

## Powerhouse Museum Alliance

### Objection to Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation SSD-67588459

#### The Powerhouse Museum Alliance OBJECTS to the Powerhouse Ultimo SSD

The State Significant Development plans for 'Powerhouse Ultimo' demolish all trace of the Powerhouse Museum, destroying the investment of generations of taxpayers, and the trust of the museum's donors and supporters. This is a wasteful, deceptive and destructive project that breaches the obligations that governments and trustees have to protect museums and their assets as an intergenerational legacy, not to mention the explicit promises of two governments that the Powerhouse Museum would be saved. **These plans show the Powerhouse Museum is NOT saved.** It is extraordinary that any museum or Trust, mindful of the museum's legislated remit, could advance such destructive scheme to demolish most of its state-of-the-art buildings and exhibition spaces. It is obvious that the management of MAAS, and presumably the Trustees, have never accepted the commitments of two governments to save the PHM, and have for the last nearly four years continued their campaign to strip the PHM of its assets, collections and funding for uses unrelated to the purpose of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences and its Act.

The plans for the 'heritage revitalisation' of the 'Powerhouse Ultimo' are a sham to hide the demolition of all trace of the Powerhouse Museum and its Sulman award winning heritage adaptation and contemporary design. The project is a reckless waste of money for no public benefit. It is devoid of any credible museum need or cultural rationale, and it destroys the heritage and cultural significance of an historic public museum the government promised to save.

In place of the Powerhouse Museum and its 25 flexible exhibition spaces over five levels, the former museum will shrink to Powerhouse Ultimo, its exhibition space reduced by 75% to just three exhibition or event spaces, empty of collections bar the Boulton and Watt, the Catalina and No.1 loco. In Powerhouse Ultimo these destination objects are reduced to remnant relics of a once great museum, instead of the richly contextualised treasures discovered in the PHM across the Galleria, and the PHM's signature exhibitions of *Steam Revolution* with Australia's best collection of steam engines working under live steam, and the *Transport, Flight and Space* exhibition in the Boiler Hall.



Part of the *Transport Flight and Space* gallery in the Boiler Hall, to be emptied of its collections, two exhibition mezzanines demolished, and the gallery gutted for unspecified 'contemporary exhibition and event requirements'

It is hard to fathom how the managers at MAAS have 'promised' to retain just three large objects in the former Powerhouse Museum, as one of the objectives in this \$350m project. Would another museum or gallery seeking \$350 million for capital works promise to have just three art works left on display, with no clue about what else the place will be used for?

The scale of the demolition in the Powerhouse Ultimo SSD destroys the PHM's identity, its landmark prominence, architectural and design values, its **cultural and historic significance as an influential state museum**, its conceptual and narrative coherence, its operational and functional capacity, and its museological purpose as Australia's only museum of applied arts and sciences. What's left?

There is no revitalisation of the Powerhouse Museum, in the commonly understood meaning of this word: **to restore something to life, or give it new life**. The Powerhouse Ultimo SSD is a plan to gut, strip and demolish all trace of the Powerhouse Museum to repurpose the empty shells of the former power station into some other kind of creative arts, performance and event facility not revealed in the EIS, and unrelated to the objects of the MAAS Act.

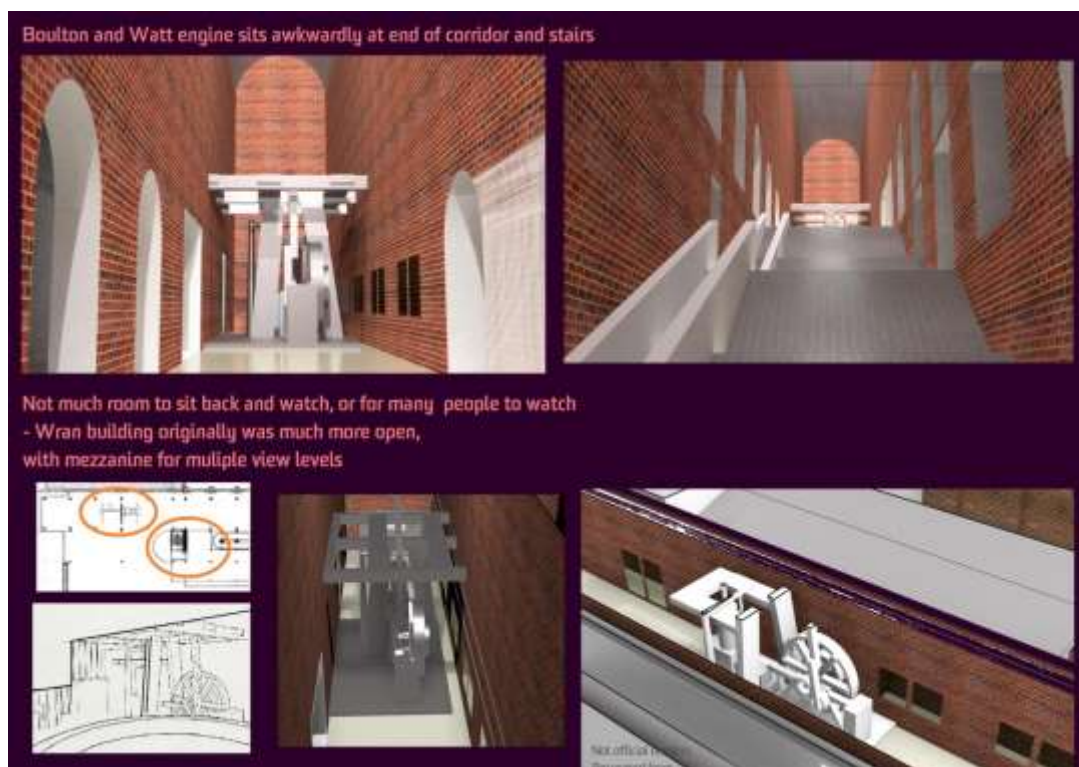
**This is not a museum revitalisation but a brick-clad death roll for what's left of the Powerhouse Museum; stripped of its purpose, collections and functional capacity, and defunded after the museum's confected closure in February 2024.** The former PHM is reduced to a shopfront and some vacant exhibition galleries for unspecified 'contemporary' uses. There are no plans for the PHM's curatorial and education staff to return to the former museum if and when the development reopens so it is impossible to understand how the facility can work as a museum.<sup>1</sup>

Under these plans a great museum loved by generations of families will be gutted and emptied of its collections, and its exhibition spaces reduced by 75% leaving the museum without any of its flexible gallery spaces designed for the display of the vast majority of its collections of applied arts, history, science and technology.<sup>2</sup> The staggering cost of this project is at least \$350m.<sup>3</sup> And this is just the capital cost, with many assumptions and exclusions, and with the caveat this is approximately 85 % of the cost of the substructure, superstructure, envelope, finishes, fitments, services, and external works.<sup>4</sup> This does not include funding for exhibitions - if this is even intended for the empty brick shells of the former PHM.

It took more than a century from the founding of the museum in 1880 for the collections of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS) to finally be housed in a state-of-the-art museum complex, fit for purpose and worthy of its significant collections and imaginative museology. When the Powerhouse Museum opened in 1988 it was the first museum in Australia to be popular, educational and fun. The Powerhouse Museum was purpose designed to display the large power and transport collections in the conceptually resonant spaces of the former Ultimo power station, brilliantly adapted by the architect Lionel Glendenning with a grand contemporary atrium and soaring Galleria<sup>5</sup> designed to exhibit the priceless 1785 Boulton and Watt rotative steam engine, and No.1 Locomotive, tender and carriages. This was conceived and designed as the starting point for visitors' exploration of the museum's exhibitions and over-arching narrative of the transformative impact of the technologies of the industrial revolution and beyond, spanning global, national, state and Sydney stories and connections. But not even these treasures will be left in the setting and context that was central to the PHM's design and museological conception.



Views of the Galleria displaying No.1 Locomotive, tender and carriages, and the 1785 Boulton and Watt rotative steam engine in an exhibition installation designed by Lionel Glendenning that allows every moving part of the engine to be seen at multiple levels and from all sides. Do the architects of Powerhouse Ultimo have a better idea for the exhibition of this priceless object? Below PMA renderings of what's left of the Galleria, looking more like the catacombs of Ultimo; the Boulton and Watt stuck up at the back of a corridor and staircase, a lost relic of the former PHM, unable to be seen properly from any angle. Can this dingy tunnel and treatment of this internationally significant object possibly be design excellence?



Only three large objects will be retained at the former museum, but still the plans haven't resolved where these objects will be displayed. In the dismal, indeed inexplicable makeover of Glendenning's light-filled Galleria, flooding the wall of the Turbine Hall with light, this axial spine is bricked-in like a dingy catacomb, and appears to have the Boulton and Watt stuck up the back in a passageway like an unwanted relic, surplus to requirements.

