

# The Ultimo Tramways Power House, 500 Harris St Ultimo

Notice of Intention to consider listing on the State Heritage Register

Submission by Kylie Winkworth

I write to object to this proposed nomination on behalf of the Powerhouse Museum Alliance (PMA) and as an expert in the assessment of movable heritage and collections. A note about my expertise follows at the end of this submission.

## 1 Introduction

1.1 The advertised nomination is for a fictitious site – the Ultimo Tramways Power House. This is not a recognisable place, either in contemporary life, or as an historic site. It cannot be found by sat nav or Google. The curtilage places an artificial line around a site that is an integral part of the Powerhouse Museum, a far more significant place than the shell of the former Ultimo power house in an imaginary pre c. 1975 form. No photograph could be taken of the nominated site that does not reflect the conservation, restoration and adaptation of the building for the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS), purpose-designed to exhibit the PHM's collection, notably the steam power and transport collections. With remarkable contortions of logic, site chronology, Burra Charter principles and heritage assessment methodology, the nomination and assessment has secretly concluded that this **site is only of local significance and does not meet the threshold for listing on the State Heritage Register.**<sup>1</sup> That being the advice of Heritage NSW's 'Independent Review', it is difficult to understand why the nomination has proceeded to exhibition, after eviscerating the National Trust's original, more robust 2015 nomination. **It is stating the obvious that the Department of Premier and Cabinet has a conflict of interest over the assessment of the Powerhouse Museum site, given it is driving the sale and demolition of the PHM, as does the Minister for the Arts combining the role of Heritage Minister. In our view the Minister's heritage functions should be delegated to another minister.**

1.2 The listing proposal does not protect the Powerhouse Museum (PHM) which is at risk with the NSW Government's plans to sell and demolish the museum and evict its collections from their purpose designed, state of the art facilities. This plan lacks community consent and has been comprehensively rejected by museum experts.<sup>2</sup> The PHM's facilities are not being replaced. The museum is being downsized by more than 75%,<sup>3</sup> and cut adrift from its historic site and context in Ultimo, its home since 1893.

1.3 The nomination does not include the Wran building and galleria, or the Harwood building - the former tram depot, which are indivisible parts of the Powerhouse Museum complex in terms of the site's history and significance, and museum functions.<sup>4</sup>

1.4 The nomination has not identified the rare and significant Case travelling cranes in the engine house, or the Goninans of Newcastle 1929 travelling crane in the turbine hall.

1.5 It does not include the PHM's *in situ* transport and steam power collections which are of outstanding significance. These core collections are central to the conception, adaptation, restoration and design of the former Ultimo power house, and its transformation into the Powerhouse Museum. The contemporary identity of the place as The Powerhouse Museum is

inextricably linked to these collections in the setting of the historic shell of the former power house. The engine house and boiler hall were restored and purpose designed to exhibit these nationally significant collections. These recognisably *in situ* collections in their heritage context are of exceptional significance.

1.6 The restoration, adaptation and design of the engine house and boiler hall was part of the foundation concept for the Powerhouse Museum from 1978, conceived as a uniquely appropriate setting for the museum's power and transport collections. These core exhibitions contextualise and interpret the history of the industrial revolution, and the transformative role of the former power house as the engine of Sydney's transport and industrial history from 1899. The nomination on exhibition has not properly investigated or understood the conservation, restoration and adaptation of these spaces which are functionally and conceptually resonant with, and indivisible from the collections they now exhibit. See 4 below.

1.7 The nomination has ignored, discounted or failed to investigate many aspects of the state significance of the Powerhouse Museum, particularly the social values of the museum for the people of NSW.

## 2 General Comments

2.1 The nomination on exhibition does not recognise the conservation and adaptation of the former Ultimo power station for the Powerhouse Museum. It places an artificial boundary around the brick shell of the former power station, identifying the turbine and boiler halls, the engine house, office building and switch house in their pre c. 1975 state, before the works to conserve and adapt the building for a museum. The nomination for the **Ultimo Tramways Power House** uses a name that has no historic use or contemporary recognition. It is for a place that has no public recognition or life outside its use and identity as the historic core of the Powerhouse Museum. It is a fictitious name with a site boundary that is not grounded in reality. The nomination ignores the prominent public life and use of the place as a museum with *in situ* collections of exceptional significance. The nomination seeks to erase the conservation and adaptation of the former power house as a museum, ignoring forty years of history and the public life of the site as part of the Powerhouse Museum. This is contrary to article 5 of the Burra Charter: *conservation of a place should identify and take into consideration all aspects of cultural and natural significance without **unwarranted emphasis** on any one value at the expense of others;* and article 15.4 *The contribution of all aspects of cultural significance should be respected.....*

