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(In print as: 'Sydney's shifted west, the Powerhouse should too')

'FROM ANDY'S DESK'

## Powerhouse Museum move to Parramatta makes economic sense

**In 1951, the Catalina flew 13,600km from Sydney to Chile in an historic flight. Now, activists are stopping it moving 20km down the road from Ultimo to Parramatta, writes Andy Marks.**

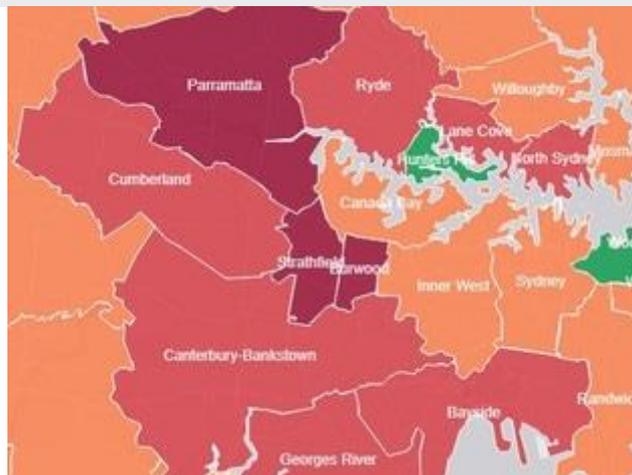
Andy Marks, The Daily Telegraph  
June 29, 2020 4:31pm

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### Sydney's Powerhouse Museum moving to city's west

Sydney's Powerhouse Museum is a step closer to moving to the city's west. The state government has purchased land on the banks of the Parramatta River, as it prepares to move ...



New 'golden circle' of property coming to NSW

With a nearly 32 metre wingspan, the Catalina is among the Powerhouse Museum's most imposing exhibits. Aviator PG Taylor chose it for his pioneering 1951 flight from Sydney to Valparaiso, Chile.

The aircraft blitzed the roughly 13,600 kilometre crossing in just two weeks, but not without drama. The flying boat broke anchor in a storm off Easter Island, almost crashing into cliffs before the crew got it airborne.

Taylor, who reportedly fell overboard during the ordeal, later quipped it was a "shaky do".



The flying boat the Catalina took two weeks to get from Sydney to Chile in 1951.

The Catalina's next journey will be just 20 kilometres, from Ultimo to Parramatta. But it may as well be to the moon the way some critics have described the museum's relocation: a "disaster", "cultural vandalism", "shameful".

The Powerhouse has been quite the traveller over the years. Starting at the Garden Palace in 1881, the museum then temporarily moved to the Domain. In 1893 it was relocated to Harris Street. With five branch museums opening in 1896, it moved into a former tram depot in 1981 before shifting to Ultimo in 1988.

Buildings change, the collection is the continuum. That collection is given meaning by its interaction with people.



People gather on the steps outside the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo to protest the museum's move to Parramatta. Picture: Toby Zerna

At Parramatta, it will be an accessible collection for all to share; a collection that reflects greater Sydney's shifting population. In time, that too will change.

Change is inherent in culture, and museums are not passive onlookers. The best ones question the way we see the world. A museum that embraces that dynamic is one that

does more than simply stay relevant, it shapes the cultural landscape. That can't happen if a museum is inaccessible to the increasingly large sections of the community funding it. Growth is not possible if a museum shies away from the "shock of the new".



Famed aviator PG Taylor, aviator, who flew from Sydney to Chile in 1951.

In his landmark documentary of the same name, Robert Hughes talked of the transformative influence of industrialism's "mechanical paradise" on the way culture is shaped and perceived.

Western Sydney is Australia's most culturally diverse and rapidly growing region. It deserves to, and will, make its stamp on that re-envisioning.

As crew member on a 1935 flight aboard Charles Kingsford Smith's famous 'Southern Cross' aircraft, PG Taylor left the cabin and traversed the underwing struts, mid-air, six times, using a Thermos to salvage oil from a crippled engine to another. His heroic feat saved the aircraft and crew and earned him a George Cross medal.

If a museum can't be successfully relocated, for the sixth time, over ground and into a purpose-built facility, then this is more than a "shaky do".

*Dr Andy Marks is assistant vice-chancellor at Western Sydney University*

