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Heritage Council of NSW

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To Whom This May Concern,

RE: objection to the listing proposal for the Powerhouse Museum from the Heritage Council of NSW

Dear Heritage Council,

I write in my capacity as an internationally and nationally recognised scholar of industrial and transport heritage (relevant publications listed below under references) and as a scholar who has been closely associated with the Power House Museum in the past, having (i) contributed a chapter on the Powerhouse museum and technical education to the book, *Yesterday's Tomorrows: 125 Years of the Powerhouse Museum*; (ii) been invited by the American Society for the History of Technology to judge the Powerhouse Museum's *Universal Machine: computers and connections* Exhibition for the Smithsonian Institute's Dibner Award for Excellence in Museum Exhibits in 2000, which resulted in The Powerhouse Museum being awarded the Dibner Prize in August 2000; and (iii) been a member of the Migration Heritage Centre's Cultureworks program Advisory Committee in 2002 to promote links between industrial and migration heritage through the Powerhouse Museum.

I am extremely concerned that your proposed State Significant listing of the 'Ultimo Tramways Powerhouse' buildings in Ultimo, excludes the actual Powerhouse Museum, given that the significance of the Museum was recognised by the Smithsonian, and as critically, neglects the role played by its Migration Heritage Centre exhibitions in the Museum in supporting the State's legislated commitment to multiculturalism as evidence by the Multicultural NSW Act 2000 No 77 and its subsequent amendments. As I have emphasised elsewhere (Taksa, 2019) the neglect of migrant labour at the relatively few sites of industrial heritage that have escaped demolition, conceals the immense contribution of Australia's migrants to our nation's industrial development from the mid-nineteenth century until the closing decades of the twentieth century. The fact that the Migration Heritage Centre not only organised exhibitions on migrants but also knowledge and awareness of their contribution at the Powerhouse Museum, surely attests to its social value and its contribution not only to the State but also the nation.

Certainly, the Cultureworks program launched by the Migration Heritage Centre at the Museum helped to promote knowledge of migrants through its oral history project and exhibition, which resulted in the publication by Inge Reibe and Dianne Knott, *Real Stories: people & cultures at work*, which I edited and published in 2005 as UNSW Monograph and which the Migration Heritage Centre distributed to all public schools in NSW. In so doing, the Powerhouse Museum was continuing its leading role in education and training that can be traced back to its origins as the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, as I outlined in my chapter in the History of the Powerhouse Museum mentioned above.

Accordingly, I argue that the physical proximity and connections between the historic buildings and precincts of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences and the Powerhouse Museum must be maintained through the preservation of the Powerhouse Museum building in its entirety in Ultimo.

As a scholarly expert on industrial, transport and labour heritage, I am also extremely concerned about the threat to the preservation of a critical site for the State's rail transport, shipping and energy enterprises. As Terry Irving (Sydney University) and I showed in the *Labour Heritage Register of NSW* (funded by the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, NSW Heritage Assistance Program Grants, 1995-1997), published as a Monograph in 2002 by the UNSW Industrial Relations Research Centre, the site was central to an immense industrial precinct, linked not only to transport and energy but also warehousing and logistics more broadly, making it pivotal for working class life, employment, training and community, as has been well documented by others in the following publications:

Michael R. Matthew, *Pyrmont & Ultimo: A History*, South wood Press, Sydney, 1982.

Shirley Fitzgerald and Hillary Golder, *Pyrmont & Ultimo: Under Siege*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1994.

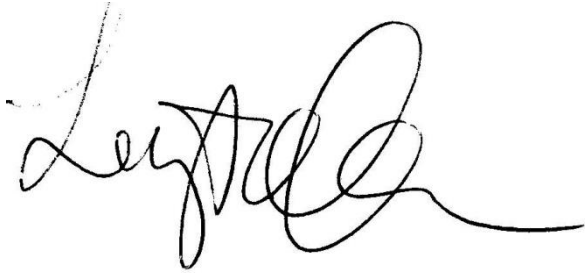
The history and heritage of industry and working life in NSW have been woefully neglected in comparison with other States in Australia and other countries, including Canada, England, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Poland, all the Scandinavian countries, Scotland and the USA, where museums of industry and working life abound and are recognised for their contributions to national and local cultures, community life and the education of future generations. The majority of these recognise the significance of historic connections to place for current and future generations.

I am therefore particularly appalled by the lack of protection proposed for the Museum itself and its world renown machinery collections, including the Case gantry cranes in the engine house, the Goninans of Newcastle gantry crane in the turbine hall and the transport and steam power collections. To ensure alignment with world best practise in industrial heritage museums and management, I would argue these **MUST BE RETAINED IN SITU** as collections of not only State but more importantly national significance!

The nomination on exhibition must, in my view, be rejected. The whole Powerhouse Museum, including the former tram depot, should be listed on the State Heritage Register, along with the museum's outstanding collection of transport and engineering objects.

I look forward to your consideration of both the tangible and intangible heritage of this Museum site and its collections in their entirety in their industrial, economic and social context.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Lucy Taksa, PhD

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