2.2 If this nomination is approved, without recognition of the life of the place as the Powerhouse Museum, with its notable *in situ* power and transport collections, and social and cultural values, it will facilitate the demolition of the Powerhouse Museum, the eviction of its significant collections - putting them at risk, the erasure of forty years of history and cultural life, resulting in the gross diminution of the heritage and cultural values of the site, and the irrevocable change in the mission of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.<sup>5</sup> This would be contrary to the purpose and objects of the Heritage Act 1977 and Burra Charter article 15.1 *change is undesirable where it reduces cultural significance.* While the government has suggested there may be other uses for the site as a cultural industries precinct, this would inevitably diminish the significance of the place. **For the last thirty two years the site has been a museum about itself – a former power station which has at its core exhibitions about the**

**transformative role of steam power and transport history, told through the PHM's nationally significant engineering and transport collections.**

2.3 The basic premise of all heritage practice is that significance must be investigated and assessed so that the important values of the place can be conserved, managed and interpreted. The nomination on exhibition has not investigated and assessed the significance of the site. The artificial c.1963 site boundary, and incomplete assessment of just part of the Powerhouse Museum, is based on the acceptance that the government has decided to sell the PHM and demolish the Wran building and galleria and the Harwood building, the former tram depot. The NSW Government's development intentions should not pre-empt or prevent a proper assessment of the significance of the whole Powerhouse Museum site, especially when there is no compelling cultural or financial case for the closure of the Powerhouse Museum and the eviction its collections from their purpose designed settings and state of the art facilities. The PMA asks Heritage NSW and the NSW Heritage Council to consider a new nomination now in preparation with the National Trust for the whole Powerhouse Museum complex and its notable *in situ* collections related to steam technology and transport.

**2.4 The Powerhouse Museum and its collection are not owned by the NSW Government.** The PHM's land, buildings and the museum's collections are vested in the Trustees of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, under the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Act 1945. The Act provides that *the Trustees shall have control and management of all property vested in the Trustees*; 11.1, and that the Trustees are responsible *for the control and management of the museum* 14.1.a. The PHM's donors have gifted their objects and money **to the museum**, via the Trustees, not to the NSW Government. **The NSW Government is not the owner of the Powerhouse Museum.** <sup>6</sup>

2.5 The closure and demolition of the Powerhouse Museum will see the PHM's nationally significant steam power and transport collections evicted from their purpose designed context and installation. They will never be seen together again. The business case papers reveal that the NSW Government has not budgeted for the storage of the museum's large and very large objects.<sup>7</sup> The collection will be broken up. MAAS is approaching volunteer museums and heritage organisations to ask them to take large objects. The CEO has framed this as sharing the collection with regional NSW. In fact it is in fact cost shifting onto volunteer museum and heritage organisations who lack the facilities and resources to care for these nationally significant objects which are currently displayed in a majestic, purpose designed, climate controlled museum.

2.6 The SEARS papers<sup>8</sup> for the Parramatta museum, and the Stage 2 design brief,<sup>9</sup> reveal that the project has prioritised performance and event spaces over design planning for the PHM's large objects. The design brief suggests that the Boulton & Watt could go in a circulation space.<sup>10</sup> The upper levels of the building have only 10m ceiling heights. The Boulton & Watt is 10.25m high. The circulation areas and the ground floor will not have international museum standard environmental controls, and may have uncontrolled temperature and humidity above 4m.<sup>11</sup> Given the riverside location, regular flooding and the requirement for an operable ground floor space, there will be massive spikes in humidity in the building affecting both the ground floor and the P2 space above. The ground floor of the Parramatta museum is at risk of flood. A probable maximum overland flood will wash through the building at 11.3m. While the design brief suggests that all museum objects should be above this level,<sup>12</sup> the CEO has recently

suggested the collection can be displayed on the ground floor, in areas at just the 1:100 year ARI. This risks putting the PHM's nationally significant collection in the way of floodwaters.

2.7 From first concept the Powerhouse Museum was designed around the requirements and locations of the most significant power and transport objects. There has been no such planning for the museum's large objects in the winning design for the Parramatta building. The spaces that may be used for the large objects at Parramatta will put place these objects at risk of flood, in display environments which will not have international museum standard environmental conditions, and in spaces that are too small to allow them to be appreciated. It is unconscionable that such a significant collection is being put at risk.

