

<https://www.smh.com.au/culture/art-and-design/calls-to-scrap-new-powerhouse-museum-after-arts-minister-resigns-20200411-p54j04.html>

Calls to scrap new Powerhouse Museum after Arts Minister resigns

Sydney Morning Herald

By [Linda Morris](#)

April 12, 2020 — 12.05am

The Berejiklian government has been urged to abandon the new Parramatta Powerhouse Museum following the departure of the project's leading advocate, the former Arts Minister Don Harwin.

Opponents doubled down on their criticism of the \$1 billion relocation project with the arts sector calling on the NSW Premier to instead give urgent priority to immediate heart-starter measures to revive the state's cultural life.

[An artist's impression of the design for the new Powerhouse Museum in Parramatta].

NSW is alone among Australia's major states yet to have specifically redressed the financial impacts to theatres, museums, galleries and arts workers during the pandemic. A decision by NSW Treasury is thought to be imminent.

From inside State Cabinet and his position on the Expenditure Review Committee, Mr Harwin had been a passionate champion of the arts, according to Museum of Contemporary Arts chairman Simon Mordant. "He set up artform boards made up of people who had deep experience in relevant sectors and they advised government on policy and grant making and he came to everything," Mr Mordant said. "He was highly visible and for the first time the state and federal ministers of arts were both from NSW and were actively engaged in the arts in government and across the bureaucracy."

The minister's availability was particularly important when culture was vital to the recovery of the state and when NSW faced unprecedented social issues and mental health issues, Mr Mordant said. Mr Harwin pushed through Sydney Modern, the expansion of the Sydney Opera House and redevelopment of Walsh Bay. More controversial was his plans to relocate the Powerhouse Museum from Ultimo to Parramatta.

Greens MP and deputy chair of the Upper House Inquiry into the Powerhouse project, David Shoebridge, said it was now time for the government to "admit its mistake, step back, and save this iconic institution".

Infrastructure NSW has badged the Parramatta Powerhouse part of its \$97 billion COVID-19 recovery program and is pushing ahead with online public consultation amid the pandemic. A total of 20,000 leaflets have been dropped to residents and businesses and public meetings and forums replaced by online surveys and webinars hosted by the Powerhouse's chief executive officer Lisa Havilah. An Environmental Impact Statement and early market soundings are expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Mr Shoebridge said the Powerhouse project was neither shovel ready or worthy. "From day one this was a vanity project for a government that has been all too willing to spend billions of dollars on controversial projects without cost controls or clear goals. With the minister gone this project must follow," Mr Shoebridge said. "In the middle of a terrible pandemic this is not the time to flush \$1.5 billion down the river on a controversial project with so few public benefits.

Executive director of the National Association of Visual Arts Esther Anatolitis referred to an Australian Bureau of Statistics report that revealed that less than half of Australia's arts and recreation businesses currently remain trading. "With most artists, arts workers, and organisations unable to benefit from federal government income support measures announced to date, the state has a critical responsibility to prevent the collapse of the NSW arts industry," she said. "It's a tough ask for a newcomer to the role, but at the same time, it's an opportunity of monumental scale to think differently about the galleries, museums, venues, festivals and experiences for which NSW is renowned all over the world."

Ms Anatolitis asked if it still made sense to "relocate a world heritage 26-ton locomotive plus the rest of the museum's important collection, when we could instead imagine a cultural institution that's truly of and by western Sydney?". "COVID-19 austerity aside, the new minister will need to assess this decision carefully," she said.

6 NEWS

SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 2020
THE SUN-HERALD

Harwin's allies blame 'factional hit' for downfall

Lisa Vincent, Jordan Baker

Liberal insiders say former state government minister Don Harwin was betrayed by his own party colleagues in a factional hit, triggered by NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian.

In contrast to other government sources suggested, NSW Liberal MP Matt Kean said on Friday that Mr Harwin had requested to be Pearl Beach homes during the COVID-19 lockdown. Mr Harwin had requested to be Pearl Beach homes during the COVID-19 lockdown, which is in her electorate, until the story broke on Thursday.

NSW Police would not clarify yesterday on what grounds Mr Harwin had been asked to leave his home before the public health orders were implemented on March 23 and he "would not" be had not breached them.

Assistant NSW Police Commissioner Karen Webb said on Saturday: "All I can say is there was a complaint received by police, an investigation conducted and an infringement issued."

Ms Berejiklian said she had total confidence in the police, saying: "I back the police completely."

She said she would assume his portfolio responsibilities.

As a blame game gripped NSW Liberals yesterday, Ms Teach was forced to defend claims she doorknocked a Pearl Beach house, and stopped to photograph the identification of a party on the street.

Ms Teach was used as a scapegoat from a complaint on Friday about Mr Harwin's decision to doorknock a family home, asking a father and daughter living there to show her their driver's license.

The letter from a complaint, seen by The Sun-Herald, was sent on to state submission. It said: "I am sure our state number is remaining the streets of this village."

Ms Teach said the fact the complaint was made to Ms Wick's office made it seem "very politically motivated". Ms Teach confirmed she doorknocked the house on Thursday morning and also asked a few people on the street if they were locals.

"The community was saying, 'Lies, go and check that address'. The community is so concerned," she said.

She then stopped some passers by further down the street to ask why they were in Pearl Beach. "I said, 'Are you local, I'm the local member of parliament, I'm just checking on the health orders,'" she said.

Ms Teach said her job as a local member was to do "everything I can to ensure the safety of my community."

