

8 November, 2020

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MAAS TRUSTEE APPOINTMENTS RECONFIRM GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS BIAS

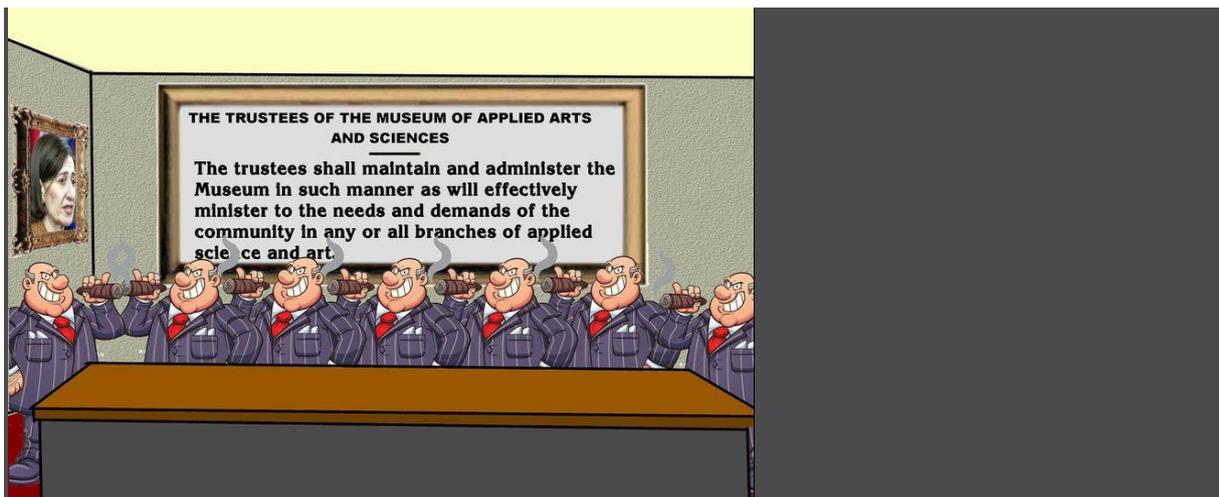
Arts Minister Don Harwin has announced his three new appointees to the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS) Trust <http://tiny.cc/nos1tz> :

- The Hon. Peter Collins AM QC, former leader of the NSW Liberal Party and now a prominent figure in the lucrative Finance sector, will join as both Trustee and President, to succeed Professor Barney Glover, starting his three year term in mid-December.

- Fellow trustee billionaire Lang Walker AO, is the founder and Executive Chairman of the Walker Corporation, one of Australia's largest property developers. "He is responsible for iconic...developments across Australia, with a focus on Western Sydney", according to Harwin. Walker will also serve until late 2023, starting in December.

- Finally, Mark Hassel is a partner at KPMG, one of Australia's "big four" investment management consultancies, which, significantly, recommended the Powerhouse "move" to Parramatta. He will start work immediately replacing Dexus CEO Darren Steinberg who resigned over "a possible conflict of interest."

Read also SMH yesterday [7 November, 2020] <http://tiny.cc/tos1tz> .



Back in 2018 we asked "How Far Can We Trust the MAAS Trustees? Under the Museums Act (1945), the Premier is responsible to Parliament for the operations of the Museum, which is managed "...by nine Trustees, appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the Minister for the Arts." The only selection guidelines the Act offers for Trustees is that there should be "representation across a range of...categories on public sector Boards and Trusts", of whom at least one (JUST ONE?) should be "...experienced in the arts or sciences". The primary responsibility of the MAAS Board is stated as "ministering to the needs and demands of the community in...applied science and art and industry development" on behalf of Australia's internationally-acclaimed Arts and Sciences Museum.

As far as we know the MAAS Board of Trustees has no recent history of consultation with the general public, nor of responding to the wider community's "needs and demands".

On the contrary, it has a troubled track record of welcoming to its ranks political, big business, and property development magnates who have the ear of the Arts Minister and the NSW government. The three new appointees are no exception. The Minister's press release enthuses "We are extremely fortunate to have these recognised business leaders on board to guide the Museum",

adding that Peter Collins' current focus is "finance." while "Investing in Greater Western Sydney" is a priority for Lang and the Walker Group, and Mark Hassell is "skilled in strategic partnerships". No mention of relevant knowledge and experience in Museum operations and management in the Arts and Culture Sector, or in associated fields.

The new appointments to the MAAS Board have infuriated - but not greatly surprised - NSW museum specialists. As one outraged museums consultant commented "What (these new Trustees) do NOT bring is independence from the NSW Government...Is the government serious about having an independent MAAS Trust with an appropriate set of skills? It says something about (their) position on the challenges facing MAAS...that they have selected a former Liberal politician as chair, a leading developer, and another partner from one of the big four accountancy...practices." And a highly-respected Sydney business figure and PHM donor, who has known all three "for years" observed "This is disastrous. Collins...has been a passionate advocate of the move West from the beginning (while) Lang will support anything the Libs want. The KMPG appointment is also appalling."

At a moment when the Powerhouse as we know it is fighting for its very existence, more heavy-handed right-wing control from Big Business appointees who join fanatical "Powerhouse move" supporter David Borger on the Board, is the last thing it needs!