

12 February, 2023

MAAS CEO FAILS TO “SELL” POWERHOUSE RENEWAL POLICY

Save the Powerhouse group circulated their comments about the interview, saying:

‘MAAS CEO Lisa Havilah’s remarks in an ABC interview ...on February 7 were greeted by many with disbelief and derision.

Introduced by RN’s fawning Andy Park as “one of the most forward thinking arts leaders in the country” (*according to whom?*) “...who is tackling the... project of renewing and expanding the Powerhouse Museum”, Havilah began with some quasi-philosophical reflections on her art-student days“, on the “community and collaboration” that triggered her future interest in “arts and culture.” and on her current conviction that “with engaging with anything from museum exhibitions to a piece of art...it’s the context and the story and the relevance that’s important.”

With her focus clearly on “Powerhouse Parramatta” , she firmly defended the NSW government’s flawed “investment decision to establish Powerhouse Parramatta right in the heart (of) western Sydney “ because “Sydney is shifting socially and culturally...(so that) we really see this investment decision by NSW government as a responsibility to rethink what Museums should be...for their communities and we really see this new approach to Museums now as community...knowledge holders.”

Fine words indeed, but based on what? Let’s not forget that it was Lisa Havilah who presided over the disastrous collapse of “Carriageworks” and that the recent NSW Parliamentary Inquiry dismissed the proposed “Parramatta Powerhouse” as an “entertainment centre”

And what of the so-called “renewal” in Ultimo? Where are the facts?

Many will agree with expert museums consultant Kylie Winkworth, who summed up the entire interview as “hogwash”: “...(it) could have drawn on some actual research including .. analysis of the last four annual reports under the leadership of the current CEO which shows a **77% decline in visitor numbers and a 74% decline in education engagement over the last four years.**

The CEO's self-described visionary new paradigm for museums is a flop with visitors and a disaster for the museum’s education mission. Many of her statements...were factually wrong...**If MAAS was a public company the CEO would have been sacked** and the company would be in administration. Instead the NSW government is handing the management a staggering \$1.4 billion to demolish the real Powerhouse Museum when the current administration hasn't demonstrated it knows how to run one museum!’

NB: The new ICOM (International Council of Museums) definition describes a museum as “**a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets, and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage,**” adding that it is “open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability.” (26 August 2022). It is (fortunately) not the responsibility of the NSW Government or Ms Havilah “to rethink what museums should be”!

Save the Powerhouse

 **Savethepowerhouse**

