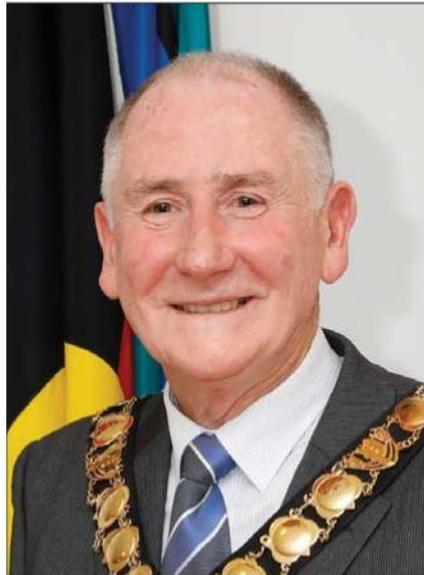


Tweak in Powerhouse design for safety

Despite disagreements, council supports the riverbank site

DI BARTOK



Cr Gerard and Cr Dwyer

THE NSW Government appears to have heeded Parramatta Council's call for a redesign to reduce the dangerous flood risk of the controversial riverside Powerhouse.

While council has not managed to have a requested sit-down with the Department of Planning, Lord Mayor Bob Dwyer is pleased with the

government's announcement that a redesign would remove the publicly accessible under-croft identified as a death trap during downpours that swell the river.

"In our submission to the department, one of our concerns was water flooding into the undercroft, causing a danger to the public," Cr Dwyer told the Times.

However, a last-ditch plea in council's submission for the government to try for a redesign that would save the heritage properties Willow Grove and St George's Terrace has again been ignored.

But Cr Dwyer said council was largely in the dark about what the latest is with the Parramatta Powerhouse.

"The government has gone quiet with us over the Powerhouse, so anything is possible," he said.

At an earlier council meeting deputy Lord Mayor Michelle Garrard said that, following the announcement to keep the Ultimo building, there was hope that the government "may change its mind over the demolition" of the heritage buildings.

Despite some disagreements, council supports siting of the Powerhouse on the riverbank and is excited with the investment in Parramatta.

Centre of Global Sydney

Parramatta is the centre of global Sydney and deserves a world-class cultural institution. The new Powerhouse Museum will deliver that," Cr Dwyer said.

"I thank the NSW Government for recommitting to this game-changing project and we will do everything in our power to ensure the best outcome for the community."

Meanwhile, the Upper House inquiry into the NSW Government's handling of the Parramatta Powerhouse project will have its fourth hearing in October.

OPINION: Councillors square off over Powerhouse Museum location

Preserving heritage a win-win for our city

CR DONNA DAVIS



THERE are very few buildings you see that make you want to smile, but Willow Grove is one of these. Willow Grove and St George's Terrace enhance Parramatta and are of high social significance. They must remain central to any reimagining of our city to ensure we incorporate the past in the present.

The Parramatta community has campaigned for over three years to save these significant buildings because they are such an important part of the built and social fabric of our city.

The State Government must accept that Parramatta needs and deserves investment in the arts and cultural institutions but not at the expense of our heritage.

In 2014/15 the Council bought Willow Grove and St George's Terrace because they were central to its River Strategy.

When the Council was sacked in 2016, the State Government used this opportunity to purchase the sites and proceed with their proposal to move the Powerhouse from Ultimo.

When a new Councillor body was elected in 2017, it unanimously supported the incorporation of both heritage buildings in any redevelopment of the site.

Two weeks ago, the State Government capitulated to mounting pressure announcing that the Powerhouse will be staying in Ultimo thus putting into doubt the validity of the entire Powerhouse EIS process.

It also raises questions about the key themes and objectives of the Powerhouse Parramatta.

The proposal is to create a new institution with lots of flexible space but for such a significant project, funded primarily with taxpayer's money, is this museum "fit for purpose" or is it more as it seems that the Government is making it all up as they go along?

Deficit of cultural infrastructure

No one argues with the fact that there is a deficit of cultural infrastructure west of ANZAC Bridge, along with equitable arts funding.

However, given the backflip, strong criticism of the building design (the undercroft, flood responsiveness, public domain), the CFMEU Green Ban and the looming Upper House Parliamentary Inquiry the project should be reconsidered, or at the very least reshaped, to ensure Parramatta cultivates its very own institution.

A rethink right now gives the State Government the breathing space it needs to reassess the project at a time of extraordinary economic uncertainty.

Reconsidering the project still allows for significant investment in our city while retaining the heritage that contributes so much to this place.

The fact is there are better alternatives. A return to the Council's River Strategy provides an opportunity to save the heritage while creating a 24/7 arts and cultural precinct delivering an iconic cultural institution (an art gallery) to complement Riverside Theatres, an outdoor amphitheatre and open green space with visual links to the river.

