

From: Des Griffin
Sent: Saturday, February 24, 2024 7:56 PM
To: powerhouse.ultimo@infrastructure.nsw.gov.au
Subject: POWERHOUSE MUSEUM "REVITALISATION"

Ladies and gentlemen!

I have followed the developments with the Museum since the announcement of the intention to move the Museum to Parramatta.

I object in the strongest possible terms to the proposals in every respect including the closure of the museum.

I have corresponded with the Premier and the Minister. I have received assurances that the commitment of the present government, announced on its election, will be met.

The two inquiries conducted by the NSW Legislative Council, completed immediately prior to the present government's election, exposed a complete lack of rationale for the entire project. The Government's response was to simply disagree. It was beyond outrageous. But that was the previous government. We were promised something significantly different.

Unfortunately, every bit of information as to what is now actually happening is significantly different from the assurances and the promises. Information was to be provided: it hasn't! Consultation was to occur: what happened was a sham and turned out to be irrelevant because quite different proposals were being developed from those which were the subject of the consultation.

The Museum is being closed for 3 years (at least) and substantial changes are contemplated. The best advice I have, and my own experience, says the closure is unnecessary. Changes can proceed whilst the Museum remains open. The assertions about the structural problems are contradicted by the architect for the original conversion of the Powerhouse.

The proposed "revitalisation" will deliver one third of the space devoted to exhibitions in the previous building. And even those spaces are not to be exclusively for exhibitions! The minister's commitment was to provide larger space than the present museum.

The 'new' entrance is not new! Major exhibits will be inappropriately located. Moreover, how can the NSW Government manage to spend taxpayer-funded \$250M on downgrading a 20,000m² world-class science museum into a 6,590m² "flexible facility" at a time when money is in short supply? How can we end this folly?

This entire project has been marked by changes in direction made without any meaningful public consultation, disinformation, secrecy, confused assertions as to what is intended.

The Museum must return to its original purpose whilst being enhanced where necessary. Proposals for student accommodation and whole lot of other proposals are an absolute nonsense. That one of the main purposes of the revitalisation is to make it a centre for creative industries is an absolute outrage and a betrayal.

My concern is with the Museum in Ultimo. I note however that a development is proceeding in Parramatta to where the previous government promised the whole museum would go. It is situated on the side of the River and the base is subject to flooding (which was pointed out during the Legislative Council hearings). The building is not a museum, is not capable of housing the kinds of exhibits that were in the Ultimo building. Yet grandiose and utterly ridiculous assertions have been made about the likely number of visitors.

The Powerhouse Museum presented visitor experiences enlarging public understanding of science and technology and history. It served young people visiting in school classes. These fields of knowledge are widely, even officially, recognised as critical to the future of Australia.

For your information I was director of the Australian Museum from 1976 to 1998, during which substantial additions were constructed so I am not ignorant of what is involved. The difference between the additions in the period 1980 to 1998 and the more recent substantial additions to the Australian Museum completed November 2020 delivering more than 3,000sqm of new public space is that the Museum's management had control of the process, the brief was overseen by experts within the Museum and the developments enhanced the capacity for the Museum to deliver on its mandate.

Go back and compare that with this project.

Explain why the CEO and the Board of the Museum have never publicly revealed the details of the proposed development.

This project is arguably the greatest piece of cultural vandalism this country has ever seen. The behaviour of those involved merits their dismissal!

Des Griffin AM, FRSN