Other faction, and some may have seen his resignation as an opportunity to create a vacancy.

By midday on Friday, when the story broke, the NSW Liberal Party members were lobbying for a vote to move on Harwin, with one minister "in the end he lost everything", those in his own faction.

Some were also concerned by Harwin's decision to allow former Liberal candidate Geoffrey Waters to locate at his home after he returned from London, where the coronavirus pandemic was taking hold.

"He could have contaminated all of us," one minister said, claiming Harwin had attended at least one cabinet meeting to pass on details that period.

Another senior government source said Ms Waters' presence at the Pearl Beach home was a key reason why "this had to be the end of the road".

"When people return from overseas they are supposed to self-isolate, not isolate with someone else," they said.

Also causing consternation among Liberals is the fact the reasons for Harwin's loss remain unclear. "There are still serious questions around whether the fine will stick up," an MP said.

"This seriously undermines the rules because it seems they are being broken."

Yesterday one of Harwin's allies said he was contemplating leaving politics altogether. "He is definitely thinking about the next chapter," the MP said.

Don Harwin announcing the winning bid for the new Powerhouse museum design. Photo: Nick Mool

Pearl Beach locals want to know who doorknocked

From Page 1

to get Teach in the frame, pointing towards complaints that she had been asking people in the area for proof of their address and assuming she was "knocking" about her trip.

But Teach said she had nothing to do with Harwin's decision. She said she was with Harwin at the time of the doorknocking and was there for the first time in three weeks the next day and did not know from whom she said she kept the address.

Another theory is that it was an internal job. Until Thursday, when his picture was plastered across the front page of News Corp's Daily Telegraph, only close observers of NSW politics were likely to have heard of Harwin.

But within the NSW Liberal Party, a powerbroker: He is a senior figure in the dominant moderate faction, a key number man and close friend to Premier Gladys Berejiklian.

"There are a lot of people who owe their careers to Don," one MP said.

Many remain loyal to him. "There are few people in Parliament who have done more for the Liberal Party than Don Harwin," Energy Minister Matt Kean said. "A large part of our success is due to his strategic political skills."

One minister said: "I think it's a tragedy that on Good Friday another innocent man was crucified."

But Mr Harwin is less beloved in

other faction, and some may have seen his resignation as an opportunity to create a vacancy.

By midday on Friday, when the story broke, the NSW Liberal Party members were lobbying for a vote to move on Harwin, with one minister "in the end he lost everything", those in his own faction.

Some were also concerned by Harwin's decision to allow former Liberal candidate Geoffrey Waters to locate at his home after he returned from London, where the coronavirus pandemic was taking hold.

"He could have contaminated all of us," one minister said, claiming Harwin had attended at least one cabinet meeting to pass on details that period.

Another senior government source said Ms Waters' presence at the Pearl Beach home was a key reason why "this had to be the end of the road".

"When people return from overseas they are supposed to self-isolate, not isolate with someone else," they said.

Also causing consternation among Liberals is the fact the reasons for Harwin's loss remain unclear. "There are still serious questions around whether the fine will stick up," an MP said.

"This seriously undermines the rules because it seems they are being broken."

Yesterday one of Harwin's allies said he was contemplating leaving politics altogether. "He is definitely thinking about the next chapter," the MP said.

Harwin scandal exposed Liberal Party rifts

Page 33

Calls to scrap Powerhouse move after minister resigns

Linda Morris

The state government is under increasing pressure to abandon the Powerhouse Museum after the resignation of the project's leading advocate, former arts minister Don Harwin.

Opponents doubled down on their criticism of the \$1 billion relocation project, with the arts sector calling on the NSW Premier to instead give urgent priority to immediate health-care responses to reverse the state's cultural life.

NSW is alone among Australia's major states yet to have specifically reversed the financial impacts on theatres, museums, galleries and arts workers of the pandemic. A decision by NSW Treasury is expected soon.

From inside state cabinet and his position on the expenditure review committee, Mr Harwin had been a passionate champion of the arts, said Minister Simon Mendonca.

"His set-up and boards made up of people who had deep experience in relevant sectors and they advised government on policy and grant making and he came to everything," Mr Mendonca said.

He was highly visible and for the first time the state and federal minister of arts were both from NSW and were active and across the bureaucracy.

Mr Harwin pushed through Sydney Opera House and the redevelopment of White Bay, along with the controversial Powerhouse move.

Green MP and deputy chair of the upper house inquiry into the Powerhouse project, David Shoebridge, said it was now time for the government to "take a step back, and save this iconic institution".

Infrastructure NSW has lodged the Powerhouse part of its \$971 million COVID-19 recovery program and is pushing ahead with online public consultation amid the pandemic.

Public meetings and forums have been replaced by online surveys and webinars hosted by the Powerhouse's chief executive, Lisa Harbath.

Even before Mr Harwin's resignation, Labor had used the pandemic as justification for "killing" the Powerhouse. It is a monumental "trip-ping roost" of waste costing at least \$1 billion," said the opposition's spokesman, Matt Scott.

Mr Shoebridge said the Powerhouse project was neither shovel-ready nor worthy. "With the minister gone this project must follow," he said.

National Association of Visual Arts executive director Esther Anatolitis referred to an Australian Bureau of Statistics report that revealed less than half of Australia's arts and recreation businesses currently remain trading at present.

"With most artists, arts workers and organisations unable to benefit from federal government income support measures announced to date, the state has a critical responsibility to prevent the collapse of the NSW arts industry," she said.

With Andrew Taylor