on. “(A museum) would be a light bulb in the middle of these heritage precincts. It would be a huge welcome,” he said.

BEST FOR THE WEST



The site for the museum may overlook Parramatta River. Picture: Jonathan Ng

A PUSH by the Parramatta Council to keep the relocation locked in has been doubled by the economic value that was forecast. The council said Parramatta is at risk of losing \$803 million in economic activity if the axe falls on plans to move the museum to the former David Jones car park. Lot B also known as the David Jones car park was marked as the site in 2016, but has since been labelled a “flood risk”.

“I don’t want to think of the losing scenario,” Cr Wilson said. “We are still fighting a battle for the museum that we can win.” Cr Wilson claimed that it was in the best interest of every person in Parramatta for the museum to be moved, a sentiment echoed by Parramatta Liberal councillor Steven Issa, who has gone as far as calling the decision an act of

vandalism. “They’re cultural vandals, they’re going to cost western Sydney and Parramatta the only significant cultural contribution that this generation has seen,” Cr Issa said.

The Labor move had the firm support Mr Shoebridge, who is also the deputy chair of the portfolio committee which includes the Powerhouse Museum inquiry.

Inquiry



Chair of the Museum and Galleries Inquiry Robert Borsak from the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party member. The Museum and Galleries Inquiry began in June 2016, with the NSW Legislative Council establishing the inquiry to look into the relocation of the museum in the Upper House. The committee, chaired by Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party member Robert Borsak, has met eight times since it was established. “In some ways, the Powerhouse relocation is the billion dollars that broke the camel’s back.” He said you could tell western Sydney’s story of indigenous, colonial and migrant history for less than \$1.5 billion. “Where are the voices saying ‘it’s the Powerhouse we want’. “I can’t imagine a single person walking down Church St would say ‘move the Powerhouse west’.

Greens MP David Shoebridge said the museum isn’t a priority for “a single person” in Parramatta. “They’re worried about jobs, kids, public transport and the identity of western Sydney.”



Under a Labor government, Mr Foley said that instead of the Powerhouse, Parramatta will have a “multipurpose performance and exhibition centre” and additional funding for the arts. Mr Foley’s office said the priority of the arts centre is unclear and a plan for the centre

would not be able to be released until six months before the state election, when the parliamentary budget is released.

The NSW Government is expected to release the business case into the museum on April 27.