

To whom it may concern

I write as former principal curator at the Powerhouse Museum, headquarters of the Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences (MAAS), with nearly 30 years experience on staff (1985-2013) and an extensive knowledge of the Museum's outstanding collection.

I was deeply shocked to see this long-established, complex and beloved Museum described incorrectly and dismissively in the Heritage Council's recent notice of intention to list as the 'Ultimo Tramways Power House'. Surely the Heritage Council of NSW, of all organisations, is aware that this term is faulty and that the notice ignores the highly significant history of the building as a museum and its integration into Sydney's social and cultural life subsequent to its original power-producing function?

It beggars belief that while the notice of intention to list describes the early bones of the building as potentially of State significance, no mention is made of the Sulman Award-winning transformation of that building in the 1980s into a state-of-the-art museum. That transformation deeply respected the original building but, with skill and sensitivity, created a unique exhibition context and experience and a complete and functioning modern museum. The awe-inspiring structure of the Ultimo Power House was renewed and a new and instantly popular museum created that attracted 800,000 visitors in the first three months and 20,000,000 by today.

Significantly, this architectural and functional transformation took its place within the longer timeframe of the Museum's life, which began with the Sydney International Exhibition in 1880. The building proposed for listing ceased to be a separate entity in the 1980s as it was absorbed indivisibly into what is now the 140 years of the MAAS timeline.

Surely, surely the Heritage Council of NSW is fully aware of the Museum's long history and its vital educational, social and cultural role not only in Sydney and New South Wales, but also nationally and internationally. Surely, as heritage experts, they must know and understand that this Museum is inextricably linked to place and to its community, and that the building that houses it is inseparable from its history, its function and its extraordinary collection.

Christina Sumner OAM

Christina Sumner
82 Bellevue Street
Camberay NSW 2062
+61 2 9929 9391
0438 700 987
christinamms@icloud.com