

<https://www.smh.com.au/culture/art-and-design/court-gives-green-light-for-removal-of-historic-villa-to-make-way-for-powerhouse-20210616-p581e0.html>

Sydney Morning Herald

# Court gives green light for removal of historic villa to make way for Powerhouse

By [Linda Morris](#) and [Megan Gorrey](#)

June 16, 2021 — 4.07pm

Residents and unions have placed Willow Grove under 24-hour watch and say they will do whatever it takes to protect the historic villa after losing their legal bid to halt work on the Parramatta Powerhouse.

The Land and Environment Court ruled against [the North Parramatta Residents Action Group](#) on Wednesday paving the way for [Willow Grove's relocation](#) to a new site to make way for the museum at a cost of more than \$10 million.

[Willow Grove amid the site clearing for the Parramatta Powerhouse.]

Willow Grove's garden and curtilage have already been swept away as part of early site works, with the Parramatta Powerhouse's major construction contractor expected to be named in the coming weeks.

The NSW branch of the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union will [continue to enforce a green ban](#) on the removal of Willow Grove despite the court's findings.

The resident action group's spokesperson Suzette Meade said the legal proceedings were always "plan B".

[Willow Grove, built in the 1870s, is set to be demolished and rebuilt elsewhere to make way for the Parramatta Powerhouse. *CREDIT: JANIE BARRETT*]

"Our plan A has always been and will continue to be the power and the passion of the community with the unions working together," Ms Meade said.

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*[following text on-line only, not in print]*

"In the spirit of Jack Munday with the green ban, we will save this site and Willow Grove will stay forever. The people of Parramatta have already lost to date their public pool for a stadium, and a pub older than the city of Perth for a light rail. We will not lose Willow Grove. "

The group had challenged the validity of Infrastructure NSW's Environmental Impact Statement but Justice Tim Moore found there was no feasible alternative design for the Powerhouse that could have retained Willow Grove on the site and met the project's objectives. Therefore he found the legal challenge "must fail".

Arts Minister Don Harwin said the government would wait to read the court judgment and see whether the residents' group would launch an appeal before making any moves at the site.

The court ruling comes two days after the government pledged half a billion dollars to [transform the Powerhouse Museum at Ultimo](#), with the budget commitment bringing to \$1.4 billion the cost of keeping the Powerhouse at Ultimo, building flagship headquarters at Parramatta and expanding the institution's Castle Hill Discovery Centre. Mr Harwin said he was "not at all concerned" Willow Grove's heritage values would be damaged by moving the building. "Very well-known heritage buildings in Sydney have been moved, including Richmond Villa, which was moved to Millers Point and is now used by the community there," he said.

"Exactly the same thing will happen with Willow Grove. It's going to be built in another place. I think it's a win-win."

Parramatta councillor Donna Davis and Greens MP David Shoebridge said the fight to keep Willow Grove was not over.

Despite the hoarding, Ms Meade said residents had put the building under 24-hour surveillance and were "running through drills" in the event demolition started. "We will do what we need to do to protect the building and at this point, we don't have any concrete plans of what that will be but we will definitely go to any lengths to protect Willow Grove," she said.

Mr Harwin said the government was consulting with the community on where the 140-year-old former maternity hospital should be relocated. He said any green bans placed on Willow Grove would not prevent the project from proceeding. "We're very confident that when all the appeals are out of the way, we'll be able to get on with the job," Mr Harwin said.

It was 50 years this week that the NSW Builders Labourers' Federation placed the world's first green ban on Kelly's Bush - a patch of unspoiled natural bushland in Hunters Hill.