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# Rival Parramatta Powerhouse Museum Designs remain under wraps

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The peak body of architects has called for the release of all shortlisted design plans for the Parramatta Powerhouse Museum, saying it would be in the interests of public and professional transparency.

The organiser of the taxpayer-funded International Design Competition, Malcolm Reading, has also supported the exhibition of the shortlisted plans to demonstrate the relative merits of the winning design and protect the integrity of the competition process.

The runners up in the competition remain under wraps almost 10 weeks after the International Design Competition jury judged that the the standout design for the riverfront site came from the partnership of French architecture practice Moreau Kusunoki and Melbourne-based practice Genton.

[An artist's impression of the interior of the Moreau Kusunoki and Genton's latticed structural steel building for the new Powerhouse Museum in Parramatta.]

Mr Reading said it is customary for the designs of all architect teams to be displayed as part of an online gallery at the same time as the winning design is announced. This happened with newly designed landmarks such as [Adelaide Contemporary](#), [Houston Endowment Headquarters](#) and [University College Dublin](#).

“All our open international design competitions usually feature an exhibition – this is often but not always physical, and always digital via the competition web site,” Mr Reading said.

Asked if he had made representations to the NSW government to that effect, Mr Reading declined to comment. "This information is privileged under our contract," he said. "You would have to ask them."

[NSW president of the Australian Institute of Architects, Kathlyn Loseby, says public transparency is essential. *CREDIT:AAP*]

A spokesperson for Arts Minister Don Harwin said the government looked forward to sharing the shortlisted designs with the public "in the near future".

Moreau Kusunoki and Genton's latticed structural steel building was judged by the seven-member strong jury to be a delicate and elegant design that would create a landmark cultural destination. The jury's decision was unanimous.

The NSW president of the Australian Institute of Architects, Kathlyn Loseby, said before the institute endorsed the competition process, it was assured each proposal would be exhibited and the institute would be briefed.

It was essential to ensure proper transparency of the taxpayer-funded competition process for the sake of both public and professional confidence, Ms Loseby said. It was preferable that any physical exhibition should take place in Parramatta.

Mr Reading pointed to a page link showing that the government committed to the designs' release by the end of 2019.

The new Parramatta Powerhouse Museum design requires the demolition of historic Willow Grove and St George's Terrace, despite the NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian's assurances she would try to preserve local heritage.

At least two other short-listed designs retained one heritage building, but how the six architecture teams resolved heritage issues and arrived at their concepts on the constrained flood-prone site remains unknown. All teams signed up to confidentiality clauses as part of competition terms.

The chair of the jury, business owner Naomi Milgrom, said in a statement that thorough consideration had been given to the heritage aspects of the project throughout the selection process.

"I respect there are strong views in the community about the heritage aspects of the site, but there was no doubt among our panel of experts that this is the very best museum outcome for the communities of NSW and I am excited to see the project progress," Ms Milgrom said.

Moreau Kusunoki and Genton said they had decided to prioritise the connection between the city and the river to allow the new museum to be “most welcoming and achieve its full potential”. The new building would pay respect to the site’s multiple histories, the partners said.

“We deeply value the heritage of Parramatta as a gathering place across time, and through our landscape design we will respectfully preserve the memory and conscience of the past while looking to the future.”

In Parliament, Mr Harwin pointed out that Parramatta City Council's city architect, Kim Crestani, was on the jury that selected the winning design.