

Dear Heritage Council,

March, 2020

It seems extraordinary to me that your proposed listing of the former Ultimo Tramways Power House does not in any substantial way include the role the place plays now as the Powerhouse Museum. This is a large part of its history, having been saved in 1978 under the then new Heritage legislation for NSW, some of the most far sighted legislation in the world at the time. Over forty years ago this action saved and helped create the great museum space we now have, and preserved a core part of the industrial heritage of NSW and Australia, and a key site in proximity to the hub of NSW rail and port activity, the places where much of the produce and working life of NSW came to and was worked on and transported from. Public infrastructure, sanitation, the introduction and spread of electric power can all be linked strongly to the space and place.

Your own heritage criteria as listed here

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/heritagebranch/heritage/listings/criteria.pdf> would seem to support this assessment

The place and its environs links to trade union development and thus the extension of worker's rights and conditions in many areas, including, railways, construction, road transport, warehousing and packaging, shipping, local government sanitation and the like.

The importance of place in preserving, presenting and interpreting our history cannot be understated. Work and life are central to people's history and culture, and the iconic places that much work revolved around are too often dismissed as relics of the past. We care about industrial heritage sites not just as empty buildings but as places where people worked, places connected with skills, trades, unions and machinery. The collections in the Powerhouse are of great interest to working people, especially the transport and engineering collections which are so well displayed in the industrial spaces of the power house.

The buildings close to the museum include old wool stores, government printing offices, hotels, meeting places, education institutions and the Sydney Trades Hall on the other side of Darling Harbour. All these were and are sites of work, leisure, education and discussion. The reason such places were there remain important to our history and culture and they should remain as reminders of what we came from and as places to view and think about where we are and where we are going.

The nomination on exhibition is incomplete and should be rejected. The whole Powerhouse Museum should be listed on the state heritage register, along with the museum's transport and power displays. The listing should recognise the place as a site of working life, and its social values for working people today.

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