

The Powerhouse Museum's Wasteful Demolition and Redevelopment: Cost and Planning Comparisons with UK Museum Renewal Projects

Kylie Winkworth, November 2024

A review of award-winning museum renewal projects in the UK shows the Powerhouse Ultimo redevelopment will cost NSW taxpayers three or four times more than the cost of comparable museum renewal projects. At a cost of more than \$400m, the misnamed 'revitalisation' will erase all trace of the Powerhouse Museum, destroy the museum's heritage values, and render the PHM not fit for purpose as a museum and exhibition facility. The exorbitant waste and cost are due to:

- The extensive, wasteful and unnecessary demolition of all trace of the 1988 museum, including all the museum's interiors, all the mezzanine galleries, 20 exhibition galleries, three theatres, all the education studios, all the accessible ramps, escalators and visitor amenities, and substantial parts of the PHM's buildings, reducing the museum's exhibition space by 75% to leave just three empty voids ¹
- The wasteful, unnecessary and expensive excavation of a small loading dock through the Switch House, when the PHM already has a larger loading dock only metres away in the Harwood building. ² 'Decoupling the Harwood building from the PHM' is part of the secret design brief for the project, hidden from the public, despite the government's repeated promises to release the key documents about the project. ³
- The extensive intervention and reworking of the Switch House, destroying two floors of exhibition galleries previously used for applied arts, design, decorative arts, Indigenous design, international exhibitions and exhibitions for kids and families, along with museum offices ⁴
- Demolition of all the renewal works completed just 12 years ago, including expansive education studios, new visitor amenities, the café and shop opening to the sunny Harris St forecourt, and new escalators and lifts ⁵
- And the extensive demolition of the Galleria and Wran building, ⁶ with the Galleria's partial reconstruction as a passageway, and a substantially rebuilt smaller performance space in what was the Wran building, reconstructed in the form of a brick clad Nissen hut, hidden behind a row of shops

None of these works are in any sense an improvement on the PHM's original design and exhibition and education capacity. The secret purpose of the Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation project is not museum renewal but demolition and downsizing to change the use of the site from museum exhibitions and education to performance, commercial uses, venue hire and creative industries, see 7 below.

Critical success factors in recent award winning, exemplary and cost-effective international museum renewal projects include:

- Transparency and open communication at every stage of the process, enabling genuine public input on the masterplan, design briefs, architectural options, and exhibition concepts – all withheld from public scrutiny in the PHM 'revitalisation' project
- Museum experts and curators on design juries, including senior curatorial staff and independent museum experts, and their involvement in drafting design briefs and testing design ideas and options
- **Conservation of each museum's heritage buildings as the project starting point, with renewal plans guided by experienced heritage conservation architects**
- Delivering a range of exhibition galleries of varying scale, utilising mezzanines and side galleries to mediate the scale of larger spaces, see 1 and 6 below ⁷

- Generously scaled entry halls, atriums and public forecourts as an integral part of the visitor experience.⁸

Every one of these key ingredients for excellence in museum renewal and design are missing from the Powerhouse Ultimo project.

1 Young V&A⁹

The winner of the UK Art Fund Museum of the Year award was the V&A's former Museum of Childhood, renewed and reimagined as Young V&A to great acclaim.¹⁰ The cost? **A mere £13,000 for a total heritage conservation, renovation and imaginative renewal.** After a three-year, £13m reimagining, the former Museum of Childhood has been reborn as a joyful and inspiring paradise of play, shaped around three new galleries, Play, Imagine and Design.¹¹

https://www.vam.ac.uk/young?srsId=AfmBOor4C_ovSMDbXMCvuKGryNq6naKo47ssKwlvZ_hUYHp4JhTdcDST



2 The National Portrait Gallery London

Runner up was the National Portrait Gallery's new entry, renewal and renovation; the cost just £41.3m. The project included a new public square and forecourt, a new entry and atrium, renewal of all the NPG's galleries, conservation and repair of heritage spaces and fabric, a reimagining of the exhibitions including opening new galleries in the East Wing, and a new learning centre, café and shop.¹² <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/reviews/national-portrait-gallery-london-reopening-1234672668/>



