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To: State Heritage Register Listing
Heritage Council of NSW
heritagemailbox@environment.nsw.gov.au
Ref: DOC24/188570

**Re: Intention to consider listing on State Heritage Register:
The Powerhouse Museum Complex; being curtilage extension to Ultimo Power House:
State Heritage Register Item 02045.**

Dear Council,

I am strongly supportive of bringing together this Complex of existing operating buildings for the Powerhouse Museum, as identified, to be listed as a curtilage on the State Heritage Register, and am very grateful and impressed that you have decided to consider the proposal. The necessary extra buildings include the award-winning 1988 Wran building and Galleria exhibition spaces; and the historic Harwood (Tramshed) building, which has provided close access for professional collection and program management, exhibition development, and archival locations. In short answer to your request, I agree that: ‘...the item is of State heritage significance and warrants long-term conservation by listing on the State Heritage Register.’

I am a long-time professional historian, curator, educator and organiser in the field of decorative arts, crafts and design and, following previous responsibilities, started at the Museum as a curator in 1988 when it opened in its new Harris Street location within these buildings. As a senior curator of contemporary decorative arts, crafts and design, I became very conversant with the museum’s unique relationships between this area and science, industry, technology and social history, including their relevance to the histories of the buildings in which the museum has operated. I continue to have the greatest respect for the many professional people I worked with in the museum in the 20 years spent there, the context in which we worked, and their involvement with the broad audiences the museum generated and maintained during that time!

In ‘retirement’, working with many of those people, for nearly 10 years I have since managed the archival website of news, inquiries and opinions for the prolonged controversial issue of closing/moving/‘resurrecting’ the Powerhouse Museum, for the Powerhouse Museum Alliance: <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/>. So I am very familiar with all the heritage, program and management issues raised during this time.

Support: I would like to strongly acknowledge and support the very well-researched and detailed documented histories of the buildings that are provided in the Significance Assessment report, and the perceptive analyses of their relationship to the requirements of heritage listing.

A further related rationale:

As well as each building, and the overall curtilage, meeting the required criteria of Historical, Associative, Aesthetic and Social significance, I believe a further related issue is of great significance and hope it can also be considered:

- This is a state museum and must remain in the state city centre, accessible to local, national and international audiences.
- Parramatta needs its own arts and museum centre, and the 'Powerhouse Parramatta' appears likely to be a pop-up art experience centre, not a state museum. The new storage facility at Castle Hill is not a museum; and it is too distant for safe access to move objects for exhibitions elsewhere, and for wide audiences to reach.
- The program for the Powerhouse Museum's collection, which crosses science, technology, industry, design, decorative arts and social history (applied arts and sciences), must remain together as permanent, permanent changing, and temporary exhibitions with related engaging events. (In opposition to previous arts minister's personal specialist preferences eg. fashion and lyric theatre!)
- **Significantly, as well as each having identified heritage value, the Ultimo buildings are also very relevant in design, function and location to one another, for sharing these objectives, and for carrying them out.**
- **It is very important the buildings remain operational together, and the proposal for a 'curtilage extension' meets this need.**

Agreement with Statements:

Some particular key points that I support include:

(pages 1-2): 'The Powerhouse Museum Complex is of potential State heritage significance for reflecting innovative approaches to both power generation and museology in the history of NSW. This is complemented by the potential historic, social and associative significance of the adaptive reuse of the site as the Powerhouse Museum in 1988, including the Wran and Harwood buildings.'

- 'The change in use to a major public museum has potential State historic significance as a central part of the major cultural projects of the 1988 Bicentenary, a significant event in NSW and Australian history which engaged much of NSW's population and ushered in a new sense of national self-confidence while raising important questions about Aboriginal rights. The museum complex, as completed, was considered at the time to be a highly innovative design, producing a state-of-the-art museum by world standards.'

- 'The conversion to a museum has potential State historic and technical significance for its role in the wider heritage conservation movement as a lauded, highly influential early example of adaptive reuse of industrial heritage, nationally and internationally. Ongoing upgrades of internal fabric and fixtures related to museum use in buildings such as the Harwood and Post Office buildings reflect the changing

requirements of the museum function over time.

- 'The purpose-built 1988 Wran building contribut'es to the group's potential State historic and aesthetic significance for its landmark form, scale and spatial relationship with the other buildings.'

- **'The complex has potential State social significance for people across Sydney, NSW and Australia, for whom it represents an important educational and cultural institution and tourist destination. The Powerhouse Museum Complex and its changing use from power station to cultural institution, offers a unique insight into the stages of technological change, development and urban renewal that occurred in NSW during the 20th century.'**

Also, remembering the international acknowledgement from 1988 of the Museum's influential shift from 'display storage' of the collection to providing informative exhibition themes, background stories and engaging displays, I agree (with SHR Criteria B) that:

'The Powerhouse Museum Complex is of potential State historic significance as the first large scale conservation and adaptation of an industrial heritage site in Australia and the first in NSW for cultural purposes (with few precedents at the time). It was the first such project undertaken with conscious heritage intent, framed around retention, adaptation and restoration of the former power house. The Powerhouse Museum Complex was one of the first of the 'new' generation of museums that opened in Australia in the 1980s. Museums moved from a didactic single-point-of-view model to a more democratised, participatory, representative and interactive engagement experience.'

Recommendation: support for the proposal

To maintain its longstanding role and reputation, as a state museum with a unique collection, operating in a distinctive and relevant heritage site, I agree that listing all identified buildings on the State Heritage Register as the Powerhouse Museum Complex, being a curtilage extension to the Ultimo Power House, is highly appropriate for both the museum's identity and operational programs, and for the industrial and design history of New South Wales.

It is also hoped that this decision will lead to reliable provision of current lack of information about the future content and program for the Museum collection and associated activities, in Ultimo.

I very strongly support this very important proposal,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Grace Cochrane".

Grace Cochrane AM