After nine and half years of community opposition since 2015, and nine rounds of consultations, nothing the community or museum experts have said about saving the PHM and better ways to revitalise the Real Powerhouse Museum has had any impact. Two governments have emphatically promised to save the Powerhouse Museum, but the SSD for Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation serves up a re-run of the same wasteful and destructive scheme to demolish and erase the PHM. Regardless of Labor's explicit promises in 2023, the proponents are back again to have another crack at ripping out the PHM's collections to demolish and downsize the museum to a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate scraped clean of heritage, collections, purpose, memory and meaning.

No country anywhere in the world would destroy a treasured public museum, housed in a purpose designed, award winning and accessible museum complex that is only 35 years old. Why is this happening in Sydney?

## 1 Key Points

**The Powerhouse Ultimo SSD plans are an outrageous act of cultural vandalism and asset destruction. They must be rejected in their entirety. The plans erase, demolish and bury all trace of the Powerhouse Museum the government promised to save. If approved, this scheme will destroy the cultural significance of the Powerhouse Museum and its functional and operational capacity to meet the requirements of its Act.**

These plans cannot be remedied or amended because they are inconsistent with the MAAS Act, run counter to all the ingredients of good museum design, lack any foundational analysis, a Conservation Management Plan, or understanding of the PHM's history and design. They are based on a set of confected, baseless and erroneous objectives in the EIS which are a patently designed to empty, gut and destroy the Powerhouse Museum and change its purpose. It is absurd that this lumpen scheme is justified for its design excellence. See below for further discussion of these points.

After the Labor government's repeated promises of a heritage revitalisation, saving the Wran building, and preserving the Wran legacy none of these promises are even mentioned in the SSD plans and do not appear in the objectives of the EIS. **There is no mention of a heritage revitalisation of the PHM, nor saving the Wran building, nor saving the Wran legacy in the EIS. The plans deliver the exact opposite.** The Infrastructure NSW 'fact sheets' and signage on the PHM say there is a heritage revitalisation but the EIS and SSD plans are for something completely different. Whether the government was deceived about what is planned, or was inattentive to what is actually proposed in this destructive scheme, the plans and public pronouncements on the scheme are a deceptive and misleading sham, replete with lies, spin and empty phrases to cover the intent of the project to demolish and erase the Powerhouse Museum and reduce it to a venue for contemporary arts, performance, events and venue hire.

After the Powerhouse Ultimo Renewal SSD was withdrawn by the Minns Government, the project should have had a new a **new brief for the promised heritage revitalisation, consistent with the government's public commitments to save the Powerhouse Museum, save the Wran building and preserve the Wran legacy.** There should have been a new design competition since the concept, premise and budget for the project was completely different. I note the abandoned previous concept SSD for the Powerhouse Ultimo Renewal by Durbach Block was overwhelmingly opposed in the submissions. From 91 individual submissions there were 85 objections and only two in support of the SSD.

Now this discredited scheme has been repackaged as the Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation in substantially the same form, and for what will likely be near the cost of the original scheme of \$450m. The architects told the staff they didn't have to change much from the previous scheme. Nothing has been done to temper the inexplicable scale of the PHM's demolition or respect the public commitments for a heritage revitalisation to save the PHM and save the Wran building. On the contrary, the Powerhouse Museum is substantially demolished inside and out for no credible purpose, its Sulman award winning design and heritage adaptation and its landmark character destroyed, all without the guidance of the Conservation Management Plan, or any recognition in the Heritage Impact Statement that the Powerhouse Museum has any cultural or heritage significance.

In the years the architects and heritage consultants have been working on variations of the Powerhouse Ultimo scheme they have made no attempt to consult or even contact the PHM's architect Lionel Glendenning. There can't be any credible heritage revitalisation without the input of the PHM's architect. Their lack of interest and basic investigation of what the Powerhouse Museum is about shows in the current plans. The failure to consult the museum's architect during two 'Ultimo Renewal' SSD EIS design processes going back to 2021 is rude, discourteous and a breach of his moral rights. It is also contrary to Burra Charter principles. The government's promise to preserve the Wran legacy has no credibility without the involvement of the architect of record.

Every comparable heritage museum here or overseas shows the evolution of the museum's development in the fabric of its buildings, marking stages of development in ways that are respectful of the museum's history. The demolition and erasure of every vestige of the Powerhouse Museum's museological and design conception, and heritage adaptation, is unprecedented and inexplicable. It is shocking that any museum would advance a project that erases the museum's concept and history, substantially demolishes its multi award winning buildings, and actually reduces its capacity to exhibit the collection. The Powerhouse Museum is supposed to care about design and the conservation of cultural heritage but the proponents of this scheme are demonstrably intent on museum demolition and heritage destruction.

The No.1 exhibit in every great museum is its building. It is part of the museum's identity and brand, and its public appeal. Most importantly it is central to the visitors' experience and regard for the organisation. For 35 years the Powerhouse Museum's architecture has been inextricably related to the PHM's identity, brand, prominence and community esteem. From arrival at the sunny Harris St forecourt, and entry into the Wran building's great atrium, followed by discovery of No.1 Loco and carriages and the Boulton and Watt in the light-filled Galleria, visitors' enjoyment, wonder and memories of the PHM are centred on their experience of the building and its spaces. Central to the PHM's design conception was the flow of memorable spaces and thematically connected exhibitions, filled with light, colour and amazing objects seen in unexpected ways.<sup>6</sup> Visitors moved seamlessly

through the building's generous spaces via ramps and escalators, and a glass lift, with the mezzanines, ramps and balconies tempting visitors onwards on a journey of discovery.

It is a fantasy for the EIS and Heritage Impact Statement to suggest that the social values and community esteem for the Powerhouse Museum can be retained when the museum's most distinctive features are stripped, gutted and disappeared, not least the major exhibitions of transport and power for which the PHM is internationally renowned.

The Powerhouse Ultimo plans erase every element of what made the Powerhouse Museum so popular and enjoyable – especially for kids and families. The colour, light, collections, and the connectivity and flow of spaces are gone, replaced by flights of stairs, corridors and entombed spaces obviously designed for events, performance and venue hire, not the display of the museum's collections. Instead of the Wran building's great atrium entered from a sunny public square, the plans provide a 'concierge desk' and entry from the lowest point of the site which is in shadow for much of the year. Entering the building the first thing visitors see is a flight of stairs and a hotel desk. Everything about these plans is conceptually and spatially wrong, from every principle of museum design and visitor-centred museum planning.

Most concerning is that the Powerhouse Ultimo plans destroy the Powerhouse Museum's landmark profile, and its prominent Sulman award winning accessible entry via the Wran building, along with the sunny public square fronting the main street of Ultimo - Harris St. What's left of the former museum is buried behind a long brick façade and a row of shops. No wow factor, or presence, and no sense of arrival. Nothing could be less exciting. It leaves the Powerhouse Museum without a front door. Nothing in the design of the Harris St frontage suggests the place is a museum which may be the point.

## 2 Unacceptable Secrecy to Change the Museum's Purpose

After the government's repeated promises in 2023 of transparency and a commitment to release the key documents on this project, there is no information in the EIS or in plans released by MAAS that explains the rationale or need for the \$350m erasure and destruction of the PHM.

There is no design brief for the architectural competition as would normally be public; no design and facilities brief for 'Powerhouse Ultimo' as would normally be public. There is no masterplan as would normally be public; no museum plan as would normally be public on the MAAS website; no business case; and no exhibition plan that explains what the management wants to do in the gutted shells of the former PHM that it can't do in the Real Powerhouse Museum. Nor does the EIS explain what is meant by the alleged need for ***significant internal programmable volumes to meet the needs of present and future exhibitions***, or the nature of the ***contemporary exhibition and event requirements for large flexible spaces*** that requires the eviction of all but three of the Powerhouse Museum's large objects.<sup>7</sup>

When there is an SSD for a bridge, the function of the bridge is easily understood in the plans and the EIS. It does not need much explanation for the function, purpose and effectiveness of the plans to be understood and contested. No such information is available for the Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation to explain or support the planning designation that it is actually a museum, let alone justify the drastic scale of the asset destruction and demolition. As noted, there is no masterplan, no



design brief for the architects, no facilities brief, no business case, no museum plan, no operational plan, and no exhibition plan. In my experience as a museum planner, no museum project has ever moved to the development application stage without public plans and reports on what the museum is about, its vision and purpose, concept, themes, exhibitions, audiences, programs and collection and education focus. **This SSD is a \$350 million information vacuum.** It is impossible to understand the purpose of the scraped and emptied former PHM exhibition galleries because there is no explanation or justification for the reduction of the PHM to three large empty volumes for unspecified uses.

