

<https://www.smh.com.au/culture/art-and-design/weep-for-willow-grove-union-lifts-green-ban-demolition-to-go-ahead-20210824-p58lh2.html>

‘Weep for Willow Grove’: Union lifts green ban, removal to go ahead



By [Linda Morris](#)

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A green ban has been lifted on the historic villa Willow Grove, ending a four-year public campaign and lengthy union stand-off to keep it on site.

The NSW branch of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union announced on Tuesday it had reached an agreement with the state government, a day after contractors began tearing down the building’s modern extensions.



The removal of Willow Grove to make way for the Powerhouse Museum can now begin in Parramatta. *CREDIT: WOLTER PEETERS*

The dramatic reversal amounts to an admission that, due to COVID-19 led public health restrictions, the union was unable to enforce the green ban that until now had stalled Willow Grove’s dismantling and relocation to a new Parramatta site.

It paves the way for the construction of the second Powerhouse Museum on the bank of the Parramatta River, a project expected to generate thousands of direct and indirect jobs and take until 2024 to finish.

In a statement, the NSW CFMEU said it had received commitments from the government to establish a committee to oversee the dismantling, relocation,

rebuild and reuse of the villa and its ongoing maintenance. The government had also guaranteed the villa would be kept in public hands, funded and utilised for the Parramatta community, the union said.

It was unclear if these commitments superseded existing public pledges made by the Berejiklian government last October to [dismantle and re-erect the 19th century Willow Grove elsewhere in Parramatta and keep and restore the original heritage portion of St Georges Terrace](#).

The NSW CFMEU said it would ensure that the dismantling process was undertaken in accordance with best-practice heritage conservation without stating how it intended to do so.

It wanted Willow Grove rebuilt at a location to be chosen with the local Parramatta community and stakeholders as soon as possible.

The North Parramatta Residents Action Group had lobbied for the green ban to save the only remaining example of a riverside villa in Parramatta CBD and had challenged the development process in the NSW Supreme Court.

It had argued for Willow Grove to be retained and incorporated within the new Powerhouse Museum.

Residents could only weep for Willow Grove, its spokesperson Suzette Meade said.

“The people of Parramatta will not forgive or forget. Democracy is dead when our government ignores all experts’ advice and community opinion.



The new Powerhouse Museum will be built on the cleared Willow Grove site. *CREDIT: WOLTER PEETERS*

“To the people all over NSW that donated money to the Willow Grove court case, tied a heart on the fence, made signs and marched beside us – we thank you for your strong stand to demand better for our country’s heritage.”

Powerhouse trust president Peter Collins said the decision was the right one for the many communities of western Sydney and the NSW economy.

“I thank the CFMEU for taking this important step. Western Sydney will soon have a world-class cultural Institution they can call their own – inspired by one of the world’s most fascinating collections.”

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Powerhouse chief executive Lisa Havilah said it was time to move forward with its communities and partners to deliver the new flagship museum in the heart of Parramatta.

An alliance of industry, university and business interests applauded the union’s decision to support the relocation of Willow Grove in Parramatta.

Union branch secretary Darren Greenfield said the campaign to save Willow Grove and St George’s Terrace would remain an important part of the heritage and story of Parramatta that would be “enjoyed by generations to come”.