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Retail, pub, apartments planned for Parramatta Powerhouse Museum

Joanne Vella, April 13, 2021 - 5:33PM

Cafes, 'buzzing canteens', shops, bars and apartments will help make the western Sydney Powerhouse Museum 'a community precinct' but critics have labelled the project a "Westfields on water".

Critics have slammed retail plans for the Parramatta Powerhouse Museum as a "Westfields on water" after designs reveal shops, apartments and a pub.



Suzette Meade is furious over the retail plans for the Powerhouse. Picture: Richard Dobson

North Parramatta Residents' Action Group obtained the retail vision and strategy for the museum, which outlines plans for "large format buzzing canteens, cafes, small bars and operators that combine food production with retail".

"Food and beverage will be the primary retail category for Powerhouse Parramatta, a key driver of social interaction and a means of making the precinct relevant in daily social life," the strategy states.

"The proposed retail mix of food and beverage, lifestyle, culture, wellbeing and convenience for Powerhouse Parramatta is uniquely complex for a cultural facility, but essential to successfully establishing the project as a precinct rather than a museum."

The comments have sparked outrage from the action group.

"The people of NSW are being duped," action group spokeswoman Suzette Meade said. "Parramatta Powerhouse is just a Westfields on water to hold large business conventions, rolling exhibitions topped with apartments and a pub. We are not getting a museum — it's there in black and white."

Shooters and Fishers Party leader Robert Borsak echoed the comments and said the project was “a moving bloody target”.



“It’s just an exercise in setting up a commercial precinct with a so-called museum tacked on the side,” he said.

Infrastructure NSW has earmarked 56 apartments for the museum, a taxpayer-footed plan that triggered outrage because the landmark will be surrounded by hotels and apartments, including the neighbouring Meriton tower.

But the Powerhouse Museum has defended its plans.

*Business Western Sydney executive director David Borger defended the retail plans.
Picture: Matthew Vasilescu*

“As with almost any major cultural institution in the world the museum will offer food and beverage as well as gift shop amenities,” a Parramatta Powerhouse spokeswoman said.

“Powerhouse Parramatta will be a world class arts and culture destination for the

communities of greater western Sydney, as well as the many domestic and international visitors that come to Parramatta.”

Business Western Sydney executive director David Borger said the retail space would only occupy 775sq m, or 4 per cent of the 18,000sq m of exhibition space.

“I challenge the critics to name a world-class museum in the world that does not have a food and beverage and retail offering,” he said.

“The suggestion that the Powerhouse Parramatta is going to be anything other than a world-class cultural institution for western Sydney is laughable.

“This is another ill-informed exaggeration by opponents who want to see the families of western Sydney robbed of the greatest investment in cultural infrastructure since the Sydney Opera House.’

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