

14 November, 2020

'Problematic Castle Hill expansion project in exhibition'

Save the Powerhouse community campaign group circulated these comments by email and Facebook!

'The NSW Government has published details of its planned Expansion of the Museums Discovery Centre project at <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/project/35916>. They include "...removal of vegetation, earthworks and site preparation, and the construction and operation of a new building for the storage, conservation, research and display of the Powerhouse collection". Public comment is invited by December 1.

The announcement is not good news, not least because the project is presented as a "State Significant Development".

A "State Significant" (SDD) designation is one of the NSW Government's preferred ways of taking complete control of new Sydney developments, while silencing any community objections. This classification can be applied to any projects "due to the size, economic value or potential impacts that (they) may have" (see <https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/epi-2011-0511>) and it automatically precludes any checks and balances normally required such as evaluation by Councils, allowing buildings and structures of any height and scale that suits the Government and the developer(s), heritage destruction, etc...

Second, as everyone knows - except the Government, apparently - the lifeblood of all museums is their collection(s). This is especially true of the Powerhouse in Ultimo, the unique custodian of the area's rich industrial history, where the collections are stored, studied and cared for in the specially-designed Harwood Building.

Yet one of the project's key objectives is "construction and operation of a new building for the storage, conservation, research and display of the Powerhouse collection". This supports numerous earlier indications that the new Castle Hill facility will replace Harwood, and it's further described at <http://tiny.cc/7mn4tz> . "The proposed new Building J will cater for – Storage for the Powerhouse collection and (all) archives...suites of conservation laboratories and collection work spaces - photography, digitisation and collection documentation facilities - meeting and storage rooms, collection research and study areas.

Expanding Castle Hill as a collection facility makes the two other "Powerhouse" project sites virtually redundant, calling into question the Government's hollow mantra that Sydney will have TWO future world-class "Powerhouse Museums" - in Ultimo and in Parramatta - and the vast amounts of public money that have already been lavished (wasted?) on this concept.

In summary, the Expansion of the Museums Discovery Centre is just further confirmation that the Government has resolved to charge blindly ahead with this project, despite well-documented community opposition to many aspects including

- Location, especially the long, inconvenient journey to Caste Hill for locals and visitors with tight vacation schedules, whereas the central Ultimo site is easily accessed.
- Universal recognition of the Ultimo Powerhouse (compared with "Where's Castle Hill?").
- Trashing Parramatta's heritage buildings to make way for "Powerhouse 2".
- Destruction of the essential oil research plantation

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1179/bac.2003.28.1.014> in Castle Hill.

Meanwhile the Government is seeking expressions of interest for the "Powerhouse Parramatta" early works <http://tiny.cc/mmn4tz> and selected architect Lahznimmo to design the Castle Hill extension <http://tiny.cc/xmn4tz> .

The situation is admittedly discouraging, but at least the Government's invitation to comment offers us one more chance to speak out loudly and be heard. You can make your submission to <http://tiny.cc/6mn4tz> before December 1.

Save the Powerhouse

 **Savethepowerhouse**