The secrecy around the intent behind the large scale demolition, asset stripping and shrinkage of the PHM means the public cannot understand the reasons for the proposed development, or what it is supposed to be for. This secrecy is outside all the norms of museum planning for museums. It is not consistent with the obligations of museums *to operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities*.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore the secrecy with which this scheme has been prosecuted does not recognise that the Powerhouse Museum is held in trust for the people of NSW, and funded by the public for the last 144 years. The museum is not owned by the management or the government. It belongs to the people of NSW. After nine and half years, transparency is the least obligation owed to the community about the secret purpose of these plans.

Unlike like other museums and galleries, MAAS has no vision or mission statement, and no strategic plan to guide the expenditure of \$1.4 billion in taxpayers' money. **It has hidden the intention of the management to 'break the museum' and 'undo the institution', sprinkling references to its mission for applied arts and sciences through 'fact sheets', while bent on deindustrialising the museum.** The following appears in job ads and in the text of the Powerhouse 'strategic framework'.

About Powerhouse:

Through the renewal and across its platforms, Powerhouse will redefine museums in the 21st century by renegotiating the terms of engagement with communities, radically returning to and reckoning with its legacy as a museum of industry and fortifying its vital role in the cultural and economic ecosystems of NSW, Australia and the world.<sup>9</sup>

Reckoning with the museum's legacy as a museum of industry appears to mean emptying the Powerhouse Museum of its unwanted transport, engineering and industrial collections and sending them to Castle Hill or elsewhere.

### 3 Statutory Context

The Statutory Context section of the EIS omits mention of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Act 1945, as required by SEARS in 1: **address all relevant legislation**

The EIS does not show how the development is consistent with the statutory obligations in the MAAS Act. The project is described as an **information and education facility – museum**, but the EIS provides no information whatsoever about how the gutted shell of the former Powerhouse Museum will be used, and what is **the museum purpose** of the empty volumes of the Turbine and Boiler Halls that allegedly are required to **meet contemporary exhibition and event requirements for large flexible spaces**. The EIS provides no clue as to what this means, nor is there any other museum built on these specifications.

Having 'de-cluttered' the museum of its collections and exhibition spaces the EIS does not explain how the 'revitalisation' and empty spaces of the former PHM will be used. What are the intended uses of the Turbine and Boiler Halls that are consistent with the objects of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Act and generally understood to be museum functions and activities? What is the **museum** use of the 25m high Boiler Hall if not the exhibition of the museum's transport, flight and space collections which are central to the objects of the MAAS Act?

The development outlined in the SSD for Powerhouse Ultimo – is **not an actual museum by title** or program. The EIS does not show how the development meets the museum's statutory **obligations under the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Act**.

**14 Objects and functions of trustees**

(1) The trustees shall have the following objects and may exercise any or all of the following functions—

(a) the control and management of the Museum,

(b) the maintenance and administration of the Museum in such manner as will effectively **minister to the needs and demands of the community in any or all**

**branches of applied science and art and the development of industry by—**

(i) **the display of selected objects arranged to illustrate the industrial advance of civilisation and the development of inventions and manufactures,**

(ii) **the promotion of craftsmanship and artistic taste by illustrating the history and development of the applied arts,**

(iii) lectures, broadcasts, films, publications and other educational means,

(iv) scientific research, or

(v) any **other means necessary or desirable for the development of the natural resources and manufacturing industries** of New South Wales.

The Powerhouse Ultimo SSD is a consequence of a subversive program to change the museum's purpose and focus to creative arts, not applied arts and applied sciences. The eviction of the collections and erasure of 75 % of the museum exhibition galleries to create just three large spaces reduces the museum's capacity to fulfil its remit. It is clearly designed to turn the former Powerhouse Museum into a contemporary arts, performance and venue hire operation.

The provision of some kind of exhibition plan for Powerhouse Ultimo in the years to come is insufficient to answer questions about whether this development is a museum that is compliant with the MAAS Act. The EIS needs to demonstrate statutory compliance with the MAAS Act through provision of the design and facility briefs, the museum plan and an exhibition plan as part of the EIS. SEARS requires the EIS to address relevant legislation, and provide an explanation for how the development is a **museum**, as per the ownership and land use, when the project description in the Request for SEARS does not even mention the museum word, or any use generally known to be associated with museums such as the exhibition of collections. The SSD cannot be approved without this information in the EIS.

## 4 Creative Industries are not the business of MAAS

**The preference of the management to turn the PHM into a contemporary arts and creative industries organisation is NOT consistent with the purpose of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.** When the MAAS CEO was running Carriageworks she stated that Carriageworks is a creative industries precinct. Now apparently it is the business of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. In recent years extensive museum resources have been dedicated to funding artists, creative residents, art commissions, creative fellowships, and artistic associates running the



curatorial program, with the mantra the PHM is a creative industries **precinct**, as if this is something happening in the neighbourhood. In fact 'precinct' is internal to the museum's operations, with the museum (taxpayers) generously funding artists and creatives, art commissions, artistic fellowships, performance, and creative residencies of no obvious relevance to the museum's Act or benefit to the museum and its audiences. Almost all of these fellowships and residencies have been for artists, not scientists. The collections have been cleared out of the Harwood building and much of the building turned over to artists and creative residents. Other artists, businesses and creative residents are working in the North Annex, the top floor of the Switch House and the level five Wran mezzanine.

Applied arts are **not** the same as creative industries.<sup>10</sup> The redevelopment of Powerhouse Ultimo as a creative industries facility with creative industry shops, creative spaces and programs to support the creative industries is NOT consistent with the Objects of the MAAS Act. If the government wants to turn MAAS into a creative industries and contemporary arts organisation focussed on artists, events and performance they should change the Act first. I note the EIS has 32 references to creative industries while the Powerhouse Museum's collection is barely mentioned. There are just six references to Tech Central which is actually aligned with the museum's remit for applied sciences, sciences and technology. The EIS has nothing to say about the museum's responsibility for science, technology, industry and the development of inventions and manufactures.

There has been no policy process or consultation to justify changing the purpose of the Powerhouse Museum. It is clear the move to prioritise supporting artists and creatives has already had a negative impact on the museum's performance, audiences and education functions. The Powerhouse Museum is Sydney's major heritage museum; it is not a grant making off-shoot of Creative Australia. **The PHM is not and has never been a contemporary art centre or a 'contemporary museum' – whatever that means, or a centre for contemporary ideas and issues.** To suggest otherwise is a fundamental misreading of the museum's history, purpose and statutory obligations.

There are other galleries, facilities and precincts in Sydney that have a remit for contemporary art, creative industries and arts centres. Sydney is relatively well served for contemporary and creative arts: the MCA, Sydney Modern, Art Space at the Gunner, and Carriageworks. New creative precincts are planned at the National Art School and White Bay. Sydney has only one major heritage museum and that's the Powerhouse Museum. There is no case for the PHM to duplicate the remit and focus of other cultural organisations and facilities, especially when it comes at the expense of the PHM's core business. **The creative industries precinct should be at Carriageworks.** There is a case for better support for artists and creatives, and for studio accommodation in Sydney. The government needs to address this need in separate policy and funding process, not try and weld it on to the PHM which has a different remit and responsibilities under its Act. The City of Sydney is already working on initiatives to support artist studios.

Establishing space for new creative industries is one of the objectives of the EIS.<sup>11</sup> This is not consistent with the MAAS Act. It is not the Powerhouse Museum's business to be using the museum's land and assets to develop and manage creative industry shops and studios, particularly when the development guts the museum's exhibition spaces.<sup>12</sup> The shops for creative industries are unlikely to animate Harris St as proposed, and the PHM has far more interesting options to do this with its current facilities. The shops are built right to the Harris Street footpath alignment without any shelter or colonnade. The proposal assumes that working artists' studios will be open every day as retail shops when these are incompatible functions.

Furthermore, there is negligible visitor or tourism interest in visiting artist studios, compared with visiting heritage places and museums. In the year before Covid, just 9% of international tourists were interested in visiting art and craft studios or workshops, and only 3% of domestic visitors. The top interest of high value long stay international cultural tourists is visiting history, heritage buildings sites or monuments at 67%, followed by visiting museums and art galleries at 56%. Cultural tourism was worth \$14.3b to the NSW economy in 2019.<sup>13</sup> Taxpayers would get a better return on their investment by restoring the PHM as the fully functioning Powerhouse Museum, one of Sydney's best loved cultural and heritage attractions.

