

From: ...

Sent: Sunday, July 14, 2024 7:41:43 am

To: ...

Subject: the Powerhouse Museum Complex Heritage Hoax

Dear Friends of the PHM,

On Friday 12 July the Heritage Minister gazetted the listing of the Powerhouse Museum Complex, see attached. The critical stuff are the exemptions in Schedule C, ie what the managers of MAAS are allowed to do to the buildings and site without a permit or reference to the Heritage Council. The outcome is a heritage hoax. Or arguably an interdepartmental conspiracy to subvert the intent of the Heritage Act.

The Powerhouse Museum Complex has been gazetted with an extensive and comprehensive set of exemptions that appear to allow virtually any part of the buildings and fabric post 1980 to be altered, removed or demolished, 'to support function of the Powerhouse Museum Complex'. The exemptions bake in the scope of works entailed in the Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation SSD. The revised statement of significance is not yet on the Environment and Heritage website, but we can see the exemptions attribute no significance to the fabric of the 1980s PHM Complex that they have listed. We will have to compare the new statement of significance to see if the PHM's significance and social values have been downgraded.

The scope of the exemptions, which can be self-assessed by MAAS, are unprecedented. The exemptions allow MAAS to do virtually anything to the PHM buildings and to alter, remove, replace or demolish any post 1980 fabric, fittings, interiors, parts of floors and walls, and exhibitions that are part of the PHM Complex. Given the actual Powerhouse Museum Complex dates from the 1980s it appears that any part of the actual museum can be altered, removed, replaced or demolished.

On first reading the exemptions appear to exclude from state heritage protection **any or all features of the Sulman award winning Powerhouse Museum** that state heritage listing of the Powerhouse Museum Complex would otherwise be intended to protect. They are a green light for the demolition and erasure of all trace of the Powerhouse Museum, in line with the SSD plans. This includes any and all changes to the Wran building – *changes to internal layouts, fittings and furnishings constructed post 1980 to support function of the Powerhouse Museum Complex* – whatever that means because the development is not a museum. And similar provisions for the Harwood building, the Switch House, and the Engine House. Also exemption 3 is for the removal of exhibitions – and associated impacts – provided **penetrations made into original floors, walls and ceilings are minimal**. (I don't think there's a definition of minimal in the Heritage Act. But the impact can be self-assessed anyway.) This appears to include demolition of parts of the buildings for the removal of 'exhibitions', although I don't see how objects can be defined as exhibitions. But it looks like 'removal exhibitions' is intended to allow MAAS to demolish parts of the buildings to extract the Catalina and No.1 loco. One can only think the exemptions were written by the MAAS CEO and the heritage consultant, (handily embedded on a HC committee, and reappointed for another three years), to pave the way for the PHM's demolition and erasure, and to ensure there is no challenge to the SSD plans on heritage grounds. The exemptions appear to be extraordinarily broad and without parallel in any state heritage listing.

Given the exemptions provide for the potential removal of all trace of the PHM's interiors, its Sulman award winning design, its museum concept and major exhibits, then one wonders what is left of the actual Powerhouse Museum Complex that listing is supposed to protect? That would be nothing if that's what MAAS wants. The exemptions in 5 appear to suggest that all the post 1980s works are non-significant! And also exempt are works to the exterior of buildings erected on the site since 1980, 5.e.

Why proceed to list the PHM Complex when all trace of the PHM's design and adaptation and the museum's most significant objects and defining interiors and installations are given the green light for demolition? The Powerhouse Museum was entirely conceived, designed, planned and created in the 1980s, but the exemptions for the Powerhouse Museum Complex appear to allow all and anything that dates from the 1980s to be demolished. The answer is probably that listing of the PHM Complex was likely just a mechanism to allow the government to sell the heritage floor space rights, without any actual conservation obligations for the Powerhouse Museum.

The only thing the exemptions don't include is change to the roof form of the Wran building, 5.e, but that will be waived through with approval of the SSD EIS. The same goes for the Harwood building.

A few weeks ago we wrote to the Heritage Minister Penny Sharpe to ask for an urgent Interim Heritage Order on the PHM, attached. Of course the answer was no, **See Here for letter and reply:** I'm not sure if our IHO request precipitated gazetting the listing and the very board exemptions or not.

As we know dozens of people spent days working on submissions to the Heritage Council's invitation in March to comment on the notice of intention to list the Powerhouse Museum Complex. Many raised their concerns about the need to protect the PHM's most significant exhibitions of power and transport in the spaces that were purpose designed for these collections. These submissions from eminent experts were ignored. The Minister is obliged to consider all the submissions in making her decision, but The Heritage Council and the Minister has treated the community with contempt, just as Labor has done with its explicit promises to save the Powerhouse Museum, save the Wran building and preserve the Wran legacy. Our problem has been at every stage of this saga that we thought there was a fair process and that the explicit promises of two governments over the last four years to save the PHM meant what they said.