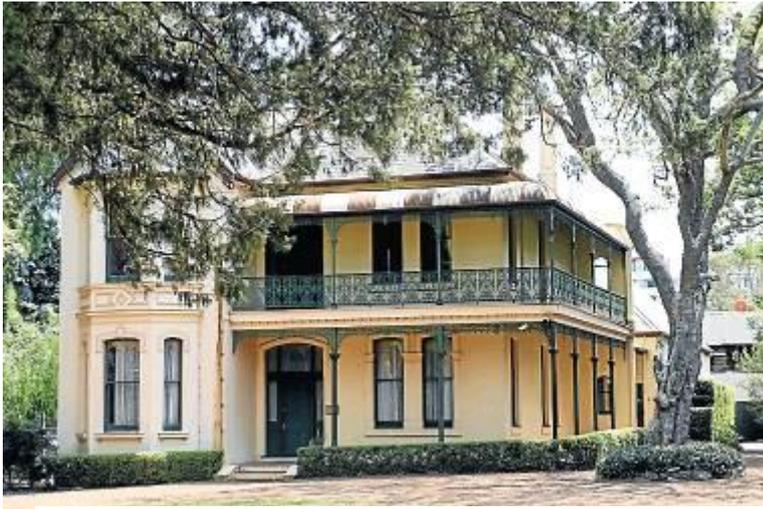


[https://www.smh.com.au/culture/art-and-design/new-powerhouse-museum-designation-steamrolls-community-objections-20200206-53y9s.html?fbclid=IwAR2dpo6TtYLHogPYQBMaU9a2WL6qM\\_UImPieM9giyqrBDkEou6ZMeXI3m1g](https://www.smh.com.au/culture/art-and-design/new-powerhouse-museum-designation-steamrolls-community-objections-20200206-53y9s.html?fbclid=IwAR2dpo6TtYLHogPYQBMaU9a2WL6qM_UImPieM9giyqrBDkEou6ZMeXI3m1g)

# Museum billing 'will allow steamrolling of objections'

30 January, *Sydney Morning Herald*,  
Linda Morris



Heritage-listed Willow Grove is on the demolition list; right: the Powerhouse at Parramatta features a towering trellis-like structure.

The new Powerhouse Museum at Parramatta has been declared a state-significant project in what opponents say gives the Berejiklian government license to override community or council objections to bulldozing of historic buildings on site.

Lisa Havilah, the museum's chief executive officer, also confirmed there would no traditional planetarium in the new museum. Instead, a largescale contemporary, immersive screen space would present science and astronomy programs.

"We are trying to do something even more dynamic than a traditional planetarium," she said. "We are trying to create a space for the future that is flexible, immersive and will continue to present great frontend technology programs for young people."

The designation of state significance bypasses Parramatta Council's development controls and comes as Labor steps up opposition to the billion-dollar project in the wake of the state's "black summer", proposing the taxpayers' contribution of \$645 million be diverted to bushfire recovery.

Architectural firms Moreau Kusunoki and Genton were named winners of the international design competition for the museum's future home beside the Parramatta River in Sydney's west. They designed a towering trellis-like structure that would provide open presentation spaces to support exhibitions, live music, and cultural events and festivals, as well as 60 residential units, cafes, and shops.

Infrastructure NSW deemed the project to be of state significance in a letter dated January 13 requesting the Department of Planning start assessment.

Its application specifies demolition of the existing fourlevel Riverbank car park, Willow Grove and St George's Terrace.

Built in the 1870s, Willow Grove is an example of a Victorian Italianate two-storey villa and once served as a maternity hospital. Along with St George's Terrace, it is a locally listed heritage item.

Opposition spokesman for the arts and treasury, Walt Secord, predicted the views of the local council, locals and community groups would be subverted by the development process as they were for WestConnex when, he said, the views of the community had been "steamrolled".

"Because the Berejiklian government does not have the community on board, it will ram the Powerhouse Museum through the approvals process," the shadow treasurer said.

"The Powerhouse Museum is a massive expenditure at a time when the economy is facing tough conditions – the drop in tourism due to the coronavirus, infrastructure cost blow-outs, the recent bushfires and the devastating drought."

Museum consultant Kylie Winkworth said planning for the Parramatta facility had been secretive, compared to Museum of London's open process of community involvement when it proposed shifting to the abandoned Smithfield market.

In NSW, the public had had no say in the site selection assessment and on the museum's themes and content, she said. The public had yet to see the shortlisted competition designs, let alone voice a preference.

Ms Havilah, however, said the community would be actively involved throughout the planning process and the museum's development and programming: "We look forward to sharing finalist designs with the public in the near future."

In forging ahead, Infrastructure NSW said the new museum project exhibited design excellence and established a new iconic public building for the Parramatta CBD that would anchor arts and culture in western Sydney.

Ms Winkworth said the project was not so much a museum for the people but a statement of architecture, with the museum's collection deemed unimportant.

"It is much cheaper to deliver with empty spaces than to develop an actual museum with proper exhibitions," she said.