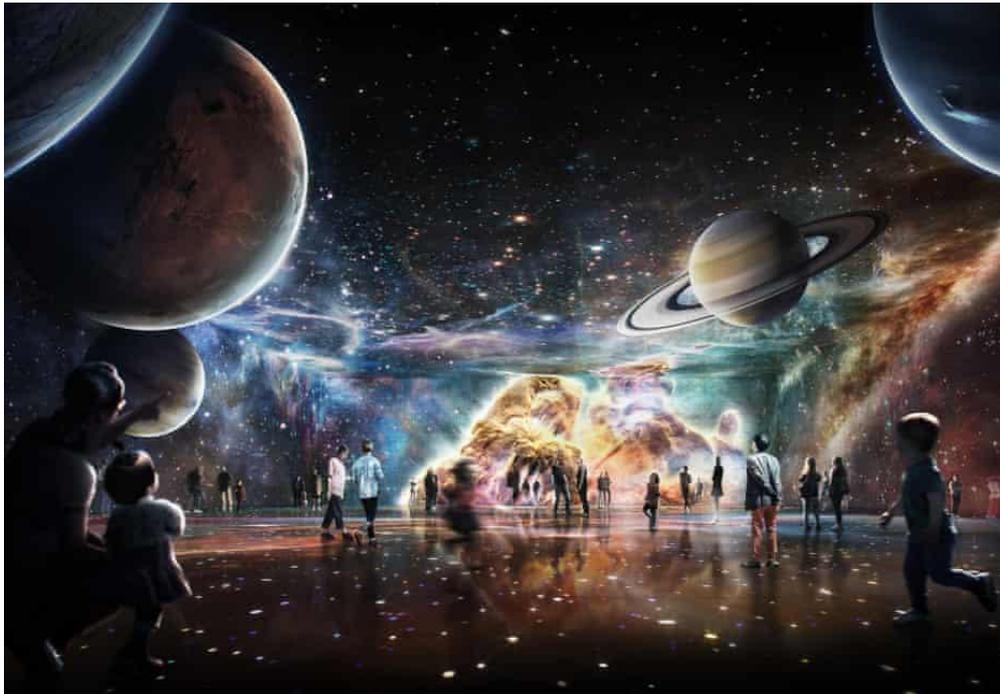


<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2021/oct/22/property-developer-lang-walker-throws-powerhouse-parramatta-20m-lifeline>

Property developer Lang Walker throws Powerhouse Parramatta \$20m lifeline

The controversial museum in development has received the second largest donation to any western Sydney institution in history



An artist's impression of a Powerhouse Parramatta exhibition space. Photograph: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences

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Kelly Burke

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Billionaire property developer Lang Walker has thrown a lifeline to the controversial Powerhouse Parramatta project, with a hefty \$20m donation.

The University of Western Sydney has also come on board with a \$10m investment, to secure its place as the museum's foundation co-partner, along with the Walker family foundation.

Property developer Walker joined the board of trustees for the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, better known as Ultimo's Powerhouse museum, in November 2020. He is notable particularly for his large-scale developments in western Sydney, including the \$2.8bn redevelopment of Parramatta Square.

Announced on Friday, the \$30m will go a considerable way towards reaching the \$75m in philanthropic donations Powerhouse Parramatta must raise if the project is to go ahead.

The Guardian understands no other funds have so far been secured.

The museum has had a troubled genesis, including a years-long wait for development approval and controversy over the chosen site.

A [parliamentary hearing into museums in February](#) this year heard that as of early 2021, not a single dollar had been secured in donations.

Giving evidence at that inquiry, NSW arts minister Don Harwin said he was “entirely comfortable” with the progress the campaign for donations was achieving, but admitted that “none of it’s in the bank yet”.

On Friday, the Guardian requested information from the minister’s office over the total amount of funds so far raised for Powerhouse Parramatta, but has so far not received a response.



The Moreau Kusunoki and Genton design for Powerhouse Parramatta. Photograph: Moreau Kusunoki and Genton

The \$20m donation from the Walker family foundation will be used to fund in-school STEM education in the Blacktown, Campbelltown, Liverpool, Bankstown, Penrith and Parramatta LGAs in 2022, and overnight stays at the museum for regional students.

The museum trust president, former NSW Liberal leader Peter Collins, said Walker’s commitment to western Sydney was longstanding and the investment in Powerhouse Parramatta was extraordinary.

“His visionary investment in the Lang Walker family academy will be something parents and the children of western Sydney and regional NSW will speak about for generations,” Collins said in a statement on Friday.

“There will be no STEM learning program like this in Australia and I can’t wait to see this groundbreaking academy program develop.”



An artist's impression of the Lang Walker Family Academy at Powerhouse Parramatta. Photograph: Museum of Applied Arts and Science

Walker, the founder and executive chairman of the Walker Corporation, said he expected his foundation to inspire and educate students in western Sydney and beyond.

Vice-chancellor and president of Western Sydney University, Prof Barney Glover, said he believed the project would create life-changing opportunities for young people in western Sydney and regional NSW.

“Together with the incredible generosity of the Walker family foundation, Western Sydney University’s contribution will help support the Lang Walker family academy to deliver world-class, immersive STEM education experiences for school students from across our region and will see the university’s own students, staff and researchers embedded in the life of the museum,” Glover said.

“We know that harnessing school students’ early interest in science, technology, engineering and maths, creatively engaging more young people from diverse geographic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds in STEM and inspiring future generations to actively pursue STEM-related education and careers are all vital for the knowledge economy and Australia’s technological future.”