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An architect image of the new Powerhouse Museum at Parramatta, which has been attacked for being unable to house popular exhibits like the Sydney hansom cab, pictured below inset.

ELIZABETH FORTESCUE
ARTS EDITOR

A HORSE-drawn hansom cab that zipped us around Sydney before taxis and Uber.

A 1944 Catalina flying boat that pioneered the air route across the Pacific.

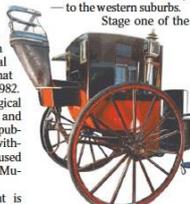
An aerobatic monoplane that looped over Zetland in 1914 and the 1906 Central Station indicator board that directed passengers until 1982.

Critics say these magical objects from our past and many more will be lost to public view because they — without fanfare — won't be housed in the new Powerhouse Museum at Parramatta.

The State government is

moving the Powerhouse from inner-city Ultimo, claiming it will generate 1100 construction jobs and bring two million tourists — and arts and culture money, 95 per cent of which it says is currently spent in the eastern suburbs and inner city — to the western suburbs.

Stage one of the



planned closure at Ultimo has been delayed in response to a rush of demand to see its irreplaceable exhibits before they are taken off view.

The museum was scheduled to close its popular Steam Revolution and Transport exhibition halls on Tuesday, but timed tickets sold out, disappointing many who had hoped to pay one final visit.

The steam and transport exhibitions will now remain open until the end of 2020, Powerhouse chief executive Lisa Havilah said yesterday.

The entire museum will close for good in 12 months' time as the State government forges ahead with its widely criticised plans, approved by

Cabinet in 2018, to transplant it to Parramatta at a cost of at least \$1.1 billion.

Museum and heritage experts say the proposed new building in Parramatta, by architects Moreau Kusunoki, is flood-prone and unsuitable, and simply won't house massive exhibits like the Steam Locomotive No. 1 or the Catalina flying boat, the world's largest suspended aircraft.

An inquiry chaired by NSW upper house MP Robert Borsak last year recommended keeping the Powerhouse in Ultimo. Mr Borsak's committee will sit again to examine the governance of the Powerhouse Parramatta project.

He says the Powerhouse at Parramatta will open with no

permanent collection display, and no onsite permanent storage. Powerhouse Parramatta will be a "fun palace" with a "strong tinge of commerciality", he claimed.

Museum and heritage consultant Kylie Winkworth agrees, saying: "It's a multi-purpose arts and entertainment complex. There's not a single space in the building that's dedicated to museum exhibitions."

"Every space in the building is available for commercial hire. It has to do double duty for performances and events."

Ms Winkworth claims the Powerhouse Parramatta will be a potential "death trap" during floods, and believes its true cost will approach at least

\$2 billion by the time it opens in 2024 or 2025.

Large exhibits that won't fit in the Powerhouse Parramatta will be "farmed off", former deputy director of the Powerhouse, Jennifer Sanders, says.

"You won't see the (1928) Bugatti or the (c. 1885) penny farthing," Sanders says. "You won't see the engines operating on steam. They'll all go."

"This is one of the great museums of the world. When it's gone it will be lost forever."

Like many, Mr Borsak believes the move is "all about a grab for inner-city real estate" cash by the government.

Questions to the Powerhouse Museum about where exhibits will be stored after the closure were not answered.

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