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COUNCIL DOES NOT WITHDRAW “SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE” FOR “REVITALISATION” DESPITE LOVELL CHEN’s FINDINGS

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Hi everyone,

In previous posts we said that the City of Sydney’s Transport, Heritage and Planning Committee (THPC), meeting on Monday 9 December decided “not to decide” whether to proceed with the amendment of the LEP2012 Heritage Map to reflect the July 2024 state heritage listing of the “Powerhouse Museum Complex”, passing the buck to the higher Central Sydney Planning Committee (CSPC).

Watch the THPC meeting podcast HERE <https://webcast.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/archive/video24-1209.php> from 2:55:30 to 3:00:40 then from 3:13:00.

The CSPC, meeting on Thursday 12 December went on to decide to put the Powerhouse Museum into the “too hard basket.”

In the CSPC, the Council is in a minority (3 Council representatives vs 4 members nominated by the NSW Planning Minister).

Watch the CSPC meeting podcast HERE <https://webcast.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/archive/video24-1212.php> from 32:50

The LEP amendment process would take several months with a public exhibition in April 2025 and the document finally amended in October 2025.

THIS IS TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE as, by this date, most of the Powerhouse Museum Complex’s heritage will have been destroyed by the “Revitalisation.”

Instead, Save the Powerhouse <http://tiny.cc/uxp1001> and many others, including the Powerhouse Museum Alliance and Pyrmont Action Inc., urged the Council to **withdraw its “support in principle”** of the discredited Government’s “Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation” project and officially **OBJECT** to it.

This fell on deaf ears although this very unpopular project does not meet the City’s conditions for its support and is strongly condemned by the Lovell Chen report commissioned by the Council.

One of the report’s fundamental findings is that “the Museum (adapted Old Power Station and Wran Extension) and the Harwood Building **SHARED A SYMBIOTIC FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP**” and that **“the coalition of the MAAS collection and the historic buildings was MUTUALLY STRENGTHENING in terms of their significance, social resonance and cultural influence”**.

The CSPC recommended that **“Council defer consideration of the Planning Proposal - Powerhouse Museum Heritage Item Amendment, shown at Attachment C to the subject report, to enable a review of the purpose and whether any additional benefit is gained from the local listing against the recently expanded State heritage listing.”**

See “Relevant Information for Council”

<https://meetings.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/documents/s90468/Information%20Relevant%20To%20Item%2011.3%20Public%20Exhibition%20-%20Planning%20Proposal%20-%20Modern%20Residential%20Flat%20.pdf>

This recommendation must have come as a relief to the Councillors who, otherwise, would have seen the listing proposal placed on public exhibition in April 2025 when the Powerhouse Museum will be reduced to a pile of rubble, attracting **hundreds of hostile submissions**.

The CSPC's recommendation formed part of item 11.3 of the Council meeting agenda of Monday 16 December.

<https://meetings.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=29197&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI17123>

Watch the Council meeting podcast HERE <https://webcast.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/archive/video24-1216.php> from 1:32:00

and read our transcript HERE <http://tiny.cc/ixp1001>

Cr Jess Miller, chairing the debate, and City of Sydney Chief Planner Graham Jahn detailed (again) the importance of deferring the listing process *"to allow for a review of the proposal so that the listing can align be again looked at to determine whether there is additional benefit gained from a local listing against the expended state heritage listing"*. But Lord Mayor Clover Moore asked *"So this deferral means that **if we don't believe that the state heritage (listing) is not going to do the things that we thought**, we could recommend taking it up again with the CEO or the CSPC?"*

Her optimistic conclusion was *"I think **things have reached a point now where heritage is going to be respected and restored and we are going to get a better outcome in terms of the interiors and in terms of exhibition space.***

This is where I think we are at but we will be able to check that when the State has done its work."

DOES SHE KNOW MORE THAN WE DO?

Is she listening to Kylie Winkworth's advice that **"The City of Sydney, notwithstanding the constraints that it faces with the policy of SSD approvals has considerable clout and capacity to speak directly, at senior level, to the Premier and Ministers."**

The EIS drawings available to the public show that:

- The Wran extension will be **entirely demolished** and replaced by brick structures covered by a roof of similar round shape as the original.
- All the interiors of the Museum will be destroyed leaving only three large empty caverns.
- The total exhibition area of the Museum will be reduced from the existing 21,080m² to just over 6,000m², a 75% reduction.

Cr Sylvie Ellsmore deplored the undemocratic rules of SSDs and CSPC which enable the Government **"to overrule and effectively block the elected Council from doing something."**

She stressed the importance (for the Council) **"to continue to be in that room** when the State Government has the project developed, because I think there is a real chance we can win better heritage protection as a result of that", and acknowledged *"the submissions that have been received, particularly because I genuinely believe that we are only at the stage we are at now in terms of not being a private development or sold off because of the work of the community and the number of those people who wrote submissions to us."*

Can the replacement of one of the most revered science museums in the world by yet another event and performance centre be considered a community victory?

The motion (see above) to defer the heritage listing decision was unanimously approved by those present.

Deputy Lord Mayor Zann Maxwell and Cr Mitch Wilson did not participate in the debate and the vote due to a "significant non-pecuniary interest" related to former Cr Linda Scott who supported their Sydney Labor campaign and has now been appointed to the MAAS board of Trustees.

But they participated in the debates and voted at the THPC meeting of 9 December (both) and CSPC meeting of 12 December (Maxwell) on exactly the same agenda item, whereas Linda's nomination to

the Museum Trust was made public on 10 December <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/art-and-design/who-s-in-who-s-out-as-labor-figures-head-cultural-leadership-shake-up-20241127-p5ku3e.html>

The “Revitalisation” Project is now likely to be “Determined” (rubber-stamped) by the Planning Minister in early January next year, with wrecking balls moving in soon after (although the Boulton & Watt engine’s exile to Castle Hill, scheduled in February, may slow down the process.)

Save the Powerhouse

