

<https://cityhubsydney.com.au/2022/09/powerhouse-commits-to-fashion-and-design-focus-with-uts-partnership/>

CityHub

CITY HUB

Powerhouse commits to fashion and design focus with UTS partnership

Posted on 29 September 2022 by Erin Modaro in **City Hub** **Featured City Hub** [0 Comments](#)



*The University of Technology Sydney has entered a partnership with the new Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo.
Photo: UTS/amaga.org.au*

By SASHA FOOT

The University of Technology Sydney (UTS) has entered into a partnership with the [Powerhouse Museum Ultimo](#), cementing the museum's shift towards a fashion and design focus. The NSW Government announced that UTS will invest \$10 million to create an educational and professional meeting point for creatives, and expand Australia's fashion and design reputation at the Ultimo museum.

Elizabeth Mossop, Dean of the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at UTS, maintains that the museum does not have a STEM identity, but a shared science and creative industry focus.

“The Powerhouse has always been a museum encompassing the creative arts, design and technology as well as science,” she told *City Hub*. “Australia does not have an outstanding design museum, so this will be a real boon to the Powerhouse identity.” Mossop added that design is “at the intersection of science and technology and the arts and creativity”.

Powerhouse museum advocacy groups have been [campaigning against the museum's shift](#) away from science and technology since the [first plans were revealed](#).

Members of Save the Powerhouse Patricia Johnson and Jean-Pierre Alexandre said the fashion and design theme has been “dominant for some time”. Johnson and Alexandre told *City Hub* the Powerhouse building is not an appropriate space for fashion and design. “The largest fashion museums in the world are only a fraction of the size of the Powerhouse; a fashion and design facility could easily move to a smaller premise elsewhere in Sydney.”

“The very high ceilings of the Powerhouse are well suited to large objects such as locomotives, steam engines and aeroplanes.”



The Catalina flying boat 'Frigate Bird II' on display in the Powerhouse Museum. Photo- Powerhouse Museum

Grace Cochrane, a former senior curator of decorative arts and design and a member of the Powerhouse Museum Alliance, called the renewed creative industry focus a “major concern”.

“Fashion is just one part of this broad collection, and it is ridiculous to overwhelm the wider scope with such personal preference,” she said. “The present buildings have consistently hosted many permanent exhibitions, as well as temporary exhibitions and events.”

Cochrane said the historic adjacent Harwood Building is likely to be overrun by “fashion events and programs for the benefit of UTS”.

“Partnerships are useful but not if they inhibit access to other important collection categories.”

Community members concerned over Powerhouse UTS partnership

Members of Save the Powerhouse consider the partnership “a real estate deal” by allowing the university to rent spaces for student classes.

Mossop states that the partnership will provide educational programs for rural and Indigenous children focused on creative subjects. She also noted that UTS will collaborate with the museum on exhibitions and events to “provide opportunities for students and researchers” while engaging with external creatives.



An artist's rendition of the upgrades to the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo. Photo: Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences

NSW Minister for Skills and Training Alister Henskens said that the [university's creative and practical approach](#) to education enhances the museum's educational programs. Cochrane remarked that the museum's renewal, alongside its strategic design focus, has not been transparently explained. “Business and strategic planning documents are extremely limited in their availability and detail and are not at all convincing as plans for the future of the Museum in Ultimo.”

Johnson and Alexandre further cited their concerns over the costs of renewing the building and shifting its focus to fashion and design. “\$500 million is an immense sum for a project that downgrades a world-class applied arts and science museum into a design and fashion facility.”