

Powerhouse Museum closes for 3 years of “revitalisation”

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Image: Visitors After The Museum's Closure. Image: Grace Johnson

The Powerhouse Museum has officially closed its doors as of 5pm today, and will undergo 3 years of “revitalisation” works.

Towards closing time, the museum was still filled with visitors wanting to catch a last glimpse of the iconic displays.

A few minutes before 5pm, dozens of exiting visitors gathered in the foyer could be heard booing the closure.

When the museum’s “temporary closure” was announced over the public address system, some critics yelled out “bullshit” and “liar”.

Community and union groups have been heavily protesting the closure of the museum, saying the government is yet to produce a refurbishment plan, employment plans, or a safe plan for the removal of more than 3000 precious objects.

Arts Minister John Graham said there were significant problems with the building that needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency, with Infrastructure NSW saying that costs could be greater if the museum remained open and works were carried out in a staged manner.

But museum experts have all agreed that renovations can be done without closing the museum and without moving the exhibits.

Particular concerns have been raised about the Catalina Frigate Bird II airplane, the centrepiece of the transport exhibition.

The plane was donated by Australian aviator Captain P. J. Taylor, who flew the plane across the South Pacific from Australia to Chile, via Tahiti and Easter Island in 1951 on a mission to find the shortest air route from Australia.

Former museum senior transport curator Andrew Grant said, “What is beyond doubt is that the proposed disassembly and removal of the Catalina and its relocation and reassembly places this highly significant aircraft at unnecessary risk.”

While some of the most famous objects, such as the Locomotive 1 and the Strasbourg clock, are supposedly guaranteed to return, exhibition programming would determine what objects are exhibited when Powerhouse Ultimo reopens, according to a museum spokesperson.