

22 August, Parramatta Advertiser

<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/willow-grove-could-be-relocated-to-cumberland-hospital-robin-thomas-reserve-or-lake-parramatta/news-story/7102b9cfc8861309f1bcd4f49a8f2bea>

Willow Grove could be relocated to Cumberland Hospital, Robin Thomas Reserve or Lake Parramatta

Plans to rebuild the heritage-listed Parramatta building that was bulldozed for the Powerhouse Museum have emerged but critics likened it to shooting someone's dog and then offering to stuff it.

[Joanne Vella](#)

Follow

@Parramatta_News

2 min read

August 22, 2022 - 1:00PM

Parramatta Advertiser

Heritage advocates are imploring the State Government not to rebuild Willow Grove a year after the 140-year-old property was torn apart to make way for the \$915 million Powerhouse Museum at Parramatta.

Create NSW has called for community input to choose from a shortlist of locations for a rebuilt Willow Grove, a grand double-storey Italianate property that was once used as a maternity hospital between 1919 and 1953 before it was dismantled.

The sites are Lake Parramatta where it would be set amid open lawns and bushland, Parramatta Council-owned Robin Thomas Reserve where heritage house Ellagowan also stands, and the grounds of the Cumberland Health Precinct where [Sydney University](#) will open a campus.

But North Parramatta Residents' Action Group spokeswoman Suzette Meade said reconstructing the villa to the latter two locations would threaten their heritage value and questioned why the government wanted to restore Willow Grove now.

"NPRAG has always opposed Willow Grove being removed from its garden grounds or a rebuild anywhere, but especially desecrating another heritage site," she said.

“The folly of attempting to rebuild a trashed heritage building that has lost all its significance is like shooting someone’s dog, but offering to pay for it be stuffed and asking what room of the house it should be mounted in.

Should Willow Grove be rebuilt?

Yes, it will be a community asset

No, it should never have been dismantled

Cast your vote

“Unfortunately, the Arts Minister Ben Franklin stating Willow Grove is culturally significant now, is about two years too late.”

Now the group is urging the government to dump the plans and spend the \$7 million on other cultural projects such as creating botanic gardens in Parramatta around the Female Factory and restoring “scores of heritage buildings”.

Ms Meade said Willow Grove’s story, centred on Parramatta businesswoman Annie Gallagher building her successful drapery business and elegant family home from the villa, and its use as a maternity hospital, had been lost.

“Parramatta is one of the most significant heritage sites in this country, setting a precedent that heritage can be moved around at the whim of any development should be cause for concern for everyone.”



An artist’s impression of how a restored Willow Grove could look.

A spokesman for Mr Franklin said government was working closely with Parramatta Council and community groups to identify the appropriate location and use for Willow Grove.

“This consultation is continuing to ensure the heritage and cultural significance of this important asset is appropriately highlighted, and its future use is relevant to community needs,” he said.

Willow Grove was dismantled despite a long community campaign and the NSW National Trust branch stating the villa, which has been stored in a southwest Sydney facility, could not be reconstructed properly.

Ms Meade said Parramatta had so many resilient and pioneering women the funds could be allocated towards female empowerment projects such as the Annie Gallagher award scheme for arts, heritage, architecture and landscape projects.

“Making sure the stories and places of the women that have come before us are recognised will make sure the next generation of female trailblazers believe they too will be supported and recognised,” Ms Meade said.

“There are so many heritage buildings in Parramatta that have not been bulldozed that could make good use of the \$7 million instead of throwing it at the remains of Willow Grove.”

The government will hold community feedback sessions about the project at Parramatta Farmers Market at Centenary Square on Wednesday August 31 and at the Parramatta Square underpass of the train station on Monday September 5.

Online sessions will be held on Friday August 26 at 10am and August 29 from 5pm.

Register [here](#).