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<https://visual.artshub.com.au/news-article/news/museums/gina-fairley/lisa-havilah-to-head-up-maas-and-lead-powerhouse-museum-move-256793>

### **Lisa Havilah to head up MAAS and lead Powerhouse Museum move**

Lisa Havilah is the fourth woman to take the reins of the Powerhouse, and the first to step into a restructured CEO position that will captain the Museum's controversial relocation.



*Incoming CEO of MAAS and Powerhouse Museum, Lisa Havilah photographed in her current post at Carriageworks.*

While the appointment of National Gallery of Australia Director Nick Mitzewich was decried the “worst kept secret” in the sector this year, breaking news that Carriageworks Director, Lisa Havilah has been appointed to head up the Powerhouse Museum, was a cracking surprise this morning.

The [Sydney Morning Herald](#) broke the news, reporting that Havilah views the appointment as a ‘massive opportunity’ to bring the museum's world-renowned collection to a much wider audience. ‘I have a million ideas,’ she told Fairfax Media.

Havilah has been appointed to oversee the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS) – a portfolio position that includes the Sydney Observatory, Museum Discovery Centre and the Powerhouse Museum. The role will also oversee the design, construction and re-engagement of the collection in the new \$1.17 billion Powerhouse Museum in Parramatta.

Havilah told ArtsHub: ‘I am honoured to be appointed to this role at such a transformative time for the Museum and at the same time very proud of the extraordinary things that have been achieved with the Carriageworks Board and staff.’

NSW Minister for the Arts Don Harwin said of her appointment: ‘I’m thrilled to welcome Lisa to this crucial role. There is no doubt her wealth of experience puts her in a class of her own. MAAS’s future, in particular the move of the Powerhouse Museum requires expert governance – I have total confidence Lisa is the person for the job.’

In April this year, Minister Harwin confirmed the position would be restructured into a CEO role with the Powerhouse’s move to Parramatta.

The position has laid vacant since Dolla Merrillees resigned from MAAS in July this year, a position which she had held since April 2016.

**Read: Powerhouse Museum Director resigns**

Havilah has garnered a reputation for turning multi-platform organisations into dynamic financial and publicly engaged successes. She will take up the position 7 January 2019, and is the fourth consecutive female director to take the position after Dolla Merrellees, Rose Hiscock and Dawn Casey.

Today's announcement comes as the international design competition for the new Powerhouse Museum prepares to launch in early December. The winning design will be announced by the NSW Government in late 2019, with an expected move to the new site in 2023.



*Concept sketch for new Powerhouse Museum in Parramatta; supplied*

**WHO IS LISA HAVILAH, AND WHAT WILL HER PARRAMATTA STAMP LOOK LIKE?**

Lisa Havilah comes to MAAS after eight years as at Carriageworks (Feb 2011- Dec 2018). Prior to that she was Director of Campbelltown Arts Centre (CAC) for six years (2005-2011). In both she stepped into a new building and a new operating model.

It was at CAC where she pioneered the development of an innovative multidisciplinary contemporary arts program that engaged the diverse communities of Western Sydney, one that she went on to grow to extraordinary lengths at Carriageworks, garnering her a reputation for driving young and new audiences, and for her capacity to connect and engage local communities.

Her beginnings, however, were in Wollongong where she ran the independent Project Art Space with curator / husband Glenn Barclay in the early 1990s, a community like Campbelltown that is culturally diverse – and at that time – economically tough.

Carriageworks has become the fastest-growing cultural precinct in Australia, SHM reporting that visitation numbers had grown from 110,000 in 2010 to 1.32 million in 2017.

In a paper she delivered: *The next generation of the cultural institution* for Currency House Creativity and Business Breakfast Series (May 2016), Havilah made the point that 'survival should never be the aim'.

**Read: Survival should never be the aim**

Havilah said at the time: '[Carriageworks] was born like all cultural institutions through valiant battles, through triumph and failure ... Carriageworks is a step forward from the great sandstone institutions that have come before us. We are red brick, more suburban than civic – an entrepreneurial hybrid, made for generations of workers for us to continue to work.'

She continued on to say that ‘cultural institutions should be radical and participatory. They should lie in the heart of their communities, providing moments of great joy and wonder; they should provide pathways, lead social change and create and deliver on our individual and collective ambition.’

Her vision will be a boon for the Powerhouse Museum’s relocation.

Part of that entrepreneurial swell that sits at the heart of Havilah’s working modus operandi, is through commercial partnerships. Carriageworks commits about 80-90% of its budget to the commissioning new work for its program, and self-entrepreneurs about 75% of its turnover through commercial partnerships, Havilah told ArtsHub in a June interview.

**Read: [Booking for sustainability – building a relationship with a venue](#)**

She believes that building long-term relationships with artists, and ensuring they have a purpose, is key to the sustainability of an institution. ‘What we try to do [at Carriageworks] in terms of those relationships is to ensure that they have a purpose.’

It is a philosophy that Havilah is sure to bring to Western Sydney.

## **NAVIGATING THE ROUNDABOUTS OF GOVERNMENT**

Havilah is well versed in working with governments, from the smaller scale local council at CAC to the muscle of a State cultural organisation with Carriageworks. She is well placed to face the quagmire that has surrounded the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum’s move to Parramatta, or should there be a change in government in the coming year, to visit alternative decisions for the site and the move.

For now, the last exhibition will be mounted by the Powerhouse Museum in its current Ultimo location in late 2019, the Museum schedule to close in January 2020.

The move was [confirmed definitively on 28 April](#) by the Premier Gladys Berejiklian and Minister for the Arts, Don Harwin, after near three years of planning, objection and speculation.

Havilah will not only have to oversee the building of the new Museum, but to ensure that it remains relevant over the three-year gap in construction before reopening in 2023.

Additional to Carriageworks and CAC, Havilar was Assistant Director of Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre (1998-2004) and has lectured in Management and Organisation (Master of Fine Arts) at the College of Fine Arts, University of NSW. She sits on the City of Sydney’s Public Art Advisory Panel, Lendlease Arts Advisory Panel – Barangaroo and Barangaroo Arts and Public Program Panel. She is a Non-Executive Director of Underbelly Arts, and an Advisory Committee Member of Firstdraft.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Gina Fairley is ArtsHub’s National Visual Arts Editor. For a decade she worked as a freelance writer and curator across Southeast Asia and was previously the Regional Contributing Editor for Hong Kong based magazines Asian Art News and World Sculpture News. Prior to writing she worked as an arts manager in America and Australia for 14 years. She is based in Mittagong, regional NSW, and you can follow her on Twitter [@ginafairley](#) and Instagram at [fairleygina](#).