



**MEDIA RELEASE – 20<sup>th</sup> August 2022**

**NPRAG IMPLORNSW GOVERNMENT TO USE \$7 MILLION FOR WILLOWGROVE REBUILD ON CELEBRATING WOMENS HISTORY IN PARRAMATTA INSTEAD**

In response to Create NSW this week called for community input to choose a location and future use for the rebuild of Willow Grove NPRAG is calling for the NSW government to not throw away \$7million on rebuilding the Villa after its demolition in 2021 for the controversial Parramatta Powerhouse. With two of the three proposed sites being significant heritage sites of their own and the 140 year Victorian Italian Villa and its garden grounds on Phillip Street no longer hold any significance one has to ask why is this still going ahead.

The story of the Parramatta businesswoman Annie Gallagher building her successful drapery business and elegant family home Willow Grove has been lost, as has the connection for thousands that were born inside the wall of the two-story Villa when it served as a maternity hospital for decades. Unfortunately, the Arts Minister Ben Franklin stating Willow Grove is culturally significant now, is about two years too late. 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.

NPRAG has always opposed Willow Grove being removed from its garden grounds or a rebuild anywhere, but especially desecrating another heritage site. There has never been community support for a relocation, and with National Trust of Australia (NSW Branch) declaring that Willow Grove could not be “authentically reconstructed” earlier this year you must ask why is the NSW government pushing ahead?

NPRAG believe there are many other worthy ways that \$7million could be spent in Parramatta. Scores of heritage buildings needing restoration funding, we need a art gallery, we could have our missing Botanic Gardens designed around the Female Factory precinct. Cultural projects that are much desired and supported by the community in Parramatta should be getting this money.

Parramatta’s history has so many stories of resilient and pioneering women the \$7 million could also go towards empowering women in Parramatta. 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. An annual awards scheme could be developed named the “Annie Gallaher Award” with multiple categories in arts, heritage, architecture, landscape, design to go to projects that celebrate Parramatta’s significant women’s history would be another respectful way to honour Willow Grove.

*“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,” **said Suzette Meade spokesperson for NPRAG***

*“There is 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, **said Spokesperson for NPRAG Ms Meade***

***Suzette Meade added**” NPRAG would like to see Annie Gallagher; the pioneering Parramatta business woman who built Willowgrove remembered with an Annual Annie Gallagher Award recognising outstanding women’s history in Parramatta. The \$7 million could empower local women in their cultural pursuits in heritage, arts, and design.*

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