

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/powerhouse-museum-in-dispute-over-staff-jobs-20200612-p5520p.html>

# Powerhouse in jobs dispute with 95 out

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*EXCLUSIVE*

*Linda Morris*

Management of the Powerhouse Museum has been taken to the Industrial Relations Commission in a dispute over the loss of up to 95 jobs prompted by the closure of the museum's heritage halls.

The Public Service Association alleges the Ultimo museum's early closure, from June 30, is being carried out without proper consultation of affected staff.

The union representing staff employed in the museum's visitor services, events, and programs departments has compared the museum's early closure to the Berejiklian government's election eve demolition of the Allianz Stadium.

The PSA and Professional Officers' Association notified the Industrial Relations Commission of a dispute on June 4, with an initial hearing convened last Thursday.

They estimate 95 people will lose work, while hundreds of others face significant uncertainty following the Berejiklian government's decision to begin mothballing the museum from June 30 – years before the opening of the new Parramatta museum.

With the Parramatta Powerhouse yet to be approved, Public Service Association assistant secretary Troy Wright said there was no reason to close the Ultimo museum unless it was to stymie opposition to a deeply unpopular project as happened with Allianz Stadium.

The move comes as an internal email, headed Powerhouse Consultant budget, reported "costs to date of \$45m up to the end of 2019". This included \$2.7 million spent by Create NSW and \$2.3 million running the architect's design competition.

Labor's treasury spokesman Walter Secord said the consultants' budget was equal to that for a new Sydney primary school. "No one has seen the avalanche of construction jobs as promised; we've only seen consultants in offices getting richer."

Infrastructure NSW denied the Powerhouse Museum had spent \$46 million on consultants, saying \$18 million had been allocated to the museum's relocation to Parramatta up until June 2019. This had included costs associated with the Parramatta business case, the running of the International Design Competition, and relocation logistics.

This figure does not capture the full costs of the Parramatta Powerhouse's Environment Impact Statement and planning for the redevelopment of Ultimo due this calendar year, nor the winning architect's multi-million dollar fee.

The Powerhouse employed casual staff for a range of purposes, including supporting various exhibitions, a museum spokesperson said. Where appropriate, the Powerhouse may offer work to casual staff to relocate or digitise the collection.

Neither project would likely sustain staff for a hibernation period lasting five years, Mr Wright said.