

30 January, 2021

'Govt to approve "revised" Parra Project but major risks remain'

Save the Powerhouse community campaign group advises:

'It is now reliably rumoured that approval of the revised Environmental Impact Statement for the controversial Parramatta Powerhouse will be announced by the Government by mid-February. This would clear the way for full implementation of the contested Riverbank project, including construction of the widely-ridiculed "milk-crate" building and "moving" Parramatta's heritage-rich Willow Grove mansion from the site by dismantling it brick by brick and restoring it elsewhere. In late 2020 the Government revealed that over 1,300 public submissions to the initial EIS had been received, most raising serious concerns about the proposed 'museum's design, especially its vulnerability to flooding (over 20% of objections). Of particular note was the submission from water specialists Molino Stewart, which expertly identified and described the design's numerous fatal flaws, and showed that the flood risks presented "A GRAVE THREAT TO HUMAN LIFE."

The Government's agency, Ethos Urban" subsequently prepared a Response to Submissions (RTS) <http://tiny.cc/uwjbtz> "detailing amendments to the proposed design and operation of the museum ... so as to address all issues raised."

Molino Stewart then produced a second report (for PMA) <http://tiny.cc/4xjbtz> "to determine whether the flood risk issues had been adequately addressed... by the ... design and operational amendments proposed." They conceded that "the redesign of building features, particularly the undercroft and its connections to the podium level, have significantly reduced flood risks to people outside the building (and) inside the building" BUT warned that "as it might not be possible to achieve acceptable flood risks at the site...there is still considerable work to be done to demonstrate that the museum's collections can be provided with an appropriate level of flood protection - if at all. It is therefore recommended that...FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS AND DECISIONS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE DEVELOPMENT CONSENT IS GRANTED TO THE PARRAMATTA POWERHOUSE MUSEUM."

Museums' consultant Kylie Winkworth (for PMA) agrees that safety risks to human life may have been partially addressed, but that the priceless collections will still be vulnerable to flood events. She observes <http://tiny.cc/gxjbtz> "The appropriateness of selecting this flood prone site for a museum has not been explained...This is a building that is so exposed to flooding that the undercroft is required...to ALLOW FLOODWATERS TO FLOW UNDERNEATH...THE MUSEUM...The safety of the museum's visitors and collections should have been the highest priority consideration in the site selection and design competition".

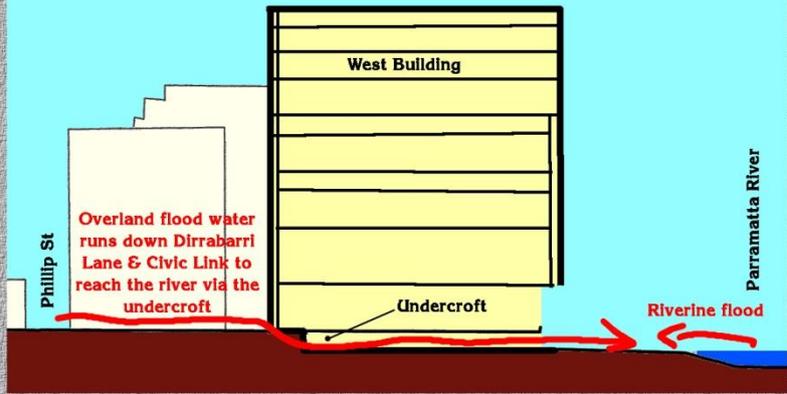
The Parramatta City Council has always wholly supported their local community's right to a new cultural institution of their choice. But, it still has serious concerns about the flood risks despite the design modifications, especially questioning "...the suitability of the undercroft as a flood solution where the conveyance of floodwater through the undercroft also passes through proposed habitable floor space...COUNCIL CONSIDERS THIS TO BE IN CONTRADICTION OF THE FLOODPLAIN DEVELOPMENT MANUAL AND NSW FLOOD POLICY".

There is general agreement that the Government has brushed aside critical questions including

- How the undercroft screens (in the event of flooding) will be operated reliably?
- Whether the provision of emergency power to lifts will cover both buildings and the undercroft
- How often the building is likely to flood?
- The standard of climate control planned for, and whether it is adequate to protect the collections?
- Whether the emergency generator and/or other building design features will be able to maintain climate control standards during extreme floods?
- The impact of flood events on museum operations?

...amid fears that, if project approval is announced very soon as predicted, they will never be answered.

Save the Powerhouse, 30-01-2021



Undercroft which will host large public events is also designed to "convey" Overland Flood Water to the river