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SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

OPINION

## *Powerhouse Parramatta will be bigger and better than before*

**By Barney Glover**

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Arts and culture is for everyone. It's a phrase I've heard countless times at events across Sydney, extolled at the opening of this, or the closing of that. It's a nice thought that all in society have equal access to the best our creative industries and cultural institutions have to offer. But it's a sentiment that, in many instances, doesn't ring true.

Cultural equity lies at the heart of NSW's most ambitious arts and cultural investment since the Opera House: the Powerhouse Parramatta.

[An artist's impression of the new Powerhouse Museum in Parramatta. *CREDIT: SUPPLIED*]

I've seen numerous error-filled columns from figures recently claiming to support the Powerhouse. They've created their own "facts" and displayed nothing but indignation for the renewal of the institution and its extraordinary collection.

Rather than be "hidden" or 'sold-off' as some have suggested, the museum's globally revered collection will thrive at its new home. In western Sydney it will be seen by more visitors, more often, and with more variation than ever before. Visitors to Ultimo, the museum's fifth home in the institution's 160-year history, have seen barely 10 per cent of the collection. This new purpose-built facility in Parramatta – along with the expanded Museum Discovery Centre in Castle Hill – will greatly enhance capacity, ensuring so much more of the collection can be experienced.

The truth is that visitation to the Ultimo site has followed a predictable path. Many visitors come once as a child, then once as a parent, and then as a grandparent. It simply has not inspired regular return visits. The result has been a diminishing of the museum's relevance in our constantly changing world.

Our museum needs to reflect and engage with Greater Sydney's changes, and not be left behind. The Powerhouse prognosis is clear – it's time for renewal.

The Powerhouse Parramatta will be at the global forefront of museums. It is designed and engineered to support the exhibition of the collection across seven highly engaged and state-of-the-art presentation spaces. At 30,000 square metres, including more than 18,000 square metres of exhibition and public space, it will be NSW's largest museum and larger than the Powerhouse in Ultimo.

The new facility's spaces will be developed to international standards and engineered to present objects of an incredible scale from the collection including the Catalina flying boat and Locomotive No.1.

The safety of the museum's collection is paramount. As president of the Powerhouse Trust and in conjunction with my fellow trustees, we take ultimate responsibility for its custodianship and protection.

Powerhouse Parramatta will be a museum that supports our future generations from the ground up. Starting in its first year, 10,000 regional NSW students will come to Parramatta for overnight stays to immerse themselves in the museum's science, technology, engineering and maths programs. They will connect with international leaders in these fields and be provided opportunities to expand their ambitions for future careers.

The new museum is a bold reimagining of the Powerhouse into an institution that not only tells the great stories of an industrial age but forges its own narrative of technology, access, inclusion and cultural relevance.

Great projects are born of controversy, but it's time to park tired cultural hierarchies and confected outrage. We must focus on the future. Greater Sydney deserves a landmark cultural institution. There's no better legacy of a city's growth than to pass on to Parramatta the much-loved Powerhouse institution, soon to become the greatest science and technology museum in the southern hemisphere.

**Professor Barney Glover AO is president of the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.**