



Heritage debate was always heated

Defenders of Parramatta's dwindling heritage buildings are reflecting

■ DI BARTOK

WITH International Women's Day for this year just passed, defenders of Parramatta's dwindling heritage buildings are reflecting on the sustained attack on female history in Sydney's burgeoning second CBD.

The debate between development to take Parramatta forward and retaining the Cradle City history that belongs to the nation was always going to be heated - on both sides.

The threat to the sensitive Female Factory site with a planned business "hub", not to mention the protracted push for World Heritage status, and the imminent "relocation" of Willow Grove - once a maternity hospital - to make way for the Powerhouse Museum throws a light on a disregard for female history in Parramatta, leading women leaders feel.

Ever since the winning design from Moreau Kusunoki that necessitated the demolition of Willow Grove in Phillip St was announced, there has been community outcry.

In answer to that, the NSW Government has announced a "relocation" of the 1870s Italianate villa to an unconfined site - with the Fleet St heritage precinct a distinct possibility - and the retention of at least part of St Georges Terrace.

Suzette Meade from North Parramatta Residents Action Group finds it ironic that the wiping or disregard for the history of female pioneers in Parramatta is happening under the State's first elected female Premier, Gladys Berejiklian.

Strong female connection

"Willow Grove was built by a woman Annie Gallagher in the late 1870s as a private villa. She was a local business owner but the house had been attributed to her husband, who was a Parramatta councillor," Ms Meade said.

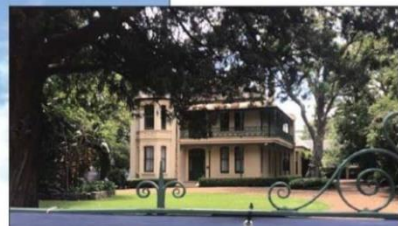
"Later it became a maternity hospital, so another place with a strong female connection."

"And the Female Factory in Fleet St, where women worked and were the mothers of our nation, is also under threat. With government plans to build a business hub, using the heritage buildings rather than the newer buildings on site will hinder moves to have the Factory becoming a World Heritage site."

Labor Parramatta councillor Donna Davis also decries the amount heritage that has had to make way for development.



Suzette Meade, Willow Grove and Female Factory.



"During the Carr government, when the justice precinct was being built, Brislington House, in Marsden St, was preserved for a medical museum, yet they can't preserve the history of Willow Grove," Cr Davis said.

Brislington House, a two-storey Georgian building, is the oldest existing dwelling in the inner city of Parramatta. It was constructed in 1821 for ex-convict John Hodges. By 1949, it was quarters for nurses at Parramatta Hospital.

It has operated as a nurses' museum, staffed by volunteers since the 1980s.

Standing steadfast amid Parramatta's soaring business towers, it is testament to colonial history - or, rather, herstory.

However, the Powerhouse, or rather Museum of Applied Arts, is considered a boon for Parramatta, by Lord Mayor Bob Dwyer and David Borger, Western Sydney Director of the Sydney Business Chamber as well as the wider business community.

Mr Borger is on record as saying abandoning the Powerhouse Parramatta project would be "a blow to Western Sydney".

He has dubbed Willow Grove as a "not particularly significant or unique" building that is outweighed by the benefit of the \$840mill Powerhouse to Parramatta.

Mr Dwyer, while upset over the reloca-

tion of Willow Grove, feels the Powerhouse is favoured by most people in Parramatta, even at the price of heritage.

The Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) has imposed a green ban on demolition or relocation of Willow Grove. Heritage defenders are prepared to chain themselves to the gates to hinder demolition, expected to start in a few months time.

Two of the state's largest unions - the NSW arm of the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) and the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association - have placed a green ban on the house, effectively preventing its demolition.

The house stands on Darug land and the land is sacred to local indigenous groups.

\$20M boost for driver program

\$20M will be spent over the next five years helping more people get behind the wheel with the expansion of the Driver Licensing Access Program (DLAP).

Minister for Transport and Roads Andrew Constance said the program's investment had been doubled and is aimed

The program helps participants to navigate the Graduated Licensing Scheme (GLS). It includes preparing for the driver knowledge test to gain their Learner's Licence, assistance accumulating 120 hours on road supervised driving experience as well as the costs in getting a licence.

Mr Constance said the statistics show unauthorised drivers are four times more