

4 October, 2020

Save the Powerhouse

(Facebook and email)

MORE SIGNS THAT HARWOOD AND THE ULTIMO SITE MAY BE DOOMED?

Hi Everyone,

A joint submission from MAAS CEO Lisa Havilah and Create NSW's Annette Pitman <http://tiny.cc/1snysz> in response to the Government's draft Pyrmont Peninsula Place (and Economic Development) Strategy, sets out clearly their "wholistic (sic) approach" for the future of the current Powerhouse Museum site in Ultimo. And it's not encouraging.

In their document, the entire site will become the "Ultimo Creative Industries Precinct (UCIP)" (no mention of a Museum!) which will be "embedded within the Pyrmont Peninsula as a key cultural anchor."

They point out that any recommendations they put forward will be subject to yet another Final Business Case, to be completed by end 2020, that will "...test options for a new 1,500 seat lyric theatre and creative industries spaces". This picks up a recurrent theme, that the unique Harwood Building will be turned into a "music-hall' theatre and commercial centre, and so will inevitably be gutted, as feared.

Further "A precinct master plan is being prepared" in response to "the site's strategic location at the junction of Darling Harbour and the Goods Line, and as an entry to Pyrmont from Ultimo."(?) The plan also establishes principles for "leveraging the heritage value of the site...revealing and showcasing its history."(?)

They conclude that UCIP will..."be a place that provides rich cultural experiences, facilitates collaboration and partnership with industry and supports Sydney's diverse creative industries community."

But where does that leave the internationally-recognised Powerhouse Museum, that has graced the Ultimo site since 1988?

First (see the attached plan), obviously, the Harwood Building would disappear, to make way for the "lyric theatre and creative industries space". A second potential victim to the wreckers would be the distinguished Wran Building "to reveal the unique fabric of the Power House and Post Office buildings". The "Ultimo Powerhouse", however, (Switch House, Boiler House, Turbine Hall and Office Building) would remain as "The Powerhouse Museum Ultimo", and the Old Ultimo Post Office, which is State Heritage protected, would be spared, too.

If it all sounds too depressing, let's remember that this document is merely a submission from Government servants, however influential they may be, and, more important, NOTHING can happen until the Final Business Case is published, which will give us all time to return to the attack!

And meanwhile, we can look forward to the fourth hearing of the Parliamentary Inquiry NEXT THURSDAY 08 OCTOBER (schedule yet TBA), which is sure to produce some strong new directions for Saving the Powerhouse.

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