

## PARRAMATTA

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# Parramatta, Powerhouse Museum: Australian Unity Fund objection

**The neighbours of the would-be Parramatta Powerhouse won't be rolling out the welcome mat after they entered a 121-page submission objecting to the controversial museum being built next door.**

[Joanne Vella](#), Parramatta Advertiser

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There is huge opposition to demolishing Willow Grove for the Powerhouse Museum.

- [Upper House inquiry into museum management under way](#)
- [What museum? Plans for units, cafes, shops at Powerhouse Parramatta](#)
- [Green ban on demolishing heritage properties](#)

Australian Unity Fund, which is next door to heritage-listed Willow Grove and the site slated for the Parramatta Powerhouse Museum, has made a 121-page submission objecting to the museum being built on the site.

The government approached AU, which is housed in the eight-storey GE Capital Finance building at 32 Phillip St, to acquire the 6759sq lot in February 2018 before withdrawing and ceasing negotiations in May that year.

The government purchased the neighbouring site, where heritage-listed Willow Grove and the St George's Terrace is, for \$140 million to build the museum.



Australian Unity's fund manager Grant Nichols.

At the time, AU fund manager Grant Nichols said the government's significant government and private investment was transforming Parramatta and was something from which 32 Phillip St could benefit.



A concept design for the Parramatta Powerhouse Museum from the Phillip St perspective



The winning design for the Moreau Kusunoki and Genton-designed museum.

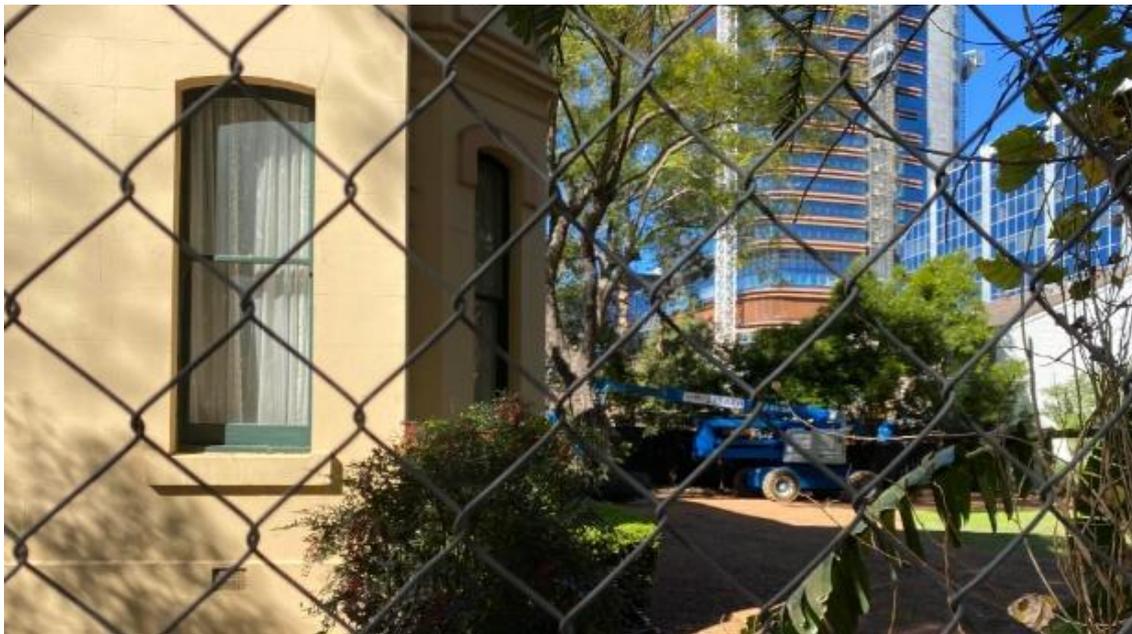
In its submission to the Planning Department, the company expressed concerns over heritage loss, flooding on the site, blocking car access during Dirrabbarri Lane during construction, and adverse noise and wind impacts if the museum, [dubbed the milk crate on stilts](#), is approved.



The GE building is next door to Willow Grove and wants to see it remain there.



The government approached Australian Unity Fund to buy the site but withdrew. The building is leased to GE until June 2023.



A sign protesting the demolition of Willow Grove to make way for the Parramatta Powerhouse Museum.

Submissions closed last month and figures revealed 95 per cent of entries opposed the museum's relocation at Phillip St, citing the demolition of the heritage-listed Willow Grove and St George's Terrace and building on a flood-prone site as chief concerns.

Willow Grove is an Italianate 1870s property that was once used as a maternity hospital between 1919 and 1953, while the 1881-built St George's Terrace is a row of two-storey terraces.

The AUF feedback, prepared by Urbis, stated: “These heritage items contribute to the local character and landscape setting of the riverside precinct and could be integrated into the Parramatta Powerhouse Museum and the public domain and the planned Civic Link.



St George's Terrace on the chopping block if the museum is built at Phillip St. Picture: Angelo Velardo

“The local heritage listed items provide in a level of protection of the significance of these places in the planning framework, that are understood by Australian Unity to represent heritage significance that is valued by the community to be retained.”

AUF also raised concerns with the lack of information on how major events, that could attract crowds of up to 10,000, would be managed.

It also said the AUF building carpark driveway could be 4m deep when the Parramatta River flooded.

“The flood impacts of the final PPM design should be tested using City of Parramatta Council’s more up to date, and peer-reviewed, flood model when it becomes available to ensure that there will be no adverse flood impacts on the subject site or the surrounding public domain,” the submission states.



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Unity has questioned how large crowds will be managed at the museum.

Despite acute criticism of the museum at that site, Parramatta state Liberal MP Geoff Lee said only a few of the objections were local. “I believe it’s crucial to understand that of the 1264 submissions, only 111 came from Parramatta,” he said. “The majority are from outside the electorate, no address provided, or not from NSW.

“There are in fact submissions from Queensland, Victoria, Northern Territory, ACT, Western Australia and even one from the United Kingdom.”

He insisted there was support for the museum.

“As a local member for over nine years, there is overwhelming support in the Parramatta community for the Parramatta Powerhouse,” he said. “I’m not going to be lectured by people in the eastern suburbs or inner city while I fight for arts and culture funding in Parramatta.

“It’s disgusting that organisations in Bondi, Hunters Hills or Millers Point want to stand in the way of Western Sydney having its share of arts funding.”

Organisations such as the troubled CFMEU in Pyrmont, Historic Houses Association of Australia in Bondi, the National Trust NSW in Miller’s Point and The Hunters Hill Trust, have all made submissions.

He also attacked the local-heritage listed Willow Grove, saying it was not listed under national or state register and there were “hundreds of similar buildings in NSW.”