

Labor media release, 22 March 23

Only Labor will save The Powerhouse Museum

NSW Labor supports The Powerhouse Museum. We want a museum of the highest excellence at the Ultimo site which has a clear and distinct identity and which builds on its traditional focus on science, engineering, transport, the technical arts and education.

It was the Wran Labor Government who conceived of a purpose-built institution on the site of the old Ultimo power station, and it was opened in March 1988 under Labor Premier Barry Unsworth, Minister for the Arts Frank Walker and then Minister for Planning and the Environment Bob Carr.

NSW Labor remains committed to the Powerhouse in Ultimo: a world-class museum for a world-class collection.

The Powerhouse Museum will evolve in a way that recognises it as a flagship location within the emerging tech and creatives industries precincts of the inner city, right alongside the ABC and the University of Technology Sydney. Labor supports investment in the Ultimo site.

The NSW Parliament Select Committee on the management of the Powerhouse Museum has revealed the shroud of secrecy that the NSW Government has sought to apply across the operations of The Powerhouse Museum for the past 12 years.

NSW Labor remains concerned about the focus on event rather than museum spaces in the Government's plans. This reflects the Government's obsession with commercialisation and privatisation.

A NSW Labor government will release key details of the plans for the Ultimo and Parramatta sites that until now have been kept secret.

NSW Labor champions major investment in the arts and culture in western Sydney and we acknowledge the value of the major investment in physical infrastructure that has taken place. The Powerhouse Parramatta deserves its own identity and name and to develop in relationship with its specific context.

The way the government has dealt with The Powerhouse Museum over many years has been a disgrace and caused distraction and delay where that was avoidable. Imagine if that time and money and energy had been put into promoting excellence in the sector - in Ultimo, in Castle Hill, in Parramatta and everywhere else in NSW.

The mishandling of this issue by the current government is only part of a wider story.

NSW has no state museums strategy. A NSW Labor government will address this so the entire sector can move forward with confidence.

Again, this is part of a wider story of neglect of cultural policy outside the inner city. In the broader cultural space, a breakdown of Destination NSW events funding across the three cities of Sydney showed that once you took out Sydney Olympic Park, less than \$1,000,000 was allocated to the Western Parkland city, only \$1.6 million went to the Central River city, and more than \$65 million was allocated to the Eastern Harbour city.

That is not fair. That is not sustainable. And it is not addressed by one project. Clearly, the priorities within government and responsible agencies need to shift.

It is time for a fresh start in arts and culture policy in NSW.



(photos: Grace Cochrane)