

# Powerhouse design gets roof-top makeover

## As unions vow to stand in-front of bulldozer

■ ELIZABETH FRIAS

THE architects designing the \$780M Powerhouse Parramatta has presented to Infrastructure NSW an improved design to include rooftop spaces which images revealed a sweeping view of the city and its river.

The Australian and French architects, Moreau Kusunoki and Genton, according to Architecture AU latest report, has submitted the improved design that reduced the size of the building but with an "inclusion of a new rooftop pavilion."

The riverfront space of the museum has been reduced by six metres to "allow for a more generous public domain on the north side of the building facing the riverfront."

On the front entry side of the museum facing the CBD has been increased by six metres to provide a bus stop and drop-off points on Phillip St.

With the reduction of the estimated 18,000sqm exhibition spaces for thousands of prized artefacts within the museum, "a rooftop pavilion" in the eastern side of the building will be used as a "multi-functional indoor-outdoor space for education, community and event activities," the report said.

It is understood Infrastructure NSW has responded to the architects' submission, which is included among the 1,303 submissions on the Powerhouse Parramatta plans for a significant development in the state expected to usher an estimated two million visitors to Sydney's second largest city.

This latest development on the museum has been welcomed by Powerhouse chief executive Lisa Havilah saying, "I am excited by the progress being made on this extraordinary design."

Ms Havilah also said they welcomed the NSW Government's recent decision to relocate Willow Grove to North Parramatta because it will mean "improved access to this much-loved building built also deliver it in a much better setting."

However, critics of the move include the National Trust, who all say that Willow Grove cannot be moved without significant damage.

President of the Museum Trust, Professor Barney Glover AO, said the completion of the world-class museum will "contribute to the expansion of the visitor and night-time economies of Parramatta while also being a place that importantly reflects the cultural diversity of Sydney."

"The project will transform the riverfront area into an active public domain

with improved pedestrian connections and deliver part of the 'Civic Link' which connects the heart of the Parramatta CBD to the river", said Professor Glover.

The architects said their "latticed structural exoskeleton" and "seven column-free exhibition spaces" design gives "lightness and transparency of the structure, along with the in-between spaces created, will connect the visitors to the surrounding landscape and enhance a unique Museum experience."

While tenders have gone out for the building work, the North Parramatta Residents Action Group president Suzette Meade said there needed to be a reassessment of the whole project, given the changes to the original approved design.

"They are not minor tweaks we've had along the way, with the closing of the undercroft for non-exhibition times, changes to the setback and now the rooftop terrace, so it needs to go back to the community," Mrs Meade told the Times.

NPRAG remains opposed to the current site of the Powerhouse and the demolition or re-siting of Willow Grove. A green ban from the construction union, the CMFEU remains on the Willow Grove site, with members vowing to "stand in front of the bulldozers" if necessary.



Above: the Powerhouse design and below the concept that didn't make the cut



## "Jarring" design that keeps heritage

WITH all the controversy surrounding the Powerhouse Museum in Parramatta, we revisit the only design on the shortlist that retained the heritage properties Willow Grove and St George's Terrace in Phillip St.

So, would this have been more palatable to opponents who say the planned building would be flood-prone and comes at the price of irreplaceable heritage - which they say will not survive the NSW

Government's solution of move to another site?

The architects of this rejected design Steven Holl Architects (US) and Conrad Gargett (Australia) envisioned "an anthropological vessel touching the earth lightly" - a homage to Mandjabu fish traps.

The jury, made up of a panel of leading architects and builders, praised the "courage and ambition" of the team's design and said the key objectives of maximizing

public space, aiming to achieve net zero emissions, and concentrating the museum functions were considered to be excellent starting points for the design.

The jury ultimately found, however, that the scale of the building was not appropriate for the site, and that the juxtaposition between museum and heritage buildings would be "jarring."

Moreau Kusunoki and Genton ultimately won the design competition with its

controversial museum with a latticed "hyper-platform" design in December, but the other short-listed designs were not released until after the decision was made.

Since then, the design has been tweaked a couple of times, but not so Willow Grove can be saved on its present site.

• DI BARTOK