2.8 The nomination on exhibition notably excludes the Wran building and galleria, and the former tram depot, which together are an integral part of the history of the site and the Powerhouse Museum complex. These are of equal and interdependent significance with the former power station structures. The nomination discounts the conservation and adaptation of the former Ultimo power house, and the inspired design of the galleria and Wran building to create a widely recognised landmark museum. It has not investigated or understood the conservation and adaptation of the former Ultimo power station into the Powerhouse Museum, which was part of a **unified design and museological concept**, a brilliantly appropriate marriage of the heritage power station with the museum's power and transport collections.

2.9 The 1988 Sulman award for Lionel Glendenning's Powerhouse Museum was for the **whole museum**, not just the 1988 Wran building and galleria. The citation notes the *four old power station buildings of varied character are joined by the insertion of stepped floors surmounted by two vaulted halls... The internal arrangement cleverly exploits the fall of the site and the floors of the halls to provide a sequence of overlapping views... The new buildings have a much lighter construction in glass and metal... they succeed in establishing an extra identity and a consistency of character out of their contrast of form and weight. From the main approaches in Ultimo, the new buildings are positive and assert a striking presence in form and colour....* . The jury citation notes the apt use of the heritage spaces for the museum's technology collection, and the importance of the design collaboration between the architecture and the exhibitions. These values should have been recognised in the nomination under criterion c.

### 3 Assessment Criteria

#### **Criterion a: history**

3.1 The PMA endorses the National Trust's assessment and exposition of criterion a: *it is important in the course or pattern of the cultural or natural history of NSW*. In addition, the **Powerhouse Museum is of state significance as the major cultural project marking the 1988 Bicentenary**, a cultural gift to the people of NSW from one generation to the future. The Bicentenary was a significant event in the history of NSW. It was a transformative period in Sydney's history, particularly for urban design and heritage conservation, with the re-making of Darling Harbour as a public event and recreation space, the redevelopment of Circular Quay, upgrades to Macquarie St and conservation works at Sydney Hospital. Of many cultural and heritage projects undertaken to mark the 1988 Bicentenary, the Powerhouse Museum stands out for the scale of its design ambition, the cultural investment in the collections and museum

infrastructure, the popular acclaim and impact of the museum since 1988, and the development of a landmark museum with a distinctive museology and exhibition design. It was and still is the largest museum in Australia with more than 42,000sqm of state of the art exhibition spaces and collections, conservation and research facilities. This criterion applies to both the former power station buildings and to the Powerhouse Museum as a whole.

3.2 Also relevant to criterion a, the Powerhouse Museum is significant at a state level in the course and pattern of the cultural history of NSW as **the first large scale conservation and adaptation of an industrial heritage site in Australia**. It was the first such project undertaken with conscious heritage intent, framed around the retention, adaptation and restoration of the former power house. This conservation process, guided by heritage specialists and archaeologists, included the restoration of the travelling cranes in the engine house and turbine hall, and the restoration of the original roof trusses in the engine house. Notably the design of the galleria and Wran building, and the design of the exhibitions, were framed to reveal and interpret the fabric of the building, including the brickwork interiors and exteriors. As a museum about power, transport and industrial history, the adaptation of the former power house has made the building one the key exhibits, now indivisible from the *in situ* power and transport installations which were purpose designed for the spaces. See 4 below.

#### **Criterion b special associations**

3.3 On criterion b, *the place has strong or special associations with the life or works of a person of importance in NSW's cultural history...* the nomination has missed the strong associations of the Powerhouse Museum with Premier Neville Wran and his deputy and minister for Public Works Jack Ferguson. Together they forged a remarkable political partnership that was influential in the cultural history of NSW. Among their achievements was the landmark 1977 Heritage Act, the conservation of many heritage buildings, and the establishment of the NSW Historic Houses Trust. The 1988 Bicentenary was the impetus for a suite of cultural projects including major extensions for the Art Gallery of NSW and the State Library of NSW. The Powerhouse Museum was undoubtedly Wran and Ferguson's most substantial and ambitious cultural landmark. Working together, both leaders championed the conservation and restoration of the former Ultimo power station, and the transformation of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences into the Powerhouse Museum. It was Wran and Ferguson who had the imagination to see that working people deserved a great museum that represented their history, culture and working life, showcased in a power house that was an engineering landmark, built to power Sydney's tram network and other public infrastructure. As a museum about power, transport, trade and industry, the Powerhouse Museum was a quintessential Labor project. Jack Ferguson, a former bricklayer, had a deep appreciation of heritage brick buildings. As the minister for Public Works he oversaw both the conservation of the Hyde Park Barracks and the adaptation of the former Ultimo power station; both buildings recognised for the quality and scale of their heritage brickwork. The Powerhouse Museum's Wran building is the only public monument named in honour of Neville Wran. As premier and minister for the arts, Neville Wran was a champion of the arts and culture, funding investment in cultural facilities in the city **and** western Sydney, including the Riverside Theatres in Parramatta and Campbelltown Art Gallery. It is especially poignant that the NSW Government now argues that the magnificent Powerhouse Museum must be shuttered and sold in the name of delivering a new cultural institution in Parramatta. Neville Wran would never have considered this as an either/ or proposition.

