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Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo heritage listing expanded, locking in the NSW government's \$300 million revitalisation project



By Sean Tarek Goodwin

Topic: Urban Development and Planning



The Powerhouse Museum site in Ultimo is undergoing a \$300 million refurbishment. (ABC News: Sean Tarek Goodwin)

In short:

The Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo's heritage listing is changed to prevent any potential sale or commercial development in the future.

The NSW government's plan for a \$300 million refurbishment of the site is underway.

What's next?

A builder will be appointed for the museum and work will commence next year. The target reopening date for the site is 2027.

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After years of changing redevelopment plans, the entirety of the Powerhouse Museum's Ultimo site has been heritage listed, locking in the state government's plan for a \$300 million refurbishment.

A change to the precinct's heritage listing will mean the site must remain exclusively as a museum, preventing any potential sale or commercial development in the future.



Artists impression of the proposed redevelopment, which would move the entrance to The Goods line. *(Supplied: Powerhouse Museum)*

The previous Liberal state government had initially planned to sell off the site to fund the construction of the Parramatta Powerhouse, but later revised that plan, instead looking to create a mixed use cultural and commercial complex in Ultimo.

That would have included demolishing the curved rooves of the Wran Building, as heritage protection previously only applied to the original power station.

Now, the Wran Building, the Galleria and the Harwood Building will be also protected by heritage laws, safeguarding against any future changes to the redevelopment plans.



The Wran Building will be protected by heritage laws, safeguarding against any future changes to the redevelopment plans. *(Supplied: Powerhouse Museum)*

"This listing is an exciting moment in the history of the Powerhouse in terms of securing its future and the precincts future in its location in Ultimo," Powerhouse CEO Lisa Havilah said.

'Enables the museum to move forward'

The current Labor government is already underway with plans to restore the entire complex, renovate the outdoor spaces, and reorientate the entrance of the building towards Haymarket and the CBD.

"This listing recognises our community's connection with this museum, but it also enables the museum to move forward with this new revitalisation project," Ms Havilah told the ABC.



Powerhouse Museum CEO Lisa Havilah said the listing recognises the site's connection to the community. (ABC News: Sean Tarek Goodwin)

Bob Debus, a former state and federal government minister, is the chair of the Ultimo Heritage Revitalisation Reference Group.

"There's been a bit of concern in the past that maybe the museum would be closed," Mr Debus said. "This is yet more proof absolutely that it won't be, and that instead, what we're going to have is a brilliant new facility with the kind of revitalisation that you can only manage once in a century."



The 1988 Wran Building is one of the sites now protected with the extension of the heritage listing. (ABC News: Sean Tarek-Goodwin)

Work to commence next year

The museum said it's now emptied more than 3,000 objects from the Ultimo site, and the government is looking to appoint a builder by the end of the year, and commence work next year.

The target reopening date is 2027.

Meanwhile, work is continuing at the Parramatta Powerhouse, with construction expected to be completed by the end of next year.



Construction at Parramatta Powerhouse is expected to be completed by the end of 2025. *(Supplied: Powerhouse Museum)*

"Powerhouse Parramatta is really coming out of the ground," Ms Havilah said.

"Lendlease are about to complete the eastern building, so we're really moving into that final stage of the construction of the museum."