## 5 The EIS Objectives are Flawed and Unjustified

The project objectives in the EIS are flawed and misguided. They fail to justify or explain the need for the large scale demolition and the reduction of the PHM's exhibition space by 75%, removing all the smaller scale flexible galleries in name of 'decluttering' the PHM's exhibition spaces. The suggestion in the project objectives that the PHM does not meet international museum standards or is unable to host international travelling exhibitions is ridiculous. See appendix 1 below.

All the Powerhouse Museum spaces meet international museum standards. The PHM's exhibition spaces have been world class since the museum opened in 1988. The museum has never had difficulty attracting international exhibitions. The lack of international exhibitions at the PHM in recent years is down to the management's programming choices and curatorial focus. The building hasn't failed; it's the management that has failed. If the government wants to see more international exhibitions and blockbusters at the PHM there has to be a change of leadership, a return to the museum's core business, and a focus on rebuilding the PHM's expert curatorial staff.

**International exhibitions are not dialled-up and chosen as if from a take-away menu.** They can take years to negotiate and typically are based on a curatorial rationale or thesis to shape the exhibition, as we saw with *Ramses & the Gold of the Pharaohs* at the Australian Museum. Securing international exhibitions needs a museum leadership who are internationally respected, and running an exhibition program of curatorial significance. Brokering international exhibitions requires the museum's leadership to build professional and organisational relationships with their international peers, as we see with the international exhibitions presented at the National Museum of Australia, through its partnership with the British Museum. The shift in recent years to employ artists to curate exhibitions, downgrade the role of curators, and hollow out the PHM's curatorial expertise across applied arts and sciences is not the way to secure international exhibitions of cultural significance.

The Powerhouse Ultimo plans reduce the PHM to just three exhibition spaces, and these will be empirically less flexible for the exhibition of the majority of the museum collections. No international *museum* exhibition needs ceiling heights of 10 or 20 metres. The loss of two levels of exhibition galleries in the Switch House, which have hosted many international exhibitions, is especially damaging for the flexibility and capacity of the museum, particularly when these are sacrificed in the EIS plans for education and program space that the museum already has in its current configuration.

Other objectives in the EIS around museum needs and the functionality of the PHM are wrong and spurious.

- The museum does not need *significant programmable volumes to meet the requirements of present and future exhibitions*. These spaces should be used for the display of the transport and power collections which are intrinsically related to the industrial history of the site and the museum's purpose.
- The museum has no demonstrated need for *additional opportunities for large-volume presentation space*, at least not needs that are consistent with the museum's Act. I note the Parramatta Powerhouse has presentation spaces with 10 and 20 metre ceiling heights, designed for performance and venue hire. There is no possible case for more spaces of this type.
- The plans actually **reduce the flexibility of the PHM's exhibition spaces to display the collection**, leaving it with no small-scale galleries suitable for applied arts, design, decorative arts, Indigenous design, social history, science, computing, health and medicine and much of the technology collections.
- The access and entry from the Goods Line can be opened and improved without the large scale demolition and erasure of the PHM. The PHM has long had an entry from the Goods Line until it was closed by the current management. Many visitors and all the schools and coaches will arrive via Harris St. The PHM still needs its Harris St presence and entry.
- The landscape plans for the eastern courtyard fail to resolve access issues around the Goods Line or show any understanding of how visitors might use the space.
- Across every aspect of the plans there is a failure to consider the museum's audiences, especially families and children and older visitors. The reliance on stairs at every entry and corridor is poor, and inferior to the level access that the PHM provides in its present configuration.
- The museum does not need more space for administration and back of house if it is keeping the Harwood building.
- There is no need to waste millions excavating a small and inferior loading dock under the Switch House and forecourt when there is a larger and more functional loading less than 50 metres away in the Harwood building.
- Claims about the need for separation of circulation and back of house spaces are wrong. Almost all museums have exhibition galleries that are *enfilade*, experienced as a sequence of rooms or galleries. The circulation paths are integral to the galleries because people go to museums to see the collections, and the sequence of rooms and galleries is how museums conceptualise and structure their underpinning narrative. Even the newest museums, such as Mona in Hobart, retain this concept. The only reason to separate circulation and seal the remaining exhibition spaces in this development is to facilitate venue hire and conversion to other uses such as a nightclub or theatre.
- Claims that the circulation paths in the PHM are problematic or not legible are spurious. People get lost in every great museum because they have a variety of connected spaces and exhibition galleries. The PHM, like most great museums, was designed with spatial eddies and balconies, and places for rest and orientation, along with exhibition spaces of different sizes and character and for different audiences. The circulation paths are places for landmark objects and small displays. What the architects see as the 'peculiarities of the building' are the very features that make it work as a museum. Their plans strip the character and variety of spaces from the PHM, and conceptualise the circulation as if a museum is a supermarket.
- It is inexplicable that the museum is deprived of its address and presence on Harris St which is integral to its visibility and cultural prominence. Entry from the Goods Line in no way

replaces the landmark prominence of the PHM's architecture with its entry and interface to Harris St, seen by thousands of people every day. The plans effectively leave the Powerhouse Museum without a front door.

## 6 The EIS Options are Confected and not Investigated

**The only option consistent with the government's commitment for a heritage revitalisation of the Powerhouse Museum is Option 3 Refurbish Existing, 2.6 in the EIS. This is dismissed on confected and baseless grounds:**

This option constrains the potential outcomes able to be achieved on the site and does not meet the ***space and program utilisation needs of the museum to exhibit the collection***. Specifically, Powerhouse requires ***large, unrestricted exhibition areas that the current buildings***, either as they are now or if they were to be modified, cannot accommodate. These ***large spaces are required to enable flexible use for future exhibitions***. The refurbishment of the existing buildings does not accommodate these changes.

These arguments are completely spurious. Nowhere in the EIS does the proponent explain what these ***program utilisation needs*** are. What is ***the museum need*** for large unrestricted areas – which is what the PHM already has - that can't be done in the PHM's buildings as they are now? And what are requirements for ***flexible use for future exhibitions*** that can't be accommodated across the PHM's current 20,080 m<sup>2</sup> of highly flexible gallery spaces?

**There is no conceivable museum need for large unrestricted exhibition areas that cannot be accommodated in the PHM buildings as they are now.** In its 35 years of operation the Powerhouse Museum has hosted every type of museum and cultural event across its 22-25 exhibition galleries including circus trapeze events, concerts, dance, sound and light shows and international exhibitions of the highest cultural significance.

## 7 The Powerhouse Museum Demolition

For \$350.4m the Powerhouse Ultimo SSD will demolish all but three of the Powerhouse Museum's 22 exhibition galleries, reducing the exhibition space by 75% to just three large spaces of 5,100 m<sup>2</sup>, (see 8 below). This will leave the former museum with no smaller scale exhibition galleries for the display of 99% of the PHM's collections spanning applied arts, Australian history, decorative arts, migration heritage, Indigenous design, technology, health and medicine, computing, and science.

As for what is displayed in the empty spaces, the meagre promise from MAAS and the government is to retain three objects in the shell of the museum that was purpose designed to exhibit the transport and power collections. These are the priceless 1785 Boulton and Watt rotative steam engine, No.1 Loco, and the Catalina. There is no plan to retain the PHM's power and transport collections in the exhibition galleries that were purpose designed for these nationally significant collections. There is no plan to retain the *Steam Revolution* gallery in the Engine House with Australia's most significant collection of steam engines working under live steam. There is no plan to retain the *Transport Flight and Space* exhibition, with what was one of the world's great installations of historic aircraft suspended in flight in the majestic space of the Boiler Hall. Instead the former PHM will be emptied of its collections and substantially gutted and demolished to create spaces for

unspecified *contemporary and flexible use*, to meet contemporary exhibition and event requirements for large flexible spaces..... The purpose is to present a broad range of exhibitions, performance and events with infrastructure to respond to contemporary museums practices and utilisation.<sup>14</sup>

Entirely lost in a blizzard of empty jargon is the core purpose of the museum to display its collection. People will have to trek to J Store at Castle Hill to see the cars, steam engines, trains, and planes in crates with the wings off. The proponents of the Powerhouse Museum steal have not disclosed what the empty large *programmable volumes* of the Boiler Hall and Turbine Hall will be used for. The design and facilities briefs are secret. But the requirements for large *autonomously programmed spaces*,<sup>15</sup> separated from circulation paths, can only be to maximise venue hire opportunities, and potentially future conversion to a theatre or nightclub to support the 24 hour casino economy.

