

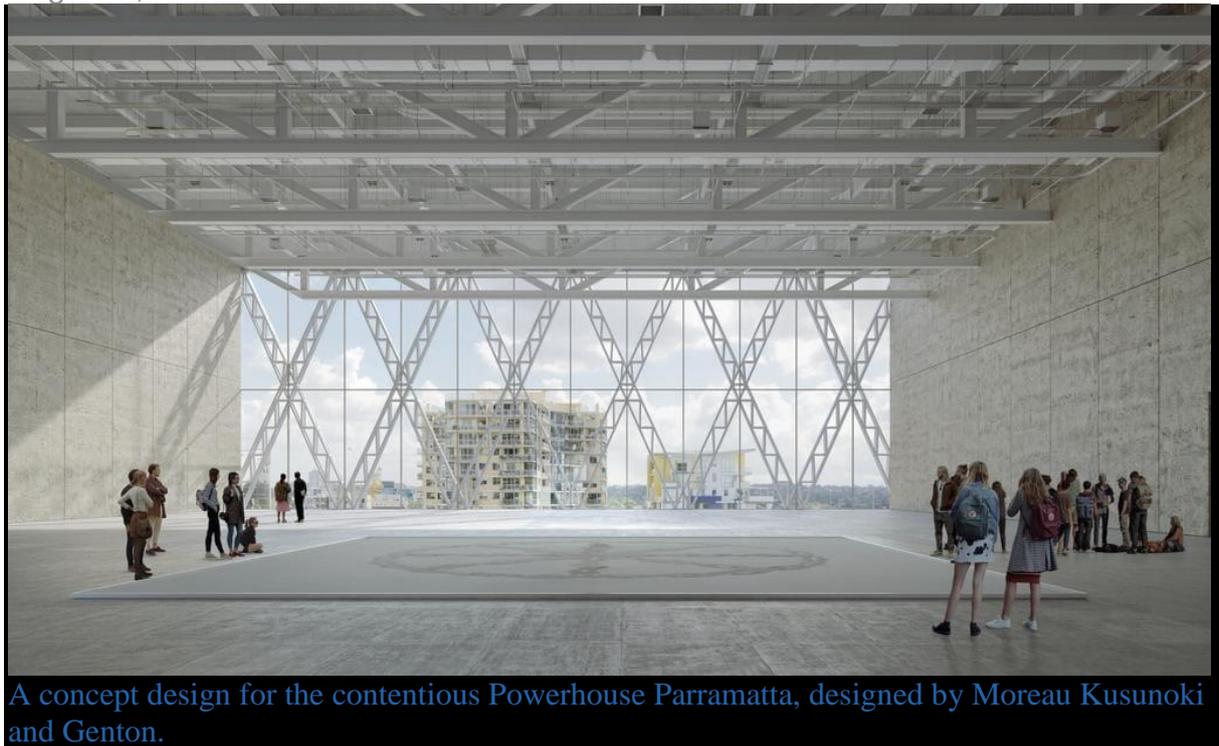
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Parramatta Powerhouse museum: Upper House inquiry under way

Shocking figures have revealed the level of objection to the iconic Powerhouse Museum being relocated and constructed in Parramatta. The figures have been revealed as an inquiry into its relocation is under way.

[Joanne Vella](#), Parramatta Advertiser
Subscriber only

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A concept design for the contentious Powerhouse Parramatta, designed by Moreau Kusunoki and Genton.

- [What museum? Powerhouse to include shops, cafes, units](#)
- [Council's submission to Powerhouse](#)
- [Fight for Female Factory to be heritage listed](#)
- [Ultimo Powerhouse stays, Parra's fight ramps up](#)

An overwhelming 95 per cent of 1299 submissions into the Powerhouse Museum relocation objected to its construction at Parramatta.

Submissions to the Environmental Impact Statement, now on display at the Planning Department website, have cited concerns including plans to build the museum on a floodplain and the loss of heritage-listed properties Willow Grove and St George's Terrace on the Phillip St site.

Willow Grove is an Italianate 1870s property that was once used as a maternity hospital between 1919 and 1953, while St George's Terrace is a row of two-storey terraces built in 1881. Save the Powerhouse Facebook group listed 1232 objections to the museum at Parramatta.

The submission results — which buoy heritage advocates' fight to retain the heritage landmarks — emerge in the same week the issues were raised in the Upper House inquiry into the government's management of the museum.



Heritage-listed Willow Grove. Picture: Monique Harmer

Parramatta Council CEO Brett Newman and the council's city planning and design executive director Jennifer Concato spoke at the inquiry on Wednesday when they reinforced the council's concerns over flooding, loss of heritage and its integration with the public domain, called the Civic Link.

Ms Concato said: "I would say that there are opportunities for the design to be improved, particularly in relation to concerns raised around heritage, the impact of heritage items, the impact on Civic Link and not quite realising the full aspirations of the council, concerns around flooding, the undercroft and also some sustainability issues."



The design for Powerhouse Parramatta has been labelled a milk crate.

However, a committee member referred to the council's EIS submission that included emphatic terms such as "lack of heritage, lack of design, failure to meet the objectives of the pedestrian spine and the name of the museum" and suggested Ms Concato was understating the opposition the council held.

Ms Concato agreed but said the main objections about flooding and design remained. She and Mr Newman were also questioned about the council's \$140 million sale of the museum site, where Willow Grove and St George's Terrace stand, to the State Government, after a committee member said "the government wasn't buying them because they like the heritage sites and to maintain them and give them a fresh paint job".

"They were buying them to build a museum.

"Was there no risk analysis done by council about the loss of these two crucial, beautiful heritage properties?"

Ms Concato was not employed by the council at the time but said heritage concerns were expressed at the time.

She was quizzed further on what heritage protections the council negotiated with the government given it was aware the State Significant developments could override heritage listings, and will have 21 days to respond.

[READ MORE: Floodplain site 'spectacular' place for a museum: Harwin](#)

[CFMEU places green ban on Willow Grove site](#)

At the hearing, Mr Newman reiterated the council had endorsed the relocation of a museum to Parramatta but not at the expense of demolishing heritage properties and poor design.

“For many years western Sydney has suffered from an under-investment in arts and culture,” he said.

“It represents approximately 10 per cent of the total population of Australia but unfortunately only represents one per cent of total federal funding in arts and culture and approximately five to six per cent of investment for arts and culture in the state budget.”



Parramatta Council CEO Brett Newman.

NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian’s backflip on July 4 revealed the Powerhouse would remain at Ultimo, while still committing to building a museum at Parramatta.

However, opponents have continued pushing for the museum to be built on another site.

The inquiry also heard that keeping the Ultimo site would mean the loss of major exhibitions held at the Parramatta museum.

Mr Newman told the hearing the council was advocating the government to ensure the museum “would continue to be a full museum, offering a full suite of exhibitions”.

Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore also spoke at the hearing and applauded the government’s decision to keep the Powerhouse at Ultimo but “not by pitting region against region”.

“Western Sydney should have its own iconic cultural facilities but not by destroying a distinct and valued inner city cultural institution,” she said.

The hearing continues on August 21.