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# Powerhouse Parramatta unlikely to open before mid-2026



By [Linda Morris](#)

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Unseasonal rains have been blamed for a one-year delay to the \$915 million Powerhouse Parramatta museum, which now seems unlikely to open before mid-2026.

Initially slated to welcome visitors by the end of this year, Infrastructure NSW (INSW) confirmed that the institution's "base build" would not be completed for handover until late 2025.



The Powerhouse Parramatta, pictured under construction last week, has no opening date. *CREDIT: DION GEORGOPOULOS*

Allowing for fit-outs, staff inductions, landscaping, and an expected four to five months of moving in exhibition objects – including large aircraft – the ribbon is unlikely to be cut on western Sydney’s flagship cultural museum before mid-2026.

“Over the past two and a half years the project has faced significant disruption due to COVID-19 supply chain impacts and record rainfall during foundation work impacting 50 per cent of working days in 2022,” a spokesperson for INSW said. “Despite these impacts, the project is running on budget.”

Sydney experienced double its average rainfall during the site’s foundation work in 2022. Wet weather impacted half of project working days that year, compared to an expected 15 to 20 per cent.

Piling work at the riverside side of the site was initially delayed by rain and design modifications to weight-bearing floors and glazing, as well as changes to the structure’s exoskeleton to ensure it could not be climbed, multiple sources with knowledge of the build told *The Sun-Herald*.

The 30,000-square-metre Powerhouse Parramatta is one of the most architecturally complex projects under construction in Australia.



The Parramatta Powerhouse as it will look when finished.

[Lendlease was contracted to deliver the project for \\$553 million](#) in May, with expectations that the new museum would open by the end of the year. Its grand opening was then pushed back [to mid-2025](#).

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Infrastructure NSW said it was unable to publicly commit to a new opening date as it would depend on construction completion and fit out. A staged completion is being planned in a manner similar to Sydney Modern, the new building of the Art Gallery of NSW.

Speaking after the delays were discussed at a state budget estimates hearing last Friday, Coalition MP Susan Carter was sceptical that the project would be completed within the new timeline.

“On present indications I wouldn’t even pencil in a diary date in late 2026 to visit the museum,” she said.

A spokesperson for the Minister for Lands and property, Steve Kamper, said the delays were incurred but not announced during the previous government. “We are getting the project back on track. Powerhouse Parramatta will be a must-visit tourism destination in the heart of Parramatta.”

Temperatures and wind conditions need to be ideal to install the building’s steel exoskeleton, a dramatic weight-bearing frame of steel vertical gantries which must be prefabricated and brought in by crane overnight, warranting CBD street closures.

Currently, two of the largest of the seven exhibition spaces are forecast to be completed early next year, enabling fit-out works to begin as construction continues.



(Related article: [Inside Australia’s biggest museum move in half a century](#) )

Powerhouse chief executive Lisa Havilah told the estimates hearing she was not at all concerned by the delay.

“I feel very confident with the amount of progress that’s been achieved over the past 24 months,” she said. “There have been some rain impacts, but Lendlease has been able to work through those.”

Havilah also defended a 20 per cent annual increase in the institution's operating budget, bringing its allocation to \$127 million this financial year – \$10 million more than the Art Gallery of NSW – despite its Ultimo campus shutting for [renovations in February](#) and the Parramatta delays.

“Common sense suggests that an operating museum should cost more to run than a museum in mothballs,” Carter said after the estimates hearings.

“Yet, the Powerhouse has turned this on its head and taxpayers are paying \$10 million more for a museum that we can't go to than for an Art Gallery which we can visit. This budget allocation is difficult to fathom.”

Havilah told parliament the extra funding supported its ongoing staffing costs, the \$6 million cost of removing 3000 objects from the Powerhouse at Ultimo, as well as the development of six major exhibitions at Parramatta.