

3 March, 2023

PHM "RENEWAL" TIMELINE - CONTRADICTIONS AND BACKFLIPS!

(*Save The Powerhouse*: email and Facebook)

Even if we've become used to the irregularity and secretive nature of the planning process for the so-called Powerhouse Museum "renewal", the recent chain of events almost defies belief! The process began conventionally back in December 2021, when a Concept Proposal (Stage 1) State Significant (ie considered specially "important" to the State) Development Application was submitted to the Planning Department by Infrastructure NSW <https://pp.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/powerhouse-ultimo-renewal>. This was then placed on Public Exhibition for several weeks in June and July 2022, a design competition was subsequently conducted, and a winner announced.(July-Dec). Nothing unusual there, and all within the "rules."

But this month, on

- **Tuesday 21 February** - Stage 1 (Concept Proposal): the Response to Submissions, Assessment, Recommendation and Determination were all completed in a single day even though 88% of the 107 submissions received OBJECTED to the Project! <http://tiny.cc/s4x4vz>
- **Monday 27 February** (only 6 days later) - Stage 2 (Detailed Design) <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/powerhouse-ultimo-renewal-detailed-application>: the SEARs step was completed and the EIS step started and
- **Friday 3 March** (4 days later): pre-election caretaker mode started when all NSW Government action is frozen –*but not the public service which continues normally!*

This sudden frenzy of activity, just before the start of the caretaker period is dangerous because it could open the way to irreversible decisions (such as signing unbreakable contracts) just before or immediately after the election.

So we went to the advertised "consultation" session on February 28 to raise our concerns that 'public consultations' were held on the detailed design stage (2) well before the SEARs and EIS steps, instead of during "Public Exhibition", as legally required. We said that if these consultations were not part of the official planning process, pre-event publicity should have made this clear. Note: *it is essential that the community should be fully informed (SEARs, EIS, Exhibition) before being consulted to enable them to form an objective opinion*

Kylie Cochrane (Aurecon, Communications Consultant) readily agreed that the current, (March) sessions, organised by Infrastructure NSW, were "provisional and informal", and not connected with the "real" DPIE planning process. But she added that "other information" outside formal submissions is customarily used in Development Application Assessment.

We also asked:

- How DPIE had contrived approval of the 3 final steps of stage 1 (Concept) in a single day.
- A Request for Stage 2 SEARs was made on 30 January, 23 days before Stage 1 was Determined (22 February) <http://tiny.cc/15x4vz>
- For clarification of the fact that Stage 1 SSD was "Determined" as an INFORMATION AND EDUCATION FACILITY although the Stage 2 SEARs is for a CULTURAL, RECREATION AND TOURIST FACILITY (not a museum) and
- That the Parramatta Powerhouse was approved as an Information and Education Facility when the design briefs and architectural plans reveal that it is in fact an arts and entertainment centre.

We noted that two of the four consultations were held on Thursday evenings – MAAS 'entertainment 'nights -- and were told that this was a deliberate tactic to attract attendance!

In fact, according to our own observations and reliable reports, not more than a total of 20 people came to the entire consultation series despite a massive publicity campaign (full page newspaper ads, postcards and even door knocking) marking one more PR disaster and waste of public money, and providing yet another reason to choose a better option at the ballot box on March 25!

Save the Powerhouse