3.4 Also of note under criterion b is the special association of the Powerhouse Museum with the work of the architect Lionel Glendenning, recognised in the 1988 Sulman award. The design, planning, restoration and development of the Powerhouse Museum was ten years in the making from 1978-88. It is the most substantial and significant architectural and cultural achievement in the architectural work of Lionel Glendenning. The project achieved national and international recognition, reflected in its many awards, and recognised for its design, creative and technical achievements. Lionel Glendenning's Powerhouse Museum, with its seamless marriage of heritage conservation and adaptation, combined with a finely detailed contemporary addition, was the exemplar for many subsequent adaptations of industrial heritage buildings for contemporary cultural purposes, see also criterion c.

3.5 The Powerhouse Museum's design and development also represents a high point in the output and outstanding quality of the Public Works Department (PWD), *criterion b special association with a group of persons*. The scale and achievement of Powerhouse Museum project reflects the status and influence of the Government Architect's Office and the Public Works Department in the delivery of distinguished cultural and public buildings in NSW, under the leadership of Neville Wran and Jack Ferguson. In the decade after the 1977 Heritage Act, the PWD and the Government Architects Office was known for its heritage conservation work and the conservation and extension of heritage buildings with sensitive new additions. The Powerhouse Museum exemplifies this design practice, also seen in the additions to the Art Gallery of NSW and the State Library of NSW. Following the election of the Greiner Government in 1988, the role of the PWD and the Government Architect's Office began a steady decline to the point where the Government Architect's role is now reduced to an advisory position, no longer building the future architectural heritage of NSW. As the 1988 Architecture Bulletin noted... *The piquant irony is the Public Works Department which championed Sydney's bold and successful urban gestures has been quietly dismantled. It has been reorganised on private sector lines – NSW Inc – with paramount emphasis on notions such as user pays, cost benefits and project management. The effect of this omnipresent realignment of priorities will be that the quality of the 1988 urban awards contenders is **guaranteed to be remembered as a rare and wonderful aberration**. The reason is simple. The new management strategy of the PWD divorces design – which is the cultural dimension of architecture, the bit that responds to society – from the physical production of buildings. The 1988 RAI Awards mark the end of an era in NSW.*<sup>13</sup>

### **Criterion c aesthetic, creative and technical achievement**

3.6 The Powerhouse Museum demonstrates *a high degree of creative and technical achievement*, criterion c. It was the first major adaptation of an industrial building for cultural purposes, and it was the influential design inspiration for many subsequent adaptations of industrial heritage buildings, including Tate Modern, the former Bankside Power Station; Casula Powerhouse; the Brisbane Powerhouse; Carriageworks and the Australian Technology Park (ATP). The Powerhouse Museum project demonstrated the visitor appeal of recycled industrial heritage buildings; the cultural potential of their great dramatic spaces; contemporary design solutions in mediating their majestic spaces with more contained and flexible side galleries; the use of Burra Charter-driven principles leaving relics *in situ*, restoring roof trusses and other fabric where possible, and retaining 'industrial' finishes and evidence of vanished elements.

3.7 The galleria was purpose designed as the showcase for the 1785 Boulton & Watt, and the No 1 Loco, tender and carriages, built by Robert Stephenson and Co. No other museum in the

world connects the two great designers and makers of transformative steam technologies in an installation that is the starting point for a journey through the museum, a tour of the industrial revolution in a national and international context. The galleria and the Boulton & Watt display installation were purpose designed by Lionel Glendenning to hold these internationally significant objects. The great barrel vault references the design language of the international exhibition buildings which led to the foundation of the Museum of Applied Arts Sciences, and also the architecture of historic railway stations. The long concourse and verticality of the vaulted space is a conceptually resonant and impressive setting for the two transformative objects of steam technology which powered the industrial revolution in Britain and in Australia. The Boulton & Watt is the oldest of just three surviving steam engines representing this transformative technology and it is the only one restored to steam operation. It is literally priceless.<sup>14</sup>

3.8 Even using the partial boundaries in this nomination, the PHM is a creative and technical achievement as a museum, notably evidenced in the installations of the steam engines in the engine house, and the transport collection in the boiler hall. It has exceptional aesthetic and landmark qualities recognised in the RAIA 1988 Sulman award. The grand spaces of the former power station are spatially and conceptually ideal for the display of the museum's nationally significant collections that interpret the history of steam power and transport in the industrial revolution, and the making of Sydney as a modern city.

