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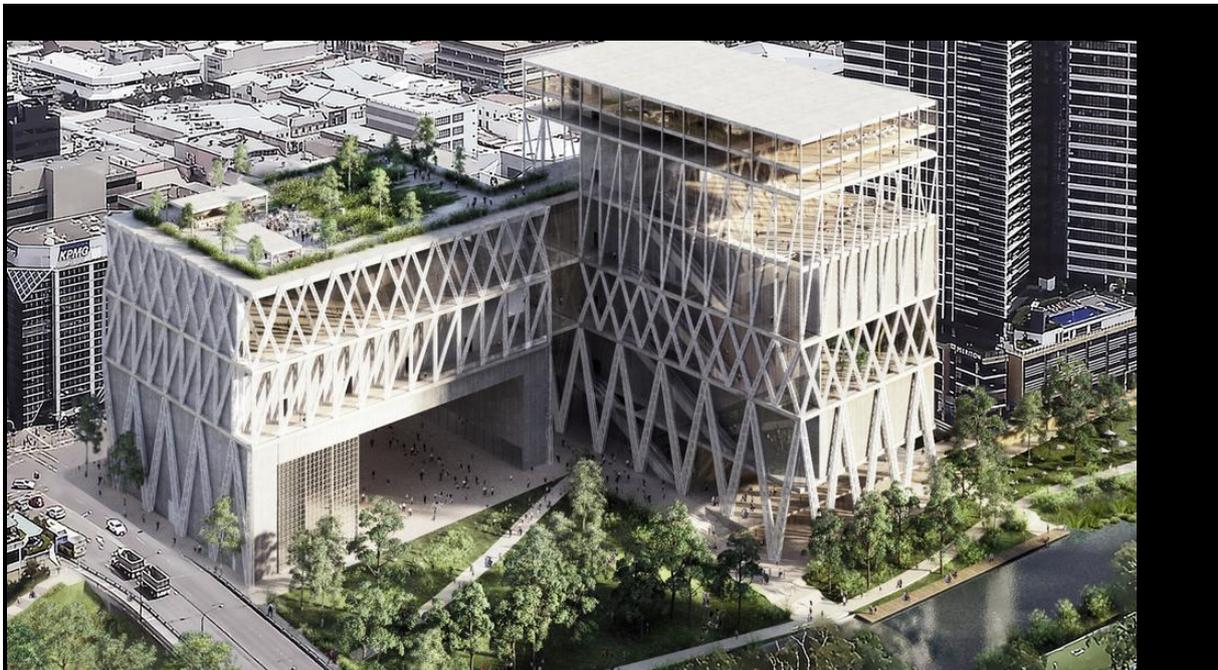
# Parramatta Powerhouse: Flood could put lives at risk at new museum

People could be trapped and their lives put at risk if a flood hits the Powerhouse Museum, which is earmarked for the “vulnerable” banks of the Parramatta River, a shocking report by flood experts has warned.

[Joanne Vella](#), Parramatta Advertiser

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Serious doubts have been cast on what would happen if floods hit the Powerhouse Museum at Parramatta.

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Fatalities could occur at the Powerhouse Museum if it's built along the “vulnerable” banks of the Parramatta River, a shocking report by flood experts has warned.

Flood experts Molino Stewart's report declared that the proposed design failed to provide evacuation plans if a severe hit flood the Phillip St site, with no access for people with disabilities and no backup power.

The report was a review of the State Government's Environmental Impact Statement into the Powerhouse Museum and labelled it "incorrect and misleading" because it mostly took into account that a flood would happen only once in 100 years. "The rates of rise of flood waters in the streets and in the river are such that it is unlikely to be practical or safe in most circumstances to evacuate the building during a flood," the report's author Steve Molino said.

"It will also be important that outdoor areas be designed to have continuously rising access routes to Phillip St which avoid overland flow paths so that all people can evacuate away from a rising river flood without getting trapped by floodwaters. The current design does not do that." Using the museum's undercroft as an evacuation point was also slammed as possibly representing "a serious risk to life".

"During a rainfall event people may take shelter in these spaces but they may become trapped there as the Parramatta River rises. This is because the evacuation routes from these spaces go down towards the river before rising to Phillip St."

The proposal to shift flooding from Phillip St to the river in underground pipes also failed to prevent flooding above ground. "This means that people evacuating from the rising river along these pedestrian connections could be confronted by a torrent cascading down each of their possible escape routes," Mr. Molino said.



The museum's contents are also under threat if a flood strikes, the report suggests.

“The proposed development is significantly more vulnerable than any residential or commercial building in Parramatta because of the number and diversity of people it will host, and the value of its contents.”

The report suggested there was also a failure to protect contents inside the museum, with humidity potentially causing contents to erode.

However, an Infrastructure NSW spokeswoman said the project met Parramatta Council’s flooding development control plan, as well as the NSW Floodplain Development Manual, and was consistent with other buildings developed in the Parramatta CBD.

However the Molino report states that the council uses flood modelling from 1987 but was now updating it.



Flooding from Phillip St, as well as the Parramatta River, is a risk.

The spokeswoman said there would be ample time during a flood for people to move from the public domain to higher levels, if required, and the undercroft would not be an evacuation point.

Infrastructure NSW has also defended the risk flooding would pose on exhibits and its power supply.

“Keeping people and the Powerhouse Collection protected from flooding has been a key consideration throughout the development of the project design,” the spokeswoman said.

“There is sufficient back-up power supply for the building that is located approximately 5m above the ground floor to maintain building operations, including climate control of exhibition spaces.

“Infrastructure NSW is considering all matters raised during the exhibition period and will respond in the Response to Submissions Report.”