

John McDonald

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(Extract from longer document...)

There is no greater mystery in New South Wales than the Premier's stubborn desire to destroy the Powerhouse Museum. Even after the COVID-19 lockdown which has drained billions from the public purse – and will continue to do so for months, perhaps years - Gladys still wants to bulldoze a much acclaimed museum, demolish one of the last remaining heritage buildings in Parramatta, and erect an expensive new structure that would not even pretend to act as a replacement for what is lost. Furthermore it's a project that nobody seems to want - nobody that is, except the Premier; Chair of the Western Sydney branch of the Sydney Business Chamber, David Borger, and Liberal MP, Geoff Lee.

The Business Chamber could hardly be taken as representative of the people of Parramatta, let alone the people of NSW who are losing a unique resource. Which businesses stand to make a dollar from this truly evil development? How can the government justify wasting a supposed \$1.1 billion (although \$2 billion is a more realistic figure), when it has proposed freezing teachers' and nurses' salaries to save \$3 billion?

The latest excuse is the lamest one yet: the project will create jobs. Yes, like that other great employment opportunity - the Adani coalmine, it will create jobs for a few hundred workers while construction is underway. The "jobs" rhetoric is surely beginning to wear thin. Every time one hears a politician pronounce the word "jobs" it's certain that something nasty is planned that will be bad news for the vast majority of people.

If and when the new building is finished Parramatta will have a gigantic white elephant that has zero possibility of drawing long-term audiences and covering costs. To achieve this excellent result the government will have irretrievably vandalised a major Australian museum and wiped out another precious piece of heritage in a city already disfigured by the concrete horrors of Westfield Shopping Centre and similar architectural eyesores.

I emailed the Premier and Mr. Lee to ask how this project was economically justified, but neither has chosen to reply.

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