#### **Criterion d social value**

3.9 The nomination excludes and discounts the life of the place as a public museum, including the social values of the place as a public museum since 1988. These social values are attached to the place and its notable *in situ* transport and power collections which are indivisible from the identity of the Powerhouse. There are many groups across NSW who esteem the Powerhouse, including community museums, rail, steam and machinery groups, and heritage places. They value the Powerhouse for its work in fostering heritage trades, technical skills, conservation and restoration, and for the outstanding quality of its major *in situ* collections of steam and transport.

3.10 The PHM meets the community attachment and time depth criteria as a publicly recognised museum since the Powerhouse project was announced in 1979. In the lead up to the museum's opening in 1988 there was a surge of donations to the collection from families and people inspired by the vision for the museum. This attachment is for the Powerhouse in particular, and the vision that the project represented to donors. It is not transferrable to the proposed Parramatta development which has nothing in common with the history and identity of the PHM, and its associations with Ultimo since 1893.

3.11 The Powerhouse meets the time depth threshold as a public museum since it opened in 1988, and for the continuity of community affection transferred from the 1893 Technological Museum at 659 Harris St. Since the 'move' and demolition of the PHM was announced in November 2014, community esteem has been demonstrated in the protests of thousands supporters among the museum's extended network of donors, volunteers, members, supporters, alumni and visitors. This has been the largest and most sustained community protest in Australian cultural history. These networks of attachment extend from the communities of Pyrmont Ultimo across the whole of NSW. The PHM is a state museum, with

audiences, supporters and donors from across NSW. With its extensive regional and migration heritage programs the Powerhouse Museum is valued by donors, members and supporters across Sydney and regional NSW. These networks are associated with the Powerhouse as a museum and an historic cultural organisation, and through its major collection themes including power and transport. These themes connect the PHM's buildings – contemporary and historic - and its significant collections, and together they define the museum's identity and symbolise the Powerhouse.

3.12 The Powerhouse Museum has had a profound impact on museums in Australia since it opened in 1988. The dramatic presentation of the power and transport collections in a building and design context that marries heritage conservation and outstanding contemporary design is emblematic of the values and museum practice of the Powerhouse. It was the first major museum in Australia to be popular, entertaining *and* educational. The PHM's innovative museology has influenced museum practice and interpretation across Australia, meeting the resonance threshold for state level significance. Aspects of the PHM's distinctive museum practice include accessible interpretation that is layered for different age groups and audiences; a high standard of exhibition design and collection presentation; interactives and opportunities for play and exploration; sensory and participatory components in all exhibitions; cutting edge social history exhibitions developed with community consultation; and ground breaking access to collections online. All of this once remarkable approach to museum exhibitions, interpretation and design is now standard practice in Australian museums, *and even art galleries*. It remains an integral part of the PHM's brand, its cultural profile, and its community recognition and esteem.

#### 4 The PHM's Significant *in situ* Power and Transport Collections

Heritage practice and legislation has long recognised that objects and collections are part of our heritage estate as relics, as movable items, and as contents and *in situ* assemblages, where they are typically inextricably related to the significance of the place.

Commonly recognised heritage places with *in situ* collections include houses with interiors and furnishings from generations of occupants; historic shops with remnant merchandise and original fittings; churches with purpose designed ritual furnishings and objects; blacksmith shops with assemblages of tools and machinery; and cinemas and milk bars with contents related to their functions, business and people.

Places with contents and *in situ* collections are always of higher heritage significance than comparable places that have no contents.<sup>15</sup> Collections, contents and relics carry additional historic values; have associations with people, skills and knowledge; research potential; rarity; social values and interpretive capacity. Because of their high significance, many sites with *in situ* collections are managed as place museums, essentially as museums about themselves, interpreting their history, themes, activities, people and the life of the place. Removing contents and collections is a last resort that diminishes significance, and understanding and appreciation of the place.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, good practice requires heritage and collection managers to assess significance before making changes, understand the relationship between the building and the collection,



and consult communities.<sup>17</sup> In the case of the decision to close the Powerhouse Museum and evict its collections, this has not happened. Indeed, the current nomination is based on the assumption that the museum and its collections will be swept aside, despite sustained community opposition.

