

<https://www.news.com.au/national/nsw-act/politics/angry-workers-demand-answers-from-government-as-powerhouse-museum-prepares-to-shut-for-renovations/news-story/dacdf105ae25b54d1be489fa9990c734>

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**NCA NewsWire**

## **Angry reps demand answers from government as Powerhouse Museum prepares to shut for renovations**

Union representatives have campaigned outside the historic building amid fears the government may have secret plans to close its doors for good

**Tess McCracken**

Union representatives have rallied outside Sydney's Powerhouse Museum amid fears the NSW government plans to shut down the historic building for good. The museum in inner-city Ultimo will be shut for up to three years while \$250m building and conservation work is completed

Community group representatives of the Health Services Union, Transport Workers Union and the Community and Public Sector Union rallied outside the heritage building on Thursday, amid fears the government may plan to "gut" the function of the museum. The Public Service Association said they had learnt of "government plans to quietly close the Powerhouse Museum this Sunday, despite refusing to release any plan to refurbish the site or to redeploy staff to other roles".



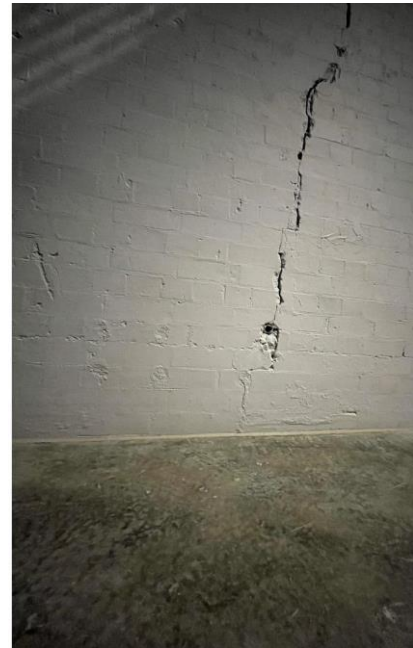
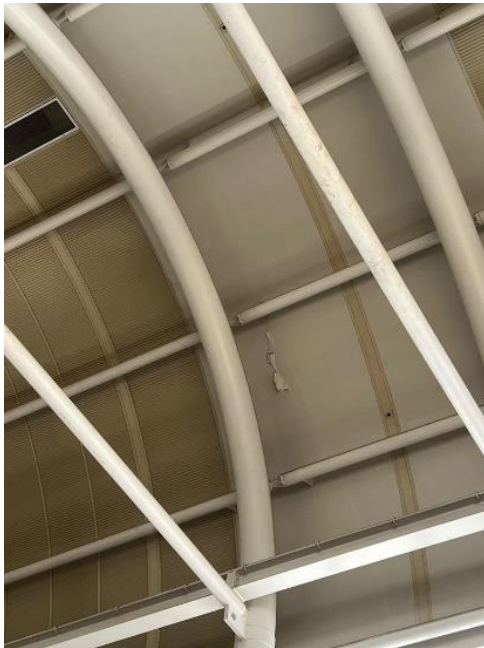
Protesters pictured outside the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo.

Picture: NCA NewsWire / Damian Shaw

NSW Special Minister of State John Graham said the government was sticking to its election promise to ensure the museum remained a Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences by undertaking necessary and complex heritage revitalisation work.

“On 2 September 2023 we committed \$250m to the heritage revitalisation, work that is necessary and complex,” he said in a statement on Thursday.

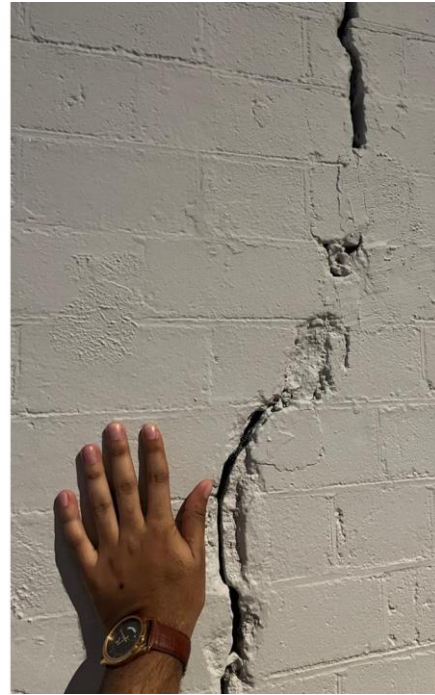
“The building has significant problems that must be addressed without further delay, including leaks from the roof and large cracks in several walls. These leaks have resulted in mould and damp, putting the collection at risk.



L: Wran building roof deterioration: Supplied Image

R: Significant brickwork cracking at chimney stack in Boiler House. Supplied Image

To put it bluntly, the current Ultimo building is not up to the standard of a world-class museum that NSW wants it to be. “A museum requires temperature control, and a dust and pest free environment to ensure the safety of the objects on display and in the collection.”



L: Significant brickwork cracking at chimney stack in Boiler House. Supplied Image  
 R: Water leak, signs of efflorescence and water marks in Switch House north wall. Supplied Image.

But PSA General Secretary Stewart Little told the rally the government's position on the museum has "smelt fishy" ever since they were elected in 2023, and now the "stench is overwhelming".

"Chris Minns repeatedly promised to save and refurbish the iconic Powerhouse Museum site before the election. Now we see the plan was apparently to close the museum and leave the whole thing a mystery," Mr Little said.

"We are deeply concerned that Lisa Havilah, the CEO the Liberals appointed to oversee the destruction of the Powerhouse, has kept her job.





PSA General Secretary Stewart Little addressed outside the protest outside the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo. Picture: NCA NewsWire / Damian Shaw

“Our members are reasonably concluding that the reason Minister John Graham can’t show us the refurbishment plan for the museum is because he knows the community will be outraged.”

Mr Little said workers at the site had been promised a copy of the change management plan, “telling them where they will be working over the next few years, and that hasn’t been provided either.”

The representatives demanded the government provide them with a refurbishment plan for the museum and the Change of Management Plan outlining the immediate working future of the museum.

Mr Graham said on Thursday “design concepts” for the Powerhouse Ultimo heritage revitalisation were shared on December 2 and a Powerhouse Museum spokeswoman said staff, PSA delegates and community advocates were all consulted on the design concepts and the development of building plans.

The government also confirmed 100 staff and the exhibition and workshop facilities would remain open during the renovation.

A Powerhouse Museum spokeswoman said the museum welcomes the needed refurbishments.

The Powerhouse Museum welcomes the critically important NSW government commitment to the heritage revitalisation of our much-loved museum, ensuring that the extraordinary collection across the applied arts and sciences will be enjoyed by generations to come,” a spokesman said.

Mr Graham said the facility was expected to reopen in 2027. In 2020, the former government reversed its decision to close the Ultimo site following public pressure to keep the museum and its priceless collection together.