

<https://cityhubsydney.com.au/2021/06/sydney-gives-their-verdict-on-the-powerhouse-museums-500m-transformation/>

# CityHub

- [City Hub](#)

CITY HUB

16 JUNE, 2021

## Sydney gives their verdict on the Powerhouse Museum's \$500m transformation

Posted on [16 June 2021](#) by [Daniel Lo Surdo](#) in [City Hub](#) [Featured City Hub](#) [0 Comments](#)



*An artist's impression of the Powerhouse Museum renewal. Photo: Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences*

By SASHA FOOT

The NSW Government announced yesterday a \$500m conversion of the Powerhouse Museum to a fashion and design institution. The decision comes after many years of uncertainty surrounding the Powerhouse Museum's future in Ultimo.

Museum specialist and Powerhouse Museum Alliance spokesperson Kylie Winkworth expressed disappointment at the planned transformation. “[The investment is] destructive of the museum’s heritage values,” Winkworth told *City Hub*.

The science and technology exhibits will be moved to the planned \$840 million Parramatta Flagship headquarters. The upgrades have drawn criticism centred upon the site’s distinct separation from its intended purpose. “To narrow the museum’s focus to just fashion and design is a betrayal of the museum’s 140 years of collecting practice,” Winkworth said. “The Government promised last July when the Powerhouse was announced to stay in Ultimo that it would retain its focus on technology, engineering and design”.

Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore applauded local community groups and expressed full support for the shift in concentration to fashion and design. Moore considered this a necessary revival for the museum space to ensure it prevails in the future.

Spokesperson for Save the Powerhouse Museum Patricia Johnson admitted there have been mixed feelings since the announcement. “The renewal of the Powerhouse in Ultimo is an improvement from the previous situation in which we thought the site was going to be destroyed and sold to developers,” Johnson told City Hub.

The Powerhouse Museum exhibits an array of collections that includes the arts, sciences, technology and design. Former Senior Curator of Decorative Art and Design, and Powerhouse Museum Alliance activist Grace Cochrane acknowledged the troubling nature of the museum’s identification. “Fashion is not a primarily separate field – it is part of the whole,” Cochrane said. “[The transformation] is potentially exciting – but not at the expense of collection-based exhibitions across all fields of design.”

Winkworth expressed similar sentiments to Cochrane. “At its heart, it’s a museum about power and transport, housed in a purpose-designed and adapted former power station,” Winkworth said. “The development at Parramatta is not able to display the major power and transport collections because it’s entirely commercially focused.”

Winkworth also expressed concerns regarding the Powerhouse Parramatta Museum. “[The new development doesn’t] support the community in Parramatta and Western Sydney ... and the stories that they want to present through the museum.”

The \$500 million upgrade will incorporate studios and workspaces for the creative industries, with an educational and residential facility for fashion and design students to use. The NSW Government maintains that moving the science and technology components to the Parramatta site will allow Greater Sydney to experience dynamic and culturally significant exhibitions. Powerhouse Parramatta has launched a community reference group to allow residents to be a part of the consultation and development process.

The unexhibited collections of the Powerhouse Museum will be housed in an external facility in Castle Hill.