In the last 20 years museums and collecting organisations have also used the significance methodology to investigate the meaning and values of their collections and important objects, using a comparable assessment process to that used by Heritage NSW. The steps in the process include documentation, research, community consultation, investigating the relationship between the building and the collection, comparison with similar collections, assessment against a framework of criteria, and summarising the values and meanings in a statement of significance.<sup>18</sup> The Powerhouse Museum was one of the first museums in Australia to incorporate significance in its collection policy and documentation practices.

Apart from place museums with *in situ* collections, few museums have collection or display installations that would be recognised as *in situ*, and inextricably related to the significance of the place.<sup>19</sup> This is partly because collections grow and outgrow museum buildings. Museums are subject to fashion like all parts of culture. Audiences change, as do exhibitions and interpretive technologies. In addition, there is an assumption that museums are inherently conservation-focussed, keeping collections in perpetuity, and so the decisions they make about their collections and exhibitions receive little scrutiny from heritage agencies.

Proponents of the 'move' of the Powerhouse Museum have gone to great lengths to argue that the PHM has moved six times, not true; that the collections are not related to the museum's history in Ultimo since 1893, definitely not true<sup>20</sup>; and that community attachment to the PHM is actually related to the collection and can be moved with the collection, also not true.<sup>21</sup>

The PHM's nationally significant steam power and transport collections are **not** provenanced to the former Ultimo power house. But in their landmark, purpose-designed installations, after 32 years of popular acclaim, more than 20 million visitors, and accolades from the museum, architecture and design professions, these installations must now be recognised as *in situ* collections<sup>22</sup>. The three key collection installations in the galleria, *The Steam Revolution* exhibition in the engine house, and the Transport and Flight and Space exhibitions in the boiler hall are of exceptional significance. They are interdependent with the significance of the building which was purpose designed, restored and adapted to house these collections. It is for this reason that the Powerhouse Museum is at its heart a museum about itself, about the transformative technology of steam power, linked to transport and industrial history, and the connection of these themes to the site and its larger context in Ultimo and Darling Harbour, and the development of Sydney as a modern city.

As noted, the conservation and adaptation of the Ultimo power station for the Powerhouse Museum was a unified heritage, design and museological conception. The central rationale and investment case for the whole museum project, from its inception in 1978, was to exhibit the museum's transport and engineering objects in a spatially appropriate setting, connecting the collections in a narrative about the industrial revolution, and in ways that revealed their significance. This required architectural, engineering, design and conservation skills across many disciplines. The conceptual design, restoration and installation of the collections was a ten year project. The resulting installation set new benchmarks for creative and technical achievements

in museum design, and it had a profound impact on Australian museology. It was never envisaged that these nationally significant objects would be pulled out of their purpose designed installations just 32 years after the Powerhouse opened.

In my view these major installations are of exceptional significance and merit state heritage listing. Recognising the extraordinary significance of the PHM's *in situ* steam power and transport collections with state heritage listing as part of the Powerhouse Museum would not constrain the museum from refreshing the design and interpretation, changing particular objects and adding new exhibition components.

The exceptional heritage significance of the PHM's *in situ* transport and steam collections require urgent assessment before any actions are taken that might affect their future. This process must involve consultation with communities to understand the social value of the collections. It must be seen to be independent from the NSW Government's property ambitions to sell the PHM's site. And it must be independent of the museum management's desire to turn a great museum, and one of Sydney's most significant industrial heritage sites, into a cultural industries precinct. The Powerhouse already has its best use as a museum about itself.

Kylie Winkworth

Museum and heritage expert

25 March 2020

## About the author

Kylie Winkworth has 40 years' experience working with museums and collections and heritage places. She is a recognised expert in movable cultural heritage, and the assessment of objects and collections **and** their relationship with places and communities. With Meredith Walker she co-authored *Places, Objects and People, retaining significant relationships, a discussion paper*, 1995. In 1996-97 she chaired the Movable Heritage Taskforce for the NSW Heritage Office and wrote a report on movable heritage policies and priorities. A strategic partnership between the NSW Heritage Office and the Arts NSW museum committee brokered a number of policy papers and projects including *What's in Store* a thematic study, book and exhibitions on shops and migration heritage; the Heritage NSW *Movable Heritage Principles*; as well as *Objects in their Place, an introduction to Movable Heritage*, NSW Heritage Office; and *Safe in the Shed, Caring for Historic Farm Machinery*, NSW Heritage Office 2001.

With colleague Roslyn Russell, Kylie Winkworth is the co-author of *Significance 2.0, a guide to assessing the significance of collections*, Collections Council of Australia, 2009. This guide, now its second edition, is widely used by museums, collection managers and heritage agencies across Australia and internationally. In 2001 she wrote the methodology *Connecting Collections; Thematic Studies of Museum and Heritage Collections, a guide for museums, heritage networks and communities*. She lectures on significance for universities and is involved in many significance projects and training with museum and heritage networks.

