

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/slap-in-the-face-daughter-of-legendary-aviator-warns-against-powerhouse-move-20200629-p5579z.html>

**EXCLUSIVE**

- [NATIONAL](#)
- [SYDNEY LANDMARKS](#)

# 'Slap in the face': Daughter of legendary aviator warns against Powerhouse move

By [Tim Barlass](#)

July 1, 2020 — 12.00am

The daughter of the famous aviator who made an epic flight from Sydney to Chile in a Catalina aircraft hanging in the Powerhouse Museum fears it will be irreparably damaged by the institution's relocation.

Gai Taylor, whose pilot father P. G. Taylor died in 1966, said the Catalina, part of Australia's aviation history, should be protected.

[Gai Taylor at home in Lismore, the daughter of captain P.G. Taylor, who made a historic Pacific crossing. *CREDIT: ELISE DERWIN*]

"I think it shows an incredible lack of appreciation, understanding and love of our aviation history," she said. "This is a slap in the face to our aviators. The United States, France, Russia, all of these countries have the most amazing aviation museums and really present them well to the world."

The *Herald* revealed on Monday that many of the very large objects – including Locomotive No.1, race cars and trams – could be dispersed to temporary homes in regional museums when the Powerhouse is relocated to a riverside location in Parramatta. There are increasing concerns about the ability of the new museum to accommodate and protect exhibits.

P. G. Taylor made the return flight in the Catalina flying boat "Frigate Bird II" from Rose Bay to Chile in 1951 crossing the Pacific, the final ocean to be traversed by air.

In 1961 Taylor presented the Catalina to the museum and in 1985 it was restored and hoisted 10 metres above the floor of the Boiler Hall to form a breathtaking centrepiece.

[Captain P.G. Taylor's Frigate Bird II at Rose Bay on the day of the flight to Chile on March 13, 1951. *CREDIT:ARCHIVE*]

"To move the museum next to the river means the aircraft will deteriorate," Ms Taylor said. "I do not trust the government's ability to think clearly about the bigger picture of our aviation heritage."

Dick Smith, whose round the world helicopter is in the Powerhouse, said he questioned the thinking behind the relocation.

"The whole thing is a bit mysterious to me," he said. "To suddenly decide that you are going to move the museum ... I'd love to know whose idea it was. When I heard it was going to move to Parramatta I thought 'Why?'"

"This Catalina was the first to cross the South Pacific so it is incredibly historic, most of the flying records are held by the United States but that's one that we hold."

Ian Debenham, former curator of transport at the Powerhouse, who oversaw the installation of the Catalina, said the relocation was "basically killing off the Powerhouse".

"The huge objects are just going to be a very costly logistics exercise in getting everything in and they won't have any context when they are in there," he said.

"In the architect's drawings [the Catalina] is in there but it looks very diminutive in the drawing but that is typical of architects, to make things fit where they may not fit. This new building is up on stilts so they have got to raise these things to an incredible height just to get them into the building."

He said the No.1 Locomotive required a minimum 26-tonne crane and would have to be lifted 11 metres up into the building.

"That's a huge risk on its own – if something goes amiss, and things can go amiss, then that heritage is permanently damaged.

"Back in the day if you wanted to know anything about the Powerhouse, you could get it. There was none of this 'cabinet in confidence' nonsense that goes on now. The museum belongs to the people. The money going into this comes from the people."

Mr Debenham said the new site was more of an entertainment area with eating facilities and "some museum objects dangling around like Christmas baubles".

About 100 people gathered outside the museum in Ultimo on Tuesday to protest against its demolition and relocation. The museum's former deputy director Jennifer Sanders told the crowd the government needed to realise the Powerhouse belonged to the people of NSW. "We love this museum and it will not be moved. Bring it on."

University of NSW science historian Professor David Miller told the gathering the relocation "defies common sense". "What is suggested to be done here is just ludicrous," he said.

"Poor old Parramatta is really getting a lemon. This is a bespoke building that can take big railway trains [and] aeroplanes. The building out there is really just a showcase, it's not a museum at all."

Asked for details about how the Catalina would be exhibited a Powerhouse spokesperson said in a statement: "The Catalina flying boat is to feature as part of curatorial programming at the new Museum in Parramatta."