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By [Linda Morris](#)

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Powerhouse planning bill hits \$18m

EXCLUSIVE

Linda Morris

The winning design for Parramatta's new Powerhouse Museum is expected to be announced as early as this week as the Berejiklian government seeks to draw a line under bitter protests that have marked its decision to relocate the venerable institution.

The move comes as Create NSW has confirmed almost \$20 million has been spent to date on planning to relocate the museum from its home in inner-Sydney Ultimo to Parramatta.

The international jury met a week ago to choose the winning architects from a shortlist of six, comprising local and international firms. The final decision has been kept under wraps, with

the government yet to deny claims that the museum's new riverside home will come at the expense of the heritage-listed 1870s Italianate villa and former maternity hospital, Willow Grove.

The government hopes the museum design will capture the public imagination. Shortlisted architects were briefed to provide ambitious concepts including options for retaining or excluding the heritage buildings, a museum unencumbered by multi-storey commercial towers, a minimum exhibition space of 15,000 square metres and opportunities to revitalise the riverside for public enjoyment.

But protesters have vowed to highlight the spending at a time of drought and bushfire crisis and tiny funding to NSW's 300 volunteer museums.

"They're splurging \$1.5 billion to shrink the Powerhouse Museum and move it 23 kilometres west to a

flood-prone riverbank, building a smaller, less accessible museum with demonstrably inferior facilities to what the Powerhouse already owns at Ultimo," museum and heritage consultant Kylie Winkworth said.

"So let's talk cultural equity, Premier. What about the bush? What about helping regional communities in the drought?"

The government has put the "net cost" of the move at \$645 million, once revenues are taken into account. According to the first business case summary,

the costs of land purchase and moving operations, including wages, is estimated at \$1.179 billion.

Labor's Walt Secord said two galleries in regional NSW could have been built for consultants' fees alone, which he estimated at almost \$36 million.

"In these tough and uncertain economic times with increasing unemployment, the drought, stagnant wages and a retail slump, we cannot afford more infrastructure cost-blow outs like the Powerhouse Museum move," he said.

Create NSW disputed these figures. It said: "The NSW Government has spent \$18 million on the museum's relocation to Parramatta, including the \$10 million allocated for the project over two years (2015-16 and 2016-17) and \$8 million to June 30, 2019."



The Powerhouse Museum has been in Ultimo for three decades. Photo: Louise Kennerley

On-line (with extra information at the end) as:

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Powerhouse planning bill hits \$18m as new design to be unveiled

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The winning design for Parramatta's new Powerhouse Museum is expected to be announced as early as this week as the Berejiklian government seeks to draw a line under bitter protests that have marked its decision to relocate the venerable institution from its home in inner-city Sydney. The move comes as Create NSW confirmed almost \$20 million has been spent planning to relocate the Powerhouse Museum from its home in inner-Sydney Ultimo to Parramatta to date.

[Photo: First conceptual drawing of the new Powerhouse Museum at Parramatta.]

The international jury met one week ago to select the winning architects from a shortlist of six, comprising local and international firms.

The final decision has been kept under wraps with the government yet to deny claims that the museum's new riverside home will come at the expense of the state heritage-listed 1870s-built Italianate villa and former maternity hospital, Willow Grove.

The government hopes the museum design will capture the public imagination, with shortlisted architects briefed to provide ambitious concepts that included options for retention or exclusion of the heritage buildings, a museum unencumbered by multi-storey commercial towers, a minimum exhibition space of 15,000 square metres and opportunities to revitalise the riverside for public enjoyment.

[Photo: Member for Parramatta, Geoff Lee, takes a selfie with Premier Gladys Berejiklian after confirming the museum's new Parramatta home. CREDIT:COLE BENNETTS]

[https://static.ffx.io/images/\\$zoom_0.311%2C\\$multiply_0.9669%2C\\$ratio_1.776846%2C\\$width_1059%2C\\$x_225%2C\\$y_95/t_crop_custom/q_86%2Cf_auto/0ad0bc462d0c00975d176bea9a4b24c54453a3d1](https://static.ffx.io/images/$zoom_0.311%2C$multiply_0.9669%2C$ratio_1.776846%2C$width_1059%2C$x_225%2C$y_95/t_crop_custom/q_86%2Cf_auto/0ad0bc462d0c00975d176bea9a4b24c54453a3d1)

But protesters have vowed to continue to draw attention to the spending at a time of drought and bushfire crisis and tiny funding allocations to the NSW's 300 volunteer museums. "They're splurging \$1.5 billion to shrink the Powerhouse Museum and move it 23 kilometres west to a flood-prone riverbank, building a smaller, less accessible museum with demonstrably inferior facilities to what the Powerhouse already owns at Ultimo," museum and heritage consultant Kylie Winkworth said. "So let's talk cultural equity, Premier, what about the bush, what about helping regional communities in the drought?"

The government has put the "net cost" of the museum move at \$645 million, once revenue sources are taken into account, but, according to the first business case summary, the costs of land purchase and moving operations, including wages, is estimated to be \$1.179 billion.

Labor's Walt Secord said two galleries in regional NSW could have been built for consultants' fees alone, which he estimated to be almost \$36 million. "In these tough and uncertain economic times with increasing unemployment, the drought, stagnant wages and a retail slump, we cannot afford more infrastructure cost-blow outs like the Powerhouse Museum move," Mr Secord said.

Create NSW disputed these figures, saying half of that had been spent to date. "The NSW Government has spent \$18 million on the museum's relocation to Parramatta, including the \$10 million allocated for the project over two years (2015-16 and 2016-17) and \$8 million to June 30, 2019. Cumulatively this spend has covered costs associated with the Parramatta Business Case, the running of the International Design Competition and relocation logistics."

In its 2018-19 annual report, the Department of Planning put expenses of developing the new Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences museum on the Parramatta Riverside at \$11.3 million. Expenses incurred at Ultimo has been estimated at \$2.5 million, about half of the \$5 million set aside for this work.

A revised business case is due to be presented to Cabinet in 2020 for a creative industries precinct at Ultimo when the site is to be vacated by the Powerhouse Museum in 2021. This development is likely to include a lyric theatre, a fashion and design museum run by the Powerhouse, and multi-storey commercial/and or residential development.

A further \$4 million was been spent by the museum itself on digitising and relocating the 500,000-plus collection to Castle Hill Discovery Centre, part of an overall budget of \$60 million allocated to take the collection to upgraded facilities at Castle Hill Discovery Centre but not inclusive of the costs to move the museum's very large objects including the Locomotive No 1.