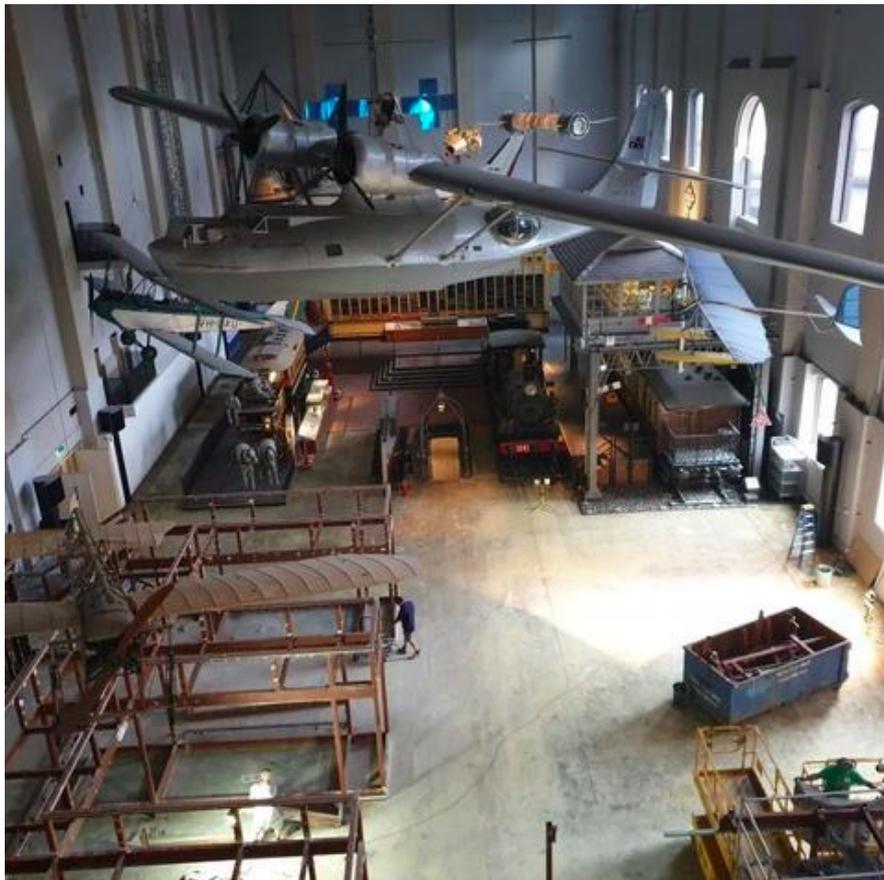


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From
John
McDonald ☺

(Extracted from a longer document with other arts news; to subscribe see end of message)



[Tearing up the carpet, burning down the house..](#)

Even though I almost dread to raise the subject again the Powerhouse Museum is back in the news for the usual wrong reasons. It was July last year when the Don and Dom show descended on the museum to announce that the building would be remaining in Ultimo. This seemed at the time like a big turnaround and a major victory for the forces of common sense that had been trying to prevent

the systematic dismantling of the PHM. But there was so little detail given that it would have been premature to break out the champagne.

Ten months on from the grand backdown and we can see it was no backdown at all, merely a smokescreen intended to buy time while the next devious scheme was put in place. Almost nothing has changed in the government's approach to the Powerhouse and Parramatta. They are still intent of building a mega-entertainment centre in Parramatta even though the site was flooded in the recent downpours. They are still intending to demolish or "move" the historic Willow Grove. They are still constructing a gigantic storage depot in Castle Hill, and even sending out press releases to tell us what a great thing this is. They are taking apart the existing museum piece by piece, condemning major exhibits to an uncertain future.

The idea is quite simple: fudge, fib and dodge for long enough until public anger dies down and complacency sets in. Gladys's gangsters have simply decided they can outlast the vigorous campaign conducted by the Powerhouse Museum Alliance and other critics of what is probably the worst ever piece of cultural vandalism undertaken in this country. I'm aware that Rio Tinto deserves an honorable mention for blowing up sacred sites in the Pilbara, but for sheer persistence and dishonesty the NSW Government is unbeatable.

Kylie Winkworth, who has made the Powerhouse debacle her mastermind subject, anticipates the new storage arrangements will cost no less than \$200 million. She notes this is double what the NSW government has spent of cultural infrastructure across the entire state for the past 10 years. So while necessary infrastructure is neglected – and established galleries such as Manly have their funding ripped out from under them – the government is spending \$200 million on an utterly unnecessary, counterproductive project that has been bitterly opposed by experts and public alike. They simply don't give a damn.

They won't even tell us what the development plans are for Ultimo while the major *Transport*,

Flight and Space display is being taken apart without so much as a dust sheet in place. It's vandalism in broad daylight.

This saga still has a long way to run, but the signs are ominous unless there is a major public mobilisation against a wasteful, ruinous project that is destroying the state's cultural heritage and giving Parramatta a monstrous edifice it doesn't actually want.

As the Labor Party seem utterly toothless with this issue (and indeed with most issues), perhaps the best hope lies with enough Coalition members being accused of sexual offences and sent to the cross-benches. We've already seen MP Michael Johnsen go down in flames (although he's contemplating a new career as a lobbyist!) and this week Gareth Ward, the Minister for Families, Communities and Disabilities, has been sent into limbo pending an investigation into allegations of sexual violence dating from 2013. Not exactly a family-friendly look, even though he denies everything.

If Coalition MPS keep getting into sex scandals, Gladys will soon find herself in minority government. There is, of course, the small matter of her own involvement with disgraced former MP, Dazza Maguire. We need not mention sex, but there are various conflicts of interest that Teflon Gladys might eventually have to discuss with the ICAC. I'm afraid the Powerhouse is the biggest crime of all but it's being trumpeted with press releases.



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