In 2022 the MAAS CEO told Budget Estimates the revenue target across the four Powerhouse sites is \$38.8m pa.<sup>16</sup> This is more than Australia's most popular museums and galleries, with more than 2 million visitors a year, earn in self-generated revenue. But the bigger concern is the tail wagging the dog, with the core purpose of the museum subordinate to running a venue hire, events and performance business subsidised by taxpayers, and managed by public servants who might otherwise be employed in museum roles. Instead of the Powerhouse Museum revitalised as a heritage museum, and contrasting with the Parramatta development, the former Powerhouse Museum is being emptied of its collections and gutted, demolished, downsized and repurposed on the same unproven concept that has nothing to do with the statutory obligations of the MAAS Act.

The EIS does not fully detail the scale of the proposed demolition. Only those who know the museum well can understand the impact of this waste and vandalism, although there are nine pages of architectural drawings for the demolition scheme. 'Decluttering' the museum of its exhibition galleries entails:

- The Switch House – losing two floors of exhibition galleries used for applied arts, design, decorative arts, Indigenous design, international exhibitions and exhibitions for kids and families, along with the offices and the connection to the board room
- Turbine Hall – demolishing all the mezzanine galleries over three levels including the Engine House for *Steam Revolution*, all the Australian Communities and social history galleries, the Kings Cinema used for films and talks, exhibition spaces for music and design, plus the ground floor for science, experimentations, interactives and displays for kids and families
- The Boiler Hall – losing mezzanine galleries at both ends used for Space and Ecologic
- The barrel-vaulted Galleria - reduced to a dingy brick catacomb for toilets, stairs, with the Boulton and Watt jammed up the back, unable to be appreciated properly from any angle. The Galleria loses exhibition space over three and half levels: formerly used for exhibitions on music, health, kids, Zoe's House, display storage exhibitions and history. And on the Harris St entry the Boulton and Watt and No.1 Loco, tender and carriages displayed with associated thematic Australian history exhibitions on the platform level.
- The Wran building is partially demolished at the southern end for no reason, reducing the temporary exhibition space by 400sqm or 600sqm. It loses the ground floor exhibition space for museum treasures and history, plus the mezzanine gallery used for international exhibitions, decorative arts, art cars, fashion and formerly the dedicated Asian gallery.

The scale of demolition is inexplicable and unjustified on any rational grounds – cost, value for money, functionality, cultural impact, heritage impacts, reduction in exhibition capacity, sustainability and the waste of assets and the investment of previous generations.

The plans erase all trace of the Powerhouse Museum's Sulman award winning heritage adaptation and contemporary design, including its award winning interiors and expansive ramps loved by kids and families.

The demolition of the Switch House exhibition galleries is especially egregious and unnecessary since the PHM has ample education space that has gone unused under the current management. In addition, the PHM's three flexible theatre spaces are reduced to one auditorium with fixed raked seating claimed to be a presentation space in the EIS.

Also scheduled for wasteful demolition is the entire removal of all the works done in 2011-13 revitalisation, including the new education spaces and schools entry from Macarthur St, and new toilets, lifts and escalators and the new café, shop and amenities opening to the forecourt. Despite claiming the museum needs more back of house and office space, the EIS plans propose to demolish the level four offices in the Switch House, and the Wran building's top floor mezzanine offices and its gem-like board room. There is no rhyme or reason to any of this. The group visits and education functions are very well connected on level 2 of the Turbine Hall and below the forecourt with new amenities, two flexible theatres with raked seating, and two expansive education areas 50% larger than the current plans, providing seamless access to the Turbine Hall and Switch House galleries.

## 8 Downsizing the PHM's Exhibition Space

The Powerhouse Museum opened in 1988 with 25 exhibitions across **20,000 m<sup>2</sup>** of exhibition space over five levels and five buildings.<sup>17</sup>

'Revitalisation' works in 2011-12,<sup>18</sup> created a new **1,800 m<sup>2</sup>** temporary exhibition space for international blockbusters in the Wran building, moving the museum's entry to the Galleria.<sup>19</sup> In the same works, the level 4 Switch House decorative arts exhibition space of **720 m<sup>2</sup>** was converted to a café and shop. This results in an overall addition of **1,080 m<sup>2</sup>** exhibition space, giving the PHM a total **21,080 m<sup>2</sup>** of exhibition space across five levels. **Total PHM exhibition space is 21,080 m<sup>2</sup>**

In the Powerhouse Ultimo proposal, there are three 'presentation spaces' and a fourth in what is actually an auditorium.<sup>20</sup> These are:

- Presentation space 1 in the Boiler Hall **1900 m<sup>2</sup>**
- Presentation space 2 in the Turbine and Engine House **2,000 m<sup>2</sup>**
- Presentation space 4<sup>21</sup> in the partly demolished and gutted Wran building **1,200 m<sup>2</sup>**.

**Total Powerhouse Ultimo presentation space is only 5,100 m<sup>2</sup>**

**This is a 75.8% decrease in exhibition space from the Powerhouse Museum's current exhibition space at a cost of \$350m. Or Powerhouse Ultimo will have only a quarter of the PHM's exhibition space.**

The measly 5,100 m<sup>2</sup> across three spaces is **half the more than 10,000 m<sup>2</sup>** the MAAS CEO advised was in the design brief in 2022.<sup>22</sup> Someone in this shadowy project has not met the facilities requirements.

*If* the auditorium was counted as an exhibition space, the total Presentation space would be 6,000 m<sup>2</sup> which is **71.5%** less than the PHM currently has. On the other hand, the Powerhouse Museum's three flexible theatres with raked seating will be demolished, as will the museum's two expansive flexible education zones adjacent to the theatres, and all the revitalisation works and new accessible education spaces built only 12 years ago in 2011-13.

Education space in the Powerhouse Ultimo demolition and downsizing is reduced by more than 50%. If the development proceeds, the former PHM will be left with just three exhibition spaces, and these will be demonstrably less usable and less flexible for the exhibition of the majority of the museum collections. No international *museum* exhibition needs ceiling heights of 10 or 20 metres. Furthermore, the ex-PHM's exhibition spaces will be less sustainable and more costly to operate, needing more expensive design and construction to mediate the volume and scale of the spaces.

**Powerhouse Ultimo is a project marked by epic waste and museum and heritage destruction for no cultural need or public purpose. There is no possible justification for reducing the Powerhouse Museum's purpose designed flexible exhibition spaces by 75%, from 20,080 m<sup>2</sup> to 5,100 m<sup>2</sup>; and from 22 exhibition spaces to just three, at a staggering cost of \$350m. Assertions by the project proponents that there will be *more and better exhibition space* are not true.**

**Also false are the claims the museum will show more of its collections** when the development leaves the museum with just a quarter of its former flexible exhibition spaces, leaving three large spaces clearly planned for events, performance and venue hire; when the spaces are less flexible for the majority of the PHM collections; and when those collections are stashed off site at Castle Hill.

## Harwood Building

INSW says that the *Harwood building is not included in this development. It will be retained for museum use to provide storage, loading, staff accommodation, workshop and conservation facilities.*





This is not credible. If Harwood is to remain part of the museum's operations why were the architects told to decouple the PHM from the Harwood building? And why waste millions inserting a loading dock into the Switch House and forecourt, at great cost and risk, when the PHM has more expansive and functional loading dock and exhibition handling facilities in the Harwood building only 50 metres away? Why waste money on a new library in the Switch House when the PHM has an outstanding library in the Harwood building?

If the Harwood building is being retained for the museum's operations, it should have been part of the EIS. Harwood is an integral part of the Powerhouse Museum Complex, its transport and industrial history, and its adaptation and design conception for the PHM. It is essential for the museum's operational capacity, functionality and future opportunities. If the Harwood building was included in the EIS the cost of the project would be substantially less. There would be less waste and demolition, and it would leave the museum with more capacity to fulfil its remit.

Almost all of the collections and conservation labs have been moved to Castle Hill which was planned to store all the museum's collections and to render the Harwood building surplus to museum needs. The cost of this unnecessary folly as at June 2023 is estimated at \$127m. Almost all the staff have been moved to Castle Hill or Parramatta. There are no plans for staff to remain at the PHM. Large parts of the Harwood building have been handed to creatives and artists rent free. The suggestion the Harwood building will be retained is not credible.

The GFA for the Powerhouse Ultimo development is **15,842 m<sup>2</sup>**. The **Powerhouse Museum Complex has a total GFA of 42,594 m<sup>2</sup>**, including the Harwood building, and this was wholly dedicated to museum functions and operations, up until the current management began handing museum spaces to artists and creatives.<sup>23</sup> Under the Powerhouse Ultimo SSD, **the Powerhouse Museum is downsized by 63%.**<sup>24</sup>

## Key Recommendations

**1 The Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation SSD EIS must be rejected in its entirety. The plans in the EIS are wasteful, destructive and inconsistent with the government's clear promises to save the Powerhouse Museum.**

**2 The Powerhouse Museum must be reopened.** The government should prioritise the repairs and maintenance neglected by the management of MAAS, the renewal of exhibitions and get the museum open again, serving the people of NSW.

