

# Pressure mounts for museum redesign

## Arts writer

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A green ban has been placed on Willow Grove, site of the future Parramatta Powerhouse. Photo: Steven Siewert



Vulnerable: Grey-headed flying foxes. Photo: Joe Armao

Opponents of the Parramatta Powerhouse project have focused their criticism on plans to demolish two heritage buildings as trade union pressure grows for a redesign of the museum.

The vast majority of community submissions lodged with the NSW government about the project lamented the loss of the 19th-century Italianate villa Willow Grove, a former maternity hospital, and a row of terraces known as St Georges Terrace. Residents who had either been born at Willow Grove or knew of family members who had were

among those penning submissions.

But Parramatta Liberal MP Geoff Lee said only 111 of the 1264 submissions were by Parramatta residents.

“The arts and culture budget must have a focus beyond the inner city and eastern suburbs. Parramatta and western Sydney deserve better. Finally, Willow Grove is not national or state

heritage-listed and there are hundreds of similar buildings in NSW," Mr Lee said.

An environmental impact statement prepared for Infrastructure NSW found that in the Parramatta CBD, Willow Grove was "one of its kind" while St Georges Terrace is the only remaining example of a terrace row in its architectural style.

But it recommended the project proceed as the benefits of moving the cultural institution to the banks of the Parramatta River outweighed heritage concerns and the loss of the community's sense of place.

Building and construction union CFMEU NSW met with Infrastructure NSW yesterday to discuss its green ban on the properties.

Union secretary Darren Greenfield said he has told Infrastructure NSW the green ban was based entirely upon preserving the buildings in their current location and this was "what the people of Parramatta have told us they want".

Mr Greenfield said there would be no backdown.

"The government needs to come up with a solution that preserves these buildings by either incorporating them into the overall design of the precinct or making other changes to ensure the community is able to enjoy these important heritage sites for many years to come," Mr Greenfield said.

Property fund Australian Unity, owner of the business tower adjoining the proposed development site, was among the public submissions calling for retention of Willow Grove and St George's Terrace. The heritage buildings contributed to the character and landscape setting of the riverside precinct, the submission said, and ought to be retained in line with community wishes.

The Dharug Strategic Management Group, a non-profit group set up to represent interests of the Dharug people, said it would not offer the Parramatta Powerhouse its "consent to destroy" the site.

Organisations including Business NSW, Western Sydney Business Chamber, housing developer Dyldam and Western Sydney University were enthusiastic about the project.