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Save the Powerhouse Museum

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(See also <https://www.facebook.com/savethepowerhouse>)

PHM "HAS...BEEN GUTTED OF ALL ITS EXPERTISE" SAYS BORSAK

Robert Borsak, MLC who competently chaired two Upper House Inquiries into management of the Powerhouse Museum was interviewed by Mike Jeffreys on 2GB's Australia Overnight program on January 10.

Listen to the complete interview HERE <https://www.2gb.com/podcast/community-groups-petition-to-keep-the-powerhouse-museum-open/>

Of the Minns Government "Powerhouse Revitalisation" project he said "There are fundamental problems in the whole process. I think this Government needs to think very carefully about, first of all, the Chair of the (MAAS) Board, the Board itself, **all appointed by the previous Government** with a certain set of assumptions as to where this was all going to go. I think they need to think very carefully about Lisa Havilah...The criticisms by the likes of Dr Lindsay Sharp and others are very, very pertinent. I mean **the place has pretty much been gutted of all its expertise when it comes to highly professional, world-class museologists**. It (the Museum) is simply not in a position where you have people in charge who can run this as a museum when it opens."

"They don't call it "gutting". They call it refurbishment."

Save the Powerhouse, and many others, have said for a long time that the current team (Museum Management, Board of Trustees and Create NSW team) does not have the competence, or even the taste, to deliver a genuinely "refurbished" Applied Arts and Sciences Museum.

They have all been appointed by the previous Coalition Government and have worked for years on projects to transform our revered Science and Technology Museum into a fashion, design and event centre.

In the process, they have contrived various ad hoc business plans and budgets and wasted tens of \$ millions on unnecessary consultancy fees. Only a fresh and competent team, with genuine museum experience, could "decant" a decade of wandering and deliver *"the 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...a world-class museum for a world-class collection...(evolving) in a way that recognises it as a flagship location."* (Minister for the Arts to be, John Graham, March 22, 2023).

"NSW Labor remains concerned about the focus on events rather than museum spaces in the (Coalition) Government's plans. This reflects the (Coalition) Government's obsession with commercialisation and privatisation." Graham added just before the election. Nearly a year after the election it is now high time for the Minister to replace the existing team "obsessed with commercialisation" with a new team which will prioritise "museum spaces".

"I know it has been said to me by the people who have been protesting this...that they believe that the museum when it closes will never reopen" added Borsak.

Save the Powerhouse believes that -

- **The February 5 closing is totally unnecessary** and wasteful since the "Revitalisation" project will not be ready for months and could, according to expert advice, be carried out while the Museum is operating. This would avoid tens of \$ millions costs in moving the collections with a real risk of damaging irreplaceable objects.

- Lisa Havilah announced that the closure was an opportunity for her to “decant” the collections (disperse them for ever).
- **The Museum will be closed for much more than 3 years.** Its \$250M budget is spread over the next 10 years (until 2033) according to budget papers.
- **The Museum will never re-open in its current form if the current team is maintained.**

Borsak confirmed his willingness to continue “to ask questions”. **It is outrageous that the Government chose the year-end break to announce the Museum closure when the Parliament will not sit until after the Museum is scheduled to close.**

Meanwhile the Save the Powerhouse/Pymont Action Inc/Friends of Ultimo’s joint petition <https://chnq.it/HWYWPscJBD> has reached almost 3,200 signatures after just 2 weeks. The Arts Minister, **John Graham, cannot ignore any longer the will of the people he promised to consult. He must reverse his decision to close the museum on February 5 as a matter of urgency.**

If you have not done so yet please **SIGN OUR PETITION** <https://chnq.it/HWYWPscJBD> and share it with your family and friends.

Read also Kerry Smith “Concern grows over NSW Labor’s secret plan for Powerhouse Museum” in Green Left of January 9 <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/concern-grows-over-nsw-labors-secret-plan-powerhouse-museum>

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