**3 The government must release the key documents and plans for Ultimo and Parramatta as promised,** including the business cases, the competition design brief and the facilities brief for the PHM.

**4 The government must restart a transparent process for the genuine renewal of the Powerhouse Museum Complex and an end to fake consultations, spin and secrecy.** Museums must operate ethically and professionally with the participation of communities. After so many broken promises new museum leadership is required to rebuild trust with communities and the PHM's supporters.<sup>25</sup>

5 The whole Powerhouse Museum Complex must be state heritage listed, and the significance and integrity of the PHM's buildings, assets and operations protected from property plays, sale or divestment.

6 The Powerhouse Museum Complex must have a new Conservation Management Plan developed in collaboration with the architect of the PHM Lionel Glendenning. The PMA asks **again** that Alan Croker of Design 5 be re-engaged to complete his CMP which was abruptly terminated by Create NSW after he had delivered the draft assessment of significance.<sup>26</sup> There is no mystery as to why his contract was terminated. Design excellence starts by employing the most qualified and skilled people. I note Design 5 recently won the 2024 National Trust's Judges Choice award for their CMP and work on the White Bay Power Station, in addition to a swag of prestigious awards for comparable renewal projects including the Sydney Opera House Renewal and the masterplan and CMP for the revitalisation of Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.<sup>27</sup> The termination of the Design 5 Draft PHM CMP is another sign, if it were needed, that the project proponents for this EIS have no intention of delivering any kind of heritage outcome or museum revitalisation. The CMP must include conservation policies to give effect to the Powerhouse Museum Design Principles developed with Lionel Glendenning and Richard Johnson.

7 The government must honour its promise to save the Wran building and protect the Wran legacy. The Wran building must be conserved and restored as the museum's entry, in keeping with its design conception, retaining its prominent landmark character on Harris St. There are many better ways of activating the museum's Harris St frontage and forecourt than by hiding the museum behind a row of shops unrelated to the museum's purpose. Restoring the role and function of the Wran building would not preclude an entry from the Goods Line.

8 In tandem with the CMP and exhibition renewal plans, the Powerhouse Museum Complex needs a master plan to guide an integrated design and landscape plan for the precinct including the Harris St forecourt, the Stage 1 Mary Anne St forecourt, the eastern courtyard and Goods Line leading to the new entry, addressing pedestrian access issues for the Goods Line and light rail. The masterplan must be integrated with the design and renewal plans for the PHM and its exhibitions, so the purpose and work of the museum is extended to the public domain and landscape design in ways that activate the spaces, express the PHM's remit and concept, supports public programs and meets the needs of the museum's diverse visitors. The perfunctory design of the museum's public domains in the Public Domain Report, appendix F and the Architecture and Urban Design report appendix E, does not demonstrate any conceptual thinking about the mission and work of 'Powerhouse Ultimo', or what kinds of cultural activities are planned for the site, or how the public domain will be used for the museum's programs to engage visitors and maximise access and cultural activity in the precinct. Perhaps there was no such discussion or collaboration.

9 There must be no asset sale, divestment or secret decoupling of the Harwood building from the Powerhouse Museum Complex. It is impossible to accept the vaguely worded phrases from MAAS and INSW that the Harwood building will be retained for museum uses.

10 The EIS and architectural drawings offer no insight as to what is intended for the former PHM. It is impossible to understand what is driving the EIS and architects' drawings except the glaring revelation that this is a thinly disguised scheme to demolish, downsize and reduce the PHM to a shop front operation for unspecified commercial uses, events and arts activities. It is obvious the

Powerhouse Museum can never be saved under the current management that pays lip service to, or is dismissive, of the museum's statutory obligations under the MAAS Act.

The PMA has lost confidence and trust in the management of MAAS. It is clear that management's intention is to deindustrialise the Powerhouse Museum, bury the collections at Castle Hill and turn the museum into a contemporary arts organisation. The last five years has seen a pronounced decay in the operations and performance of the museum, reflected across all the key performance indicators. The management has shown no interest in the museum's state wide remit for applied arts and applied sciences, technology, history, or heritage collections. Priority has shifted to supporting artists and 'creative industries' under the misapprehension that MAAS is a 'contemporary museum'. This is nonsense.

The Powerhouse Museum is Australia's only museum of **applied arts and applied sciences**. It manages a heritage collection that reflects its history and education context in Ultimo since 1893 – deeply connected to technical education, trade and industry.<sup>28</sup> The collection and the PHM cannot be separated from the museum's history and home in Ultimo. The destructive heritage impacts of the wishful thinking that the museum can be moved and remade as a creative industries body are all too glaring in the destructive, deceptive and confusing Powerhouse Ultimo scheme. The concept of a contemporary museum patronising multi art form creative industries may be appropriate for the arts and performance facility planned for the Parramatta Powerhouse. But this has nothing to do with the legislated remit of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. **Creative industries are not applied arts.**

It is time that Western Sydney has its own cultural institution based at Parramatta with a remit to work across Western Sydney supporting the creative talent and cultural life of the region's diverse communities, with the capacity to draw on all the state's collections for exhibition at Parramatta or other venues. The Parramatta Powerhouse development must be separated from MAAS and established with a unique name, identity, funding and governance arrangements.

It is untenable for the management to be operating outside the objects of the MAAS Act as is clearly the case with the Powerhouse Ultimo EIS. The SSD EIS is inconsistent with the statutory obligations of the MAAS Act and is therefore invalid.

## Conclusion

If this project is approved it will be a cultural catastrophe for Sydney and NSW. The Powerhouse Museum is our V&A and Science Museum in one, a 144 year old heritage museum, and Australia's only museum of applied arts and sciences. The PHM is highly regarded by national and international cultural and heritage institutions, evidenced in many landmark movable heritage projects, and international collaborations and exhibitions held at the PHM – until its recent churn of leaders and change of direction. It is complete nonsense for the EIS to claim that the PHM is not an international standard museum, or is unable to show blockbuster exhibitions. The Powerhouse Museum Complex hasn't failed. It is the management that has failed to maintain the building in keeping with its legislated obligations. And they have failed to deliver exhibitions and education programs in line with the MAAS Act and audience interests, not least families and kids.<sup>29</sup>

The substantial demolition of an historic cultural institution and the wastage of its state-of-the-art facilities that are only 35 years old is unparalleled anywhere in the civilised world. At stake in this deceptive and dangerous SSD is the end of the Powerhouse Museum and its unique mission for applied arts and applied sciences. For the first time since 1893 there is no museum in Ultimo. Its collections are banished to an inaccessible store at Castle Hill. The museum has already been effectively defunded and stripped of its expert professional and technical staff. There is no plan to return the staff to what's left of the PHM as the CEO told the PSA. The ***museum*** word and all its collections, exhibition capacity and facilities will be gutted to the bare brick walls. It is inexplicable that these plans have been advanced despite the government's explicit promises to save the PHM with a heritage revitalisation, save the Wran building, protect the Wran legacy, and keep the museum open, let alone that this cultural catastrophe will cost taxpayers \$350m.

Kylie Winkworth for the Powerhouse Museum Alliance

Former Trustee and Life Fellow

## Appendix 1 A Selection of The Powerhouse Museum's International Exhibitions

Rebutting the nonsense justification in that the PHM is not capable of hosting international exhibitions<sup>30</sup>

### ***Christian Dior: the magic of fashion***

July - October 1994, PHM, PP Wran building mezzanine

Christian Dior is one of the most famous names in 20th century fashion. This exclusive, retrospective exhibition of one of the world's leading fashion houses included costumes on loan from the Christian Dior archives and the Union Française des Arts du Costume, France. The exhibition and publication documented Dior's impact on the fashion world, with special focus on his influence in Australia.

### ***Treasures from the Kremlin: the world of Fabergé***

1 July - 22 September 1996, Wran building mezzanine PHM

The main attraction in this exhibition, brought from the Moscow Armory Museum, was the display of five magnificent Fabergé eggs. One of these was decorated with 1805 diamonds and 54 rubies, with miniature portraits of the Tsar's children painted on ivory. Also on display were the luxurious coronation gowns of the late Russian Tsar and Tsarina, Nicholas II and Alexandra.

