

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/blog/powerhouse-museum-update/?fbclid=iwy2xjawfjv19lehrua2flbqixmaabhslvzy4yeacmtuiqfbjcc828e5ascd3q2mcepuatt3sh m8wbtam4ptaaa aem fjojcxn-nrgslna9a>

NATIONAL TRUST

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Powerhouse Museum update



[Blog NSW](#)

24 Sep 2024

The Powerhouse Museum is once again in the spotlight, with confirmation of a new expanded State Heritage listing for the site, and the Response to Submissions for the revitalisation project currently on exhibition.

State Heritage Listing Curtilage Amendment for the Powerhouse Museum site

In 2015, the National Trust (NSW) nominated the Powerhouse Museum Complex to the NSW State Heritage Register. At the time, the site was under threat of redevelopment and the National Trust, which has four heritage listings for the place (including the museum contents), was keen to advocate for its retention as an important historical and cultural icon in the city.

The National Trust argued that the whole place, including the Ultimo Power House, Harwood Building, Ultimo Post Office, Wran Building and Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS) Collection, should be included within the heritage listing. We argued that the complex as a whole formed a unique cultural heritage precinct, ranging from the State's early electrical and transport history through to its modern civic architecture.

Although a positive step, the National Trust was disappointed when the Ultimo Powerhouse alone was gazetted on the State Heritage Register in 2020, leaving the Harwood and Wran Buildings, as well as the MAAS collection, still under imminent threat. For the last four years, we have been advocating that the whole Powerhouse Complex is of State heritage significance and needs to be conserved on site and as an operating museum.

The National Trust welcomes the news that a State Heritage Register curtilage amendment including the Wran and Harwood Buildings as part of the Powerhouse Museum Complex has recently been approved.

The National Trust is now keen to understand how this heritage listing will affect the Powerhouse Museum complex revitalisation plans, and we remain concerned that there is no current publicly accessible Conservation Management Plan for the site to guide these works. We will continue to

advocate for the buildings and the MAAS collection to be recognised for their importance and cultural significance.



The Powerhouse Museum Ultimo

Response to submissions – Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation Project

The National Trust notes that only five of the 125 submissions in response to the Powerhouse Revitalisation project were in support of the project, with the majority opposed to the proposed development. We believe that this reflects the ongoing concern over the integrity of the “heritage” focus of the project, apprehension regarding the quantity and quality of exhibition space, and a lack of clarity about the future of the MAAS collection.

The National Trust’s own submission outlined our key concerns that:

- **The heritage significance of the Powerhouse Museum is not properly understood.** *There is no Conservation Management Plan provided with the exhibited documents. The documents do not appropriately consider the place in the context of the proposed State Heritage Register curtilage expansion.*
- **The detail of what is actually happening is not clear.** *There are thousands of pages of documentation, but not a single page outlining the exhibition and display areas and what they might be.*
- **The function of the museum has not been addressed.** *There is little reference to the current collection beyond the retention of three key items. There is not a single illustration or description of any of the actual internal spaces (entry points, circulation spaces, permanent or flexible exhibition spaces) that form the basis of any major museum.*

We maintain that a high quality and sensitive heritage outcome for the site cannot be achieved without meeting the above criteria. The National Trust is reviewing the Response to Submissions, and remain concerned that the amended development documents do not address many of the concerns raised in the exhibition process.

The National Trust will continue to advocate for a better outcome for both the built heritage of the site as well as the MAAS collection.

You can make your own [submission regarding the Powerhouse Museum](#). Submissions close on the 7th of October 2024.

Find out more

The National Trust has been campaigning to protect NSW's built, cultural and natural heritage for over 75 years. Find out more about our [advocacy work](#).

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