

Statement from the Powerhouse Museum Alliance (PMA) for International Museums Day on the 18th of May

International Museum's Day in 2018 is a day of mourning for the Powerhouse Museum (PHM)

The museum is set to close next year under the Berejiklian government's world first museum demolition plan. The PMA asks the community to visit the Powerhouse before the government flogs the museum to developers.

Dr Lindsay Sharp has checked the numbers on the scant summary of the business case released by the Berejiklian government. None of the government's numbers add up. Dr Sharp, a distinguished museum expert and foundation director of the Powerhouse Museum, slams the secrecy around the plans to 'move' the museum to Parramatta. "There is no justification for withholding the business case from the public. The community of NSW owns the Powerhouse Museum not the Berejiklian government."

"The government's scheme to appropriate the land and facilities of the Powerhouse is scam on NSW taxpayers and their investment in a great museum. The government plans a smaller museum in Parramatta, built on a flood prone site that puts visitors and the collections at risk".

The NSW government is shrinking the PHM from its current 23,000sqm of public and exhibition space, with total floor space of 35,000sqm, to a museum of only 18,000sqm at Parramatta. This is at least 5,000sqm smaller than the Powerhouse at Ultimo.

The replacement storage and workshop facilities at Castle Hill will also be smaller, less accessible and in every way inferior to what the Powerhouse Museum has at Ultimo, with world's best practice storage, conservation, library and workshops all on the one site. The government is shrinking the museum's storage at Castle Hill to just 5,000sqm of additional space, down from the 8,000sqm of storage, conservation and workshops in the Harwood building at Ultimo.

The Benefit Cost Ratio for the museum move is far below accepted government guidelines. The business case has not properly accounted for the value of the PHM's facilities and infrastructure, nor the economic contribution the museum makes to Ultimo and the Darling Harbour. The pointless, costly and risky move of 240,000 objects from Ultimo to Castle Hill is a scandalous waste of money for no public benefit or cultural outcome. The benefits all flow to the developers who get their hands on the museum's site and land at Ultimo.

The mooted 'creative industries presence' to be left at Ultimo, with a so-called fashion and design museum, can only be the ghost what we already have in the PHM. The business plan is clear that there will be no museum facilities left at Ultimo because its numbers depend on maximising development opportunity at Ultimo. There is no masterplan for the PHM site; all the museum's recurrent funding and staff are tied to the new Parramatta museum. This is just museum planning by press release. This is no way to treat to the priceless collections of a great public museum endowed by generations of donors, philanthropists and the people of NSW.

The International Council of Museums has issued a statement on the independence of museums which is pertinent to powerless position of the Trustees of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. MAAS is not the client in its own museum development project. The government only says there will

be 'engagement and collaboration' with MAAS, while the government's CIPMO office will deliver the Parramatta and Castle Hill projects. The government is stripping the PHM's land, assets and facilities from the hands of the trustees, and depriving them of the control and direction of the museum. It continues the process of emasculating the MAAS Trustees from properly executing their responsibilities for the direction, safe custodianship and management of the museum and its collections.

http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Statements/ENG/20180327_Statement_independence_of_museums_Final_EN.pdf

The Powerhouse Museum Alliance has consistently supported the development of an iconic new museum in Parramatta, based on transparent community consultations. There has been no transparency in the government's belated community consultations. It is not clear that the proposed STEM museum is the No.1 cultural priority and preference of the Parramatta community.

The Powerhouse Museum has suffered more than a decade of devastating budget cuts. Staff numbers have shrunk by more than two thirds in the last fifteen years. The government must rebuild the museum's staff numbers, skills, and capacity as the essential foundation for the museum's future, serving the people of NSW as one of their treasured state cultural institutions. The Powerhouse Museum must remain open, and in full control of its historic site at Ultimo, its home since 1893.

The Powerhouse Museum Alliance asks the community to celebrate International Museums Day by visiting the Powerhouse Museum to enjoy this magnificent museum before it is closed and demolished by the Berejiklian government.

Read Dr Sharp's analysis of the scant Final Business Case Summary

<https://powerhousemuseumalliancedotcom.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/analysis-of-summary-ls-16-may.pdf>

Read the NSW government's Final Business Case Summary

<https://powerhousemuseumalliancedotcom.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/powerhouse-business-case-summary.pdf>

Contact the Premier and your state MP to object to the government's reckless museum demolition plan.

For and on behalf of the Powerhouse Museum Alliance <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/>

And the 11,000 signatories to the petition presented to NSW Parliament, 25 Feb 2016; 178 signatories to the PMA's 17 Feb 2016 open letter; authors of the 133 submissions to the Upper House Inquiry who oppose the Powerhouse move – representing 94% of all the submissions about the Powerhouse; countless museum visitors and supporters from across NSW; and followers of the Save the Powerhouse group. <https://www.facebook.com/savethepowerhouse/>

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