

3 December, 2023

Tor Larsen to Minister John Graham: restore the PHM at Ultimo

Dear Minister for the Arts,

I draw your attention to former Power House Museum (PHM) curator, Kylie Winkworth's observation in regard to the ill-fated PHM at Parramatta:

"No one has questioned why a project that was supposed to be a museum with a fully tanked underground car park turned into a commercially focussed entertainment and convention centre, with not a single dedicated exhibition space, no back of house space for collection or exhibition handling facilities, no separate loading dock for exhibitions and collections and not even one parking space for service and delivery vehicles."

Whatever you and CEO Lisa Havilah want to do vis a vis her grand visions for Parramatta and Castle Hill, stop conflating these boondoggles with the real Museum at Ultimo.

Havilah has stated that no matter what public concerns are raised about turning this important institution into a pop-culture commercial venue and fusing it with irrelevant developments in other suburbs: "The rule is to never stop moving the project forward."

You have obviously bought into the destructive fantasy inaugurated by your predecessors and chosen to support Havilah who has boldly admitted her intention is to "unmake" the institution. You have also allowed the culture of secrecy around the redevelopment of the Ultimo PHM to fester and left the same shadowy people in place.

Do what you must in Parramatta and Castle Hill but restore the PHM at Ultimo to its original historical/cultural purpose. It is not your place to deprive future generations of one of the few remaining windows into Australia and NSW's past, AS A MUSEUM SHOULD. As a labor minister I expect you to repudiate the previous government's blatant efforts to hand over treasured, accessible public institutions of great historical and cultural significance to rapacious developers and commercial interests.

Please do not bother replying as I have long since tired of politicians of all stripes "not responding [in any meaningful way] until it no longer matters" as recommended by Lisa Havilah. Just do your job and represent the cultural, historical and arts interests of the people of NSW.

Yours sincerely,

Tor Larsen