Kylie Winkworth has served on state and national policy and advisory committees for museums and heritage collections. She was a member of the National Cultural Heritage Committee which oversees the Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act (2002-12); and was a director of the Collections Council of Australia (2004-10). In a policy capacity for NSW she was chair of the Arts NSW museum committee (1996-99) which oversaw a significant increase in funding for regional museums; and was a member of the NSW Arts Advisory Council (1996-99 and 2004-8). She was a member of the NSW Heritage Office Movable Heritage Panel, 2000-04; and the Heritage Interpretation Committee 2002-05. She is a former

Trustee of the Powerhouse Museum (1996-2003) and is a Life Fellow of the museum. As a trustee she helped expand the PHM's regional services and collection partnerships with regional and community museums across NSW. She advised on the development of the NSW Migration Heritage Centre, and its forerunner in the Premier's Department from 1998-2006. This virtual museum undertook pioneering collaborative projects in partnership with diverse communities and museums across NSW until it was closed by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in 2012, followed by the abolition of the museum's acclaimed regional partnerships program in 2014.

Since 1987 Kylie Winkworth has worked extensively with museums and heritage places in regional Australia, particularly across regional NSW. As a strategic planner for museums and collections she has been instrumental in the development of new regional museums and many collection projects. A number of these projects have involved steam engines, transport items and historic farm machinery, working with farmers and rural technology experts. In this capacity she is well qualified to comment on the social values of the Powerhouse Museum and its collections to communities across regional NSW.

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<sup>1</sup> *Assessment of Heritage Significance, Ultimo Tramways Power House Museum, Independent Review*, Cracknell and Lonergan, 30 January 2020, prepared for Heritage NSW, Department of Premier and Cabinet

<sup>2</sup> More than 11,000 people signed the petition to Parliament objecting to the move of the Powerhouse Museum, and there has been sustained community opposition from across Sydney, NSW and internationally since then. See also submissions to the Legislative Council's Inquiry Museums and Galleries in NSW, First Report, December 2017; and Final Report, February 2019; and expert testimony.

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=2403#tab-submissions> Nine directors' emeriti of state and national museums have criticised the proposal to 'move' the PHM. Apart from Liz Ann McGregor, Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, who is not a museum expert but who fronted the public campaign run by the Daily Telegraph, no museum leaders have endorsed the NSW Government's plan to evict the PHM from Ultimo and move it to smaller, less accessible and inferior facilities to what the museum already owns at Ultimo

<sup>3</sup> The Stage 2 design brief reveals that the Parramatta facility will have just **5,200sqm** of 'presentation' spaces with international museum standard environmental controls (P 3, 4, and 5), *Powerhouse Museum Parramatta, International Design Competition Stage 2 Design Brief*, Malcolm Reading Consultants, NSW Government, 2019. <https://maas.museum/app/uploads/2020/02/Powerhouse-Parramatta-Stage-2-Design-Brief.pdf> The Powerhouse Museum has **21,800sqm** of international museum standard climate controlled exhibition space, with a combined floor area across the PHM of 42,594sqm. <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/what-the-experts-say/shrinking-the-powerhouse-to-parramatta-lies-spin-and-delusions-kylie-winkworth/> Thus the Parramatta facility will have just 25% of the PHM's exhibition space.

<sup>4</sup> I am grateful for expert advice on the PHM and its collection from colleagues Jennifer Sanders, Andrew Grant, Debbie Rudder, Kerrie Dougherty, Ian Debenham; and assistance from the architect of the Powerhouse Museum Lionel Glendenning in understanding the project conception and design principles underpinning the museum.

<sup>5</sup> The business case papers for the New Museum Western Sydney disclose that the MAAS Act may need to be amended to affect the project aims. Johnstaff, Legislation and Technical Requirements Review, Attachment J, v.1.0, 17 November 2017 <https://powerhousemuseumalliancedotcom.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/new-western-sydney-museum-32-legislation-technical-requirements-review1.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> The 2018-19 MAAS Annual Report shows the value of the museum's land and buildings on the books of the MAAS Trust, p.26. Note 12.b, on the revaluation of the Ultimo site states, *The valuation was predicated upon the Museum maintaining occupancy of the site until the 2021/22 financial year, with an appropriate discount factor applied. Management has also considered the ongoing use of the site over this period and adopted a value for buildings based upon a revised useful life of said buildings extinguishing by 30 June 2022* p.41-42