Even better is the opportunity to realise a museum in the Cumberland Heritage precinct that incorporates the Parramatta Female Factory.

This National Heritage site is our equivalent to Sydney's Macquarie Street. Commissioned by Governor Macquarie and designed by Francis Greenway, it is the earliest and most intact convict women's site surviving in Australia.

With a light rail route planned directly through the precinct it is the prime location to build a magnificent new museum sympathetic to its heritage surrounds.

An alternative business case has been presented to NSW Treasury by community advocates that delivers a museum for a fraction of the cost of the proposed Powerhouse Parramatta.

This is an option that won't compromise heritage, nor building design but it unlocks countless possibilities for a museum in an extraordinary location just a stone's throw from Parramatta Park and BankWest Stadium.

This vision would provide an opportunity for the City of Parramatta to realise its River Strategy development with the current funding commitment shifted to a museum on State owned land at the Cumberland Precinct.

Delivering double the cultural spaces for the community and tourist industry and double the jobs it's a win, win for Parramatta.

Councillor Donna Davis was elected to City of Parramatta Council in September 2017. She represents the Epping Ward. Views expressed here are those of the author and do not represent Parramatta Council.

Focus on the facts and forget the fluff



CR BILL TYRRELL

AS an elected councillor, I am more than comfortable to support and ensure that Powerhouse Parramatta has the central river location and is delivered now.

The Premier, Minister Harwin and Geoff Lee the Member for Parramatta, and supporters agree that delivering right now the museum for us and future generations is important to Western Sydney and the City of Parramatta, the Central River City.

Focus now should be maintained on building a centrally located Arts and Cultural hub, focused on the Powerhouse Museum, rebuilt Riverside Theatres and in my opinion Roxy Theatres.

Roxy Theatres has far more value historically and economically than the other two items, St George's Terrace and Willow Grove combined; a thousand times over.

The River location is perfect as it is centrally located to the CBD, trains, ferries, Parramatta Light Rail, the future Metro West station, shopping, restaurants, accommodation, universities and other tourism.

It is also centrally located for workers, tourists, families, students and everyone from Western Sydney.

It is connected to the River, being the heart of the Central River City, great for hosting or being the hub for events on the river to highlight our city.

Our growing heart and soul

It is connected to Riverside Theatres and close to the Roxy Theatre.

The central location makes it a drawcard for conferences and business people to work, live and play while in our great city.

It will draw millions of people into the centre of the city and adds to the activation of our city.

The central River location is the only location that makes the Museum business case stack up and will be an iconic building to walk towards down Civic Link and through to the river.

The Museum will form part of the growing heart and soul of our city.

The Museum in the next five years will provide thousands of construction jobs and operational jobs as well as associated increase in surrounding employment in locally located tourism businesses which are badly needed, while not having to wait at least 15 years for the employment benefits to flow.

The economic benefits of locating, constructing and operating the museum, outweighs the sad and unfortunate loss of the locally heritage listed items. The North Parramatta Precinct is not suitable because:

- The site is currently a Mental Health Facility;
- A new location and purpose-built facility for NSW Health would have to be located, designed, approved and constructed and facilities moved, that's a minimum of 10 years;

- No available land in that precinct, that is large enough to house a new museum to allow the footprint, size and scale that is required to house the world class museum and exhibits to ensure that Parramatta and Western Sydney gets the world class museum it deserves.
- It does not have any current transport connections, until Parramatta Light Rail is completed, but will only have one transport connection,
- Workers, tourists, families, students and everyone else from Western Sydney will come to Parramatta via train, Metro West and ferry and will not want to make another transport connection and cannot walk to the museum,
- No connection to shopping, restaurants, accommodation and other tourist locations which are located within the heart of the city or easily located,
- No flow-on effects of employment in local tourism businesses, by having a location that is not centrally located to the city,

The North Parramatta Precinct location for a museum will mean that the business case fails as it will not have the number of visitor numbers and mean that the economic benefit to spend the money to design, construct and operate the museum does not stack up.

The North Parramatta location of being an arts and cultural precinct is only an idea still stuck in its infancy as all the parties up and around that location are not on the same page, which means that the only reason that a few parties are proposing the museum idea up there is that precinct needs a substantial drawcard to even get people interested in moving forward.

Unfortunately, if it was to go ahead, the museum in that location would fail and so would the precinct.

As far as the heritage buildings, Willow Grove and St George's Terrace that have to be demolished for the Museum in its river location, they are not, World Heritage or State Heritage listed, nor is it considered that status, they are only locally heritage listed,

St Georges Terraces is only a façade and not a complete building, which would require significant resources to restore and maintain, so why is it heritage listed?

Councillor Bill Tyrrell was elected to City of Parramatta Council in September 2017. He represents the Epping Ward. Views expressed here are those of the author and do not represent Parramatta Council.