### ***Star Trek: the exhibit***

23 September 1997 - 3 February 1998, Wran building PHM

Featuring exclusive and original objects from the four television series and eight feature films, the exhibition celebrated 30 years of *Star Trek*. Included in the display were costumes, props, models, alien masks, a full scale command bridge from the original television series, and a transporter from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

### ***Knights from Imperial Austria: Treasures of Art, Arms and Armour from the State of Styria***

9 June - 11 October 1998, PHM

From the 15th to 17th century, Austria, and particularly the Austrian state of Styria, stood as the Holy Roman Empire's bastion of defence against invasions from the East. The exhibition featured over 300 objects of Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque warfare, including 76 suits of armour from Austria's Steiermarkisches Landesmuseum and private lenders; it examined the dynamic relationship between the classical fine art of the period and the art of arms and armour making.

### ***Precious legacy: treasures from the Jewish Museum in Prague***

17 December 1998 - 28 February 1999, PHM, PP, TR

Presented one of the world's most significant Judaica collections, dating from the 16th century. Exquisite manuscripts, paintings, richly embroidered synagogue textiles, silver ceremonial objects,

folk artefacts and audio visual testimonies told the story of central European Jewish communities. This was a unique cultural opportunity to celebrate the survival of the legacy and its continuation in Australia. Supported by the Jewish community of Australia. Toured to Melbourne and New Zealand.

***Rapt in colour: Korean textiles and costumes of the Choson dynasty***

September 1998 - 27 February 2000, PHM, PP, TR Wran building mezzanine

Wrapping cloths, known as *bojagi*, are functional objects of simple but stunning design that played an important role in everyday life in Korea. They were used to wrap and store clothing and gifts, to cover food or to store bedding. Six types of court wrapping cloths, 30 commoners' cloths and nine traditional costumes were displayed. The exhibition was organised by the Powerhouse Museum and the Museum of Korean Embroidery, Seoul. Toured to the Immigration Museum, Melbourne.

***1000 years of the Olympic Games: treasures of ancient Greece***

18 July – 15 November 2000, Wran building, PHM PP

The myths and rituals, sports and spectacle of the ancient Olympic Games were explored through a magnificent collection of Greek national treasures in bronze, marble and clay, produced between the 8th century BCE and the 3rd century CE. Lent by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Athens, as a contribution to the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the exhibition was developed by the Powerhouse Museum and was an official event in the Sydney 2000 Olympic Arts Festival.

***Leonardo da Vinci: the Codex Leicester – notebook of a genius***

5 September – 5 November 2000, Switch House level 3 PHM

The Codex Leicester, on loan from Bill and Melinda Gates, is one of Leonardo da Vinci's original scientific notebooks. It provided a rare insight into the inquiring mind of the definitive Renaissance artist, scientist and thinker as well as an exceptional illustration of the link between art and science, bringing to life da Vinci's observations and theories on astronomy, the properties of water, rocks and fossils, air and celestial light. An official event in the Sydney 2000 Olympic Arts Festival.

***The Great Wall of China: dynasties, dragons and warriors***

28 September 2006 - 22 July 2007, Wran building PHM, PP, TR

A joint project with the National Museum of China, the epic story of the Great Wall of China came to life through ancient artefacts, drawn from the collection of the NMC and regional museums in China, interactive, and an immersive sound and image installation comprising 12-metre wide photographic panoramas that recorded different sections of the Great Wall of China from the the limits of the Chinese empire in the north west to the East China Sea.

***Silver: Paul de Lamerie from the Cahn Collection***

17 April – 22 June 2008, Switch House PHM

Organised by Memphis Brooks Museum of Art and made possible by the Cahn Family Foundation, the exhibition focused on the extraordinary work of Paul de Lamerie (1688-1751), London's legendary 18th century silversmith. On display were around 70 fabulous rococo pieces from the Cahn Collection, including some of the most important pieces of de Lamerie silver in private hands.

***Harry Potter: the exhibition***

19 November 2011 - 9 April 2012, Wran building PHM, TR

Step inside the magical world of Harry Potter for a close encounter with the artistry that went into creating the iconic props and costumes appearing throughout the Harry Potter films. The authentic artefacts are displayed in elaborate settings inspired by locations from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry including the Great Hall, the Gryffindor common room and Hagrid's hut. Developed in partnership with Warner Bros, it toured the US, Canada, Europe, Shanghai, Tokyo and Singapore.

***Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives***

10 December 2016 – 30 April 2017, PHM

Using the latest technology, including CT scan visualisations, six mummies selected from the British Museum collection were featured alongside their 3D imagery, revealing the secrets of mummification and providing unique insights into the way people lived and died in Ancient Egypt. Visitors were able to encounter six individuals who lived and died between 1800 and 3000 years ago.

## About the Powerhouse Museum Alliance (PMA)

The PMA represents eminent museum, collection, conservation and heritage experts, architects and exhibition designers, former trustees, Life Fellows, collectors and donors to the Powerhouse Museum. The PMA has always supported a new museum for Parramatta, based on transparent consultation and community cultural aspirations. From the time the 'move' of the PHM to Parramatta was announced by former Premier Mike Baird in November 2014 the PMA has sought constructive engagement with the government, relevant ministers, senior public servants and the management of MAAS and its Trustees. Numerous expert papers have been submitted to the government and the two Legislative Council inquiries into the scheme, providing independent expert advice, and analysis of museum opportunities and critical issues including flood risks at Parramatta and more cost effective options to reinvigorate the Powerhouse Museum. The authors and contributors to these papers include senior museum leaders, architects and designers, museum planners, emeritus curators and heritage experts, most with more than forty years' experience at the Powerhouse Museum, and with museum development projects internationally and in Australia. Two schemes for the genuine renewal of the Powerhouse Museum Complex were presented to the government in 2023, at the government's invitation. These forward-looking plans for the Real Powerhouse Museum were not even considered.

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<sup>1</sup> PSA Dispute Update 23 Feb 2024 When asked will staff return from Castle Hill or Parramatta after the Ultimo site reopens the answer has been an emphatic 'no', which raises more concerns. The Powerhouse advised yesterday **that new staff would be hired in the future when the Ultimo site reopens.**

<https://psa.asn.au/power-house-museum-dispute-update/> See also News 12 May 2023

<https://psa.asn.au/powerhouse-museums-future-remains-unclear/> There is no information on what staff might be recruited as there is no plan that explains the cultural program for Powerhouse Ultimo or how it will operate. But clearly the place is designed to operate as venue hire, event and performance centre with occasional exhibitions, on the same misguided design principles as Parramatta.

<sup>2</sup> The Switch House and mezzanine galleries in the Turbine Hall, the Boiler Hall and Wran building were purpose designed for smaller scale objects (anything from cars to jewellery and lace). These collections are better appreciated in spaces that are scaled to the size of the objects. This is basic museum and gallery planning not in evidence in the EIS and plans. Exhibiting applied arts in the Turbine Hall for example requires costly design and construction to frame and safely display the objects. Leo Schofield's exhibition *1001 Remarkable Objects* shown in the Turbine Hall cost \$2,911,560 m for a six month exhibition. Over the first 25 years of the PHM's exhibition practice, the museum used a flexible system of showcases that allowed exhibitions to be changed and renewed without junking the exhibition infrastructure. When the Boiler Hall and Turbine hall are scraped to bare brick walls these spaces will be **less flexible**, and anything the museum wants to do to exhibit the collections in these vast spaces will be more costly and risky.

<sup>3</sup> Or \$350,418,000, for a development with a building life of 50 years. See Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation EIS, Appendix BB Ecologically Sustainable Development SSDA Report, p. 27.

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-67588459%2120240409T051320.066%20GMT> . The

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Slattery p.24-25 *as the cost plan was at the development application stage, information on the exact quantities of all materials was not available, requiring several assumptions to be made...*

<sup>5</sup> Both collectively known as the Wran building although they are two distinct structures with different functions: the quadrant arc of the atrium – the museum's entry on Harris St, also housing exhibitions since 1988, and the barrel-vaulted Galleria. The form, structure and materials reference the 1879 Garden Palace exhibition building from which the museum was founded, and the design of nineteenth century railway buildings.

<sup>6</sup> It is unfortunate that much of the colour and the joyful character of the PHM's interiors has been degraded with thoughtless and unnecessary changes, notably moving the museum's entry from the grand atrium of the Wran building to the Galleria, but these changes can and should be reversed in a heritage revitalisation.

<sup>7</sup> The significant programmable volumes for contemporary events, performance and venue hire are exactly what has been designed for Parramatta. It is obvious the Powerhouse Museum design brief is based on the same unproven concept that museum objects and exhibitions can be wheeled in and out of multi-purpose venue spaces in slots between commercial events and other uses. No other museum operates on these principles. For discussion of the flaws in the Parramatta design brief see Kylie Winkworth Submission 137 May 2020 to the Select Committee on the management of the Powerhouse Museum and other museums and cultural projects in NSW.

