

Sydney's Powerhouse Museum project powers on to next phase

EXCLUSIVEBy **ASHLEIGH WILSON**, ARTS EDITOR12:00AM JUNE 10, 2020 •  3 COMMENTS

The Powerhouse Museum is steaming ahead with its relocation to western Sydney with the release of key planning documents underpinning the detail of the ambitious project.

Ten days after the NSW government renewed its support for the proposed Powerhouse Parramatta, the museum has released a state significant development application and environmental impact statement for public comment until July 7, marking a milestone for a project that has divided cultural circles for the past two years.

Powerhouse director Lisa Havilah said the development was moving into its “next phase” before construction begins at Parramatta River. A builder will be engaged once the planning process plays out, with work expected to start as soon as early next year. “The project is happening and it’s moving ahead,” she said.

The Berejiklian government recently considered scrapping the Powerhouse move — estimated to cost taxpayers \$645m — after revelations the COVID-19 pandemic would cost the state up to \$20bn in lost revenue.

The Premier decided to cancel its ANZ Stadium upgrade while proceeding with the Powerhouse’s move to Parramatta, citing more than 1000 jobs to be created in western Sydney.

The new museum has been designed by Paris-based architects Moreau Kusunoki with local firm Genton. Their distinctive design, attacked by the Labor opposition as a “monstrosity on stilts”, will accommodate immersive and large-scale programs across 18,000sq m of exhibition space. The new Powerhouse, a proposed 24-hour cultural precinct, will feature a constantly changing program, as well as residential studios for researchers, scientists, artists and students.

Moving the 141-year-old institution from inner-city Ultimo to Parramatta has attracted opposition from some high-profile Sydney arts figures, as well as inside the Coalition partyroom and the Berejiklian cabinet itself.

But the project is set to become a reality with the backing of Gladys Berejiklian, who took over the arts portfolio in April following the resignation of Don Harwin. Ms Havilah said the new site would expand access to the museum's collection while renewing historic relationships between science, technology and culture.

"I really believe in this project. It's a really important philosophical investment decision that the government has made to establish a major museum in western Sydney," she said.

"With a project of this scale and ambition it's always going to have challenges, and it's been a difficult year for everybody, but the key thing is we're now moving into the next phase."

ASHLEIGH WILSON, ARTS EDITOR

Ashleigh Wilson has been arts editor since 2011. He has been at the paper for more than 15 years in various roles around the country, including several years as Darwin correspondent. In 2006, he and Nicolas Rot... [Read more](#)