<sup>7</sup> *The CRL estimate does not make any allowance for the storage of the Very Large Objects as this is still under discussion*, p.3 Hirst projects for Johnstaff, Collections Relocations and Logistics the MAAS Project, attachment U, Hirst Projects Collection Move Review, October 2017 <Attachment U Collections relocations and logistics.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Request for SEARS (4) <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/project/26576?fbclid=IwAR0bB-du2l8qvLLOoTEoS-6fBmRsQNumHAWb5O2hQsgaoxFSoeAtba7vx11>

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<sup>9</sup> *Powerhouse Museum Parramatta, International Design Competition Stage 2 Design Brief*, Malcolm Reading Consultants, NSW Government, 2019, p.132

<https://maas.museum/app/uploads/2020/02/Powerhouse-Parramatta-Stage-2-Design-Brief.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.107

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.131 and 238

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.249

<sup>13</sup> 'Architecture and the City', Haig Beck and Jackie Cooper, *Architecture Bulletin*, July 1988, p.5

<sup>14</sup> The accounting note in the last MAAS annual report says: **g) (iii) Assets not able to be reliably measured** The Museum holds a certain asset that has not been recognised in the Statement of Financial Position because the Museum is unable to measure reliably the value for that asset and that asset is likely to be material. This asset is the 1785 Boulton and Watt steam engine. The steam engine is one of the earliest rotative (wheel turning) steam engines to be built and is the oldest in existence. The engine is also one of the few in the world to work regularly under steam. The Boulton and Watt was excluded from the last valuation of the Museum's Collection on the basis that its value was deemed by the independent valuers to be unable to be reliably measured due to its unique nature. MAAS 2018-2019 annual report, p.30 <https://maas.museum/about/annual-report/>

<sup>15</sup> This is why removal of the PHM's *in situ* transport and steam collections from the boiler hall and engine house will greatly diminish the significance of the former Ultimo power station, and public appreciation of its meanings.

<sup>16</sup> There is a substantial body of heritage and collection policy that underlines the importance of retaining collections and contents in the place where they have most significance. See for example Burra Charter Article 10... *objects which contribute to the cultural significance of a place should be retained at that place...*, and Article 11 *related objects that contribute to the cultural significance of the place should be retained*, M Walker & P Marquis Kylie, *The Illustrated Burra Charter: good practice for heritage places*, Australia ICOMOS Inc., 2004. Also *Places, Objects and People – retaining significant relationships; a discussion paper*, Meredith Walker and Kylie Winkworth, 1995; and Principles 5 and 6, *Movable Heritage Principles*, Heritage Information Series, NSW Heritage Office of NSW and NSW Ministry for the Arts, 2000 <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Heritage/movable-heritage-principles.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, Movable heritage principle 3; and Principles for Good Practice with Significance in *Significance 2.0; a guide to assessing the significance of collections*, Roslyn Russell and Kylie Winkworth, Collections Council of Australia, second edition, 2009, p.43.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, *Significance 2.0; a guide to assessing the significance of collections*

<sup>19</sup> Most of these *in situ* collection installations demonstrate a resonance between the building and the theme and design of the collection installation. Examples include the Museum of Economic Botany in Adelaide; the entry gallery of the Burke Museum in Beechworth; the Line of Kings, Royal Armouries Museums, Tower of London, an installation respectfully maintained and updated over more than 400 years; some exhibition installations in the Natural History Museum in Vienna; and the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen. Other forms of museum *in situ* installations of high heritage significance include room installations, such as the Damascus room at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, gallery 461; and the Norfolk House music room in the V&A. However these remarkable spaces could not be said to be indivisible from the significance of the museum as a whole.

<sup>20</sup> *Yesterday's Tomorrows, the Powerhouse Museum and its Precursors 1880-2005*, ed Graeme Davison and Kimberley Webber, PHM Publishing, 2005, and in particular Lucy Taksa, 'Instructing: the museum and technical education' p.82

<sup>21</sup> See for example Jennifer Sanders *The Powerhouse Museum: Its Place in the World, our Nation, NSW, our Neighbourhood and our Hearts and Minds*, paper for A.ICOMOS: Policy, Power and the Cultural and Heritage Values of the Powerhouse Museum, October 2019

<https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/what-the-experts-say/policy-power-and-the-cultural-and-heritage-values-of-the-powerhouse-museum-jennifer-sanders/> and submission 142 h

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/62611/0142h%20Ms%20Jennifer%20Sanders.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Meaning on site, in position, in their place of context, in their setting, and in landmark installations which were specifically designed to display them and reveal their significance.