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/67958/0137%20Ms%20Kylie%20Winkworth.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> ICOM museum definition August 2022 <https://icom.museum/en/news/icom-approves-a-new-museum-definition/>

<sup>9</sup> Powerhouse Strategic Framework developed with the PHM Artistic Associate Agatha Gothe-Snape.

<https://powerhouse.com.au/about#powerhouse-renewal> 'Strategies' include redefine museums, folding time, staying with the trouble, and hustle.

<sup>10</sup> The **applied arts** are all the arts that apply design and decoration to everyday and essentially practical objects in order to make them aesthetically pleasing. Applied arts comprise two different types: machine-made manufactures products which have had a particular design applied to them, to make them more attractive and easy-to-use; and individual, aesthetically pleasing but mostly functional, craft products made by artisans or skilled workers. Artistic disciplines that are classified as applied arts include industrial design, fashion, interior design, graphic design - including computer graphics, as well as most types of decorative art such as furniture, glass, ceramics, metalwork, jewellery, textiles and tapestries.

<sup>11</sup> Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation EIS objectives, p.12-3

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-67588459%2120240410T232648.949%20GMT>

<sup>12</sup> At the time of writing multiple requests for the GFA measurements for the creative industry shops and spaces have not been answered by either the Department of Planning or the applicant Infrastructure NSW.

<sup>13</sup> <https://cdn.sanity.io/files/faycjmvy/production/03dd60fa631eaa502d9eb227bdb18b8f7532a435.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation EIS objectives, p.12,

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-67588459%2120240410T232648.949%20GMT> and Appendix E Architectural and Urban Design Report, p 24

and 21.

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-67588459%2120240409T051634.317%20GMT>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, appendix E p.21

<sup>16</sup> Portfolio Committee No.1 Premier and Finance Transcript, 5 September 2022, p.60

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/transcripts/2987/Transcript%20-%20PC%201%20-%20Aboriginal%20Affairs,%20Arts,%20Regional%20Youth,%20Tourism%20-%205%20September%202022%20-%20CORRECTED.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> *The Powerhouse Museum, Australia's largest and most popular museum, is located in Darling Harbour, Sydney. Its unique and diverse collection of 385,000 objects spans history, science, technology, design, industry, decorative arts, music, transport and space exploration. The Museum has an ever-changing program of exhibitions covering approximately 20,000 square metres (equivalent to three international competition soccer fields). It presents 22 permanent exhibitions and several temporary exhibitions, complemented by more than 250 interactives.* <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/100602/20110120-1007/www.collectionsaustralia.net/org/171/about/index.html>

See also Final Business Case for the Renewal of the Powerhouse Museum, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, 24 October 2014, p.7 *Located in the Old Ultimo Power Station on the edge of Sydney' central business district and adjacent to Darling Harbour, the Museum comprises approximately 20,000m2 including an exhibition space of 1,800m2* [Final Business Case for the renewal of the Powerhouse Museum.PDF \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> The 2011-12 revitalisation works were proposed for same spurious reasons as the current SSD for the Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation, the need for an exhibition space for international exhibitions or blockbusters, and alleged problems with the circulation. These were then and are now nonsense assertions. All the PHM's exhibition spaces meet international museum standards. Before the 2011-12 building works the PHM hosted a number of international exhibitions in the Wran building, and in the Switch House which in the current SSD will be substantially demolished, removing two floors of exhibition galleries long used for applied



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arts, design, decorative arts, temporary exhibitions, international exhibitions and exhibitions for children and families.

<sup>19</sup> Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Annual report 2011-12, p.8

<https://cdn.sanity.io/files/wkgts1b4/staging/6c301ceb53e52c5b719e9d853bb52786fd4ea9a0.pdf>

Proponents of the current SSD EIS have incorrectly claimed that the PHM has had no substantial works since it opened in 1988. This is not true. The revitalisation works were justified on the same grounds as the current EIS around alleged problems with the circulation patterns and the need for a gallery for international exhibitions in the Wran building. The Wran building had previously hosted a number of significant international travelling exhibitions. The works cost around \$25m and included moving the entry to the galleria (which has never worked), new toilets, escalators and lifts, a new schools entry and additional education spaces and lecture rooms under the forecourt, and a new shop and café in the Switch House opening to the Harris St forecourt. Completed only 12 years ago all these works are set for demolition. Then as now what the museum actually required was considered conservation, maintenance of the roof, gutters and window seals, renewal of services and improvements to the public domain, conservation of interiors and **revitalisation of the exhibition galleries**. The works removed much of Richard Johnson's interior design including the cubic armature in the turbine hall which provided definition and structure for thematic flow of exhibitions. Since then, with the progressive removal of exhibitions replaced by shuttered galleries, the PHM has lost much of the narrative coherence it had in its 1988 plan, and the thematic zoning of exhibition linked to audiences and education. The conversion of the Wran building to a black box space and other works stripped the museum inside and out of its colour palette and playful design.

<sup>20</sup> Presentation space 3 of 900 m<sup>2</sup> is an auditorium – described in the Design Fact Sheet as a 'black box for diverse utilisation including exhibitions, programs, presentations and immersive experiences'. The PHM's Design Fact Sheet claims the space has a **flat floor with retractable seating**, p.7.

<https://cdn.sanity.io/files/wkgts1b4/production/f3d740600c4a4d9ef6f73791b12b877d8a3c0ea2.pdf>

The plans on exhibition for the Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation SSD show the **auditorium has fixed raked seating**. Appendix B, Architectural Drawings Cross Section D, p. 24.

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-67588459%2120240409T051328.708%20GMT> These are the plans that form the basis for planning

assessment and approval, not the 'fact sheets'. An auditorium with fixed raked seating is not practical as an exhibition space and for this reason it has been excluded from the calculation of exhibition space.

<sup>21</sup> The Powerhouse Fact Sheet claims the Wran building exhibition space is 1,000 m<sup>2</sup>. It was converted to an 1,800 m<sup>2</sup> temporary exhibition gallery for 'international blockbusters' in the 2011-12 revitalisation works. In 2018 the museum subdivided the space for UTS lecture theatres, reversed by the current CEO a few years later. It is not known where the other 800 m<sup>2</sup> disappeared to. The correct sqm figure for this exhibition gallery is 1,800 m<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> ***Exhibition spaces will exceed 10,000 sqm, and new education space will be approximately 1400 sqm.***

Answers to Questions taken on Notice September 2022, p.4. No wonder they don't want to release the design briefs in case people check what was required in the design brief against what is delivered.

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/other/17814/AQON%20%20Hon%20Ben%20Franklin%20MLC%20-%20Aboriginal%20Affairs,%20Arts,%20Regional%20Youth,%20Tourism%20-%20received%2029%20September%202022.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> PHM GFA from Steensen Varming, The Ultimo Presence Project 4 Site Infrastructure assessment 2; attachment F; 8 August 2017, p.13

<https://powerhousemuseumalliancedotcom.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/ultimo-presence-project-4-site-infrastructure-assessment-2.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> This does not include existing and new shops and spaces built for creative industries.

<sup>25</sup> As opposed to the powerless Ultimo Reference Group with instructions to 'be an advocate for Powerhouse and the project's outcomes'

<sup>26</sup> Kelly Burke: Revealed: the 'buried' Powerhouse Museum report that could have stopped \$500m redevelopment; The Guardian, 26 April 2023

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/apr/25/revealed-the-buried-powerhouse-museum-report-that-could-have-stopped-500m-redevelopment>

<sup>27</sup> Julie Power; Space savers honoured in national awards, 18 May 2024

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/this-behemoth-was-at-risk-death-by-neglect-and-bird-poo-now-it-s-won-a-top-prize-20240516-p5jebo.html>

<sup>28</sup> From 1889 the museum was managed by the Department of Public Instruction. In 1893 the museum opened in a new building on Harris St designed by William Kemp, co-located with Sydney Technical College. The museum was administered by Sydney Technical College until 1945 when the Museum of Technology and

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Applied Science was established under its own legalisation; in 1950 renamed the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. For a discussion of the museum's deep connections to technical education see Lucy Taksa, 'The Museum and Technical Education', in *Yesterday's Tomorrows*, edited by Graeme Davison and Kimberley Webber, Powerhouse Publishing, 2005

<sup>29</sup> The only conspicuously popular exhibition held at the PHM in the last five years was Leo Schofield's *1001 Remarkable Objects*, August 2023-February 2024. Visitors came flocking back to the museum, including international tourists and museum colleagues from overseas. Many wondered why the heck the museum was closing when it was obvious there was nothing wrong with the place that could not be remedied by showing the collections in new ways. It was a travesty the exhibition was closed after six months, given its high development cost.

<sup>30</sup> With thanks to Jennifer Sanders and Christina Sumner for this research, the larger document is on the PMA website.