3 Manchester Museum

Manchester Museum reopened its doors to thousands of visitors in February 2023, following a £15 million renovation as part of the [hello future project](#). Boasting 4.5 million objects, a stunning new exhibition hall and galleries dedicated to different cultures across the world, it has reaffirmed its place as one of the University's and Manchester's most exciting cultural attractions. *This one-of-a-kind transformation – generously supported by our community of donors – has revolutionised how the Museum works, giving communities the opportunity to co-create exhibitions that are unique and empowering learning spaces for all.*¹³

4 The National Railway Museum Renewal

The National Railway Museum, partially closed for 18 months, but the large collection items were left protected *in situ*. The museum made a feature of cleaning and conserving the engines allowing visitors to see the conservation works in process. <https://www.railwaymuseum.org.uk/what-was-on/central-hall-exhibition> Notably the project is focussed on the *museum experience* not the building development. In common with all great museums, the heart of the development is a wonderful new atrium, the Central Hall.¹⁴ The Vision 2025 tab outlines a clear vision and information on what they are doing. Like the Museum of London, they held an online exhibition to get feedback from visitors about the design scheme and what people wanted to see in the renewed museum.

<https://www.railwaymuseum.org.uk/about-us/press-office/national-railway-museums-station-hall-close-temporarily-refurbishment>

Station Hall will close on 3 January for an expected 18 months but the museum will remain open to the public during the conservation project, with people able to visit Great Hall and North Shed.

The new roof will provide a thermally efficient and weather-tight solution to protect the collection and preserve the historic Grade II-listed structure. As well as work to the roof, the wooden doors at the rear and side of the hall will also be removed and replaced by thermally efficient glazing.

*The **£10.5m** programme of work will be funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. Experienced heritage architects Buttress have been appointed to design the roof and are lead consultants on the project with a main roofing contractor due to be appointed in March.*

Unlike the Powerhouse Ultimo project, the National Railway Museum has no problem sharing its vision and masterplan.¹⁵ *We're on a journey to become a global engineering powerhouse and a reinvented, inspiring 21st-century attraction. With this investment, our transformed museums will show the cutting-edge innovations shaping our world today - alongside the extraordinary birth and growth of the railways. By celebrating the past, present and future of railways and engineering, we will capture the hearts and minds of the next generation of engineers, innovators and thinkers.*¹⁶

5 British Museum Redevelopment

Unlike the Powerhouse Ultimo demolition and development, the British Museum redevelopment is an entirely transparent process. Five architectural teams have been selected to take part in the final stage of a design competition to redesign the Western galleries of the British Museum. The museum says it will keep the galleries open to the public during the redevelopment, which is part of its wider Masterplan to restore and renovate the site.¹⁷ **How will the winner be decided? The shortlisted candidates will take part in a series of “design exercises” at the British Museum to assess their concepts around exhibition design and working with the historic architecture. The entries will be displayed in the Round Reading Room from December;** the winning entry is due to be announced early 2025. All the shortlisted teams are experienced in heritage conservation, museum and gallery design.

The “Western Range” of the British Museum’s galleries, which currently house collections such as Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome—is set to be redesigned under the revamp. This covers a third of the museum’s overall gallery space, as well as back-of-house areas, totalling 15,650 square metres.¹⁸ The complex of spaces range in age from the original 1850s buildings designed by Robert Smirke, and later additions. “All of the buildings are in need of upgrade to meet contemporary building performance standards, and many contain highly significant heritage building fabric,” the museum says in a statement.

Unlike the Powerhouse Ultimo redevelopment, the design process includes museum leaders and curators. The design competition entries will be judged by a panel of ten members, chaired by George Osborne, the chair of the museum board, and including eminent senior curators, museum leaders and museum architects.¹⁹ The Powerhouse Ultimo project, no longer called a museum, is in the hands of Infrastructure NSW, an organisation not known for its expertise in museum design.

6 Perth Museum, Perth, Scotland

Opened in March 2024, £27m was spent repurposing Perth City Hall as the Perth Museum – the city’s largest ever capital investment. The new museum tells Scotland’s history through artefacts and artworks from a 3000 year old Bronze Age logboat, to a cast of the heaviest salmon ever caught. Its crowning glory is the Stone of Destiny, returned to Scotland in 1996 after almost seven centuries in Westminster Abbey, where it was used in coronations. The Museum is housed in an Edwardian heritage building that was the former Perth City Hall, used as a gathering place hosting everything from markets and concerts to political conferences and wrestling matches. This historic venue was transformed into a new museum and major visitor attraction, and includes a cafe, museum shop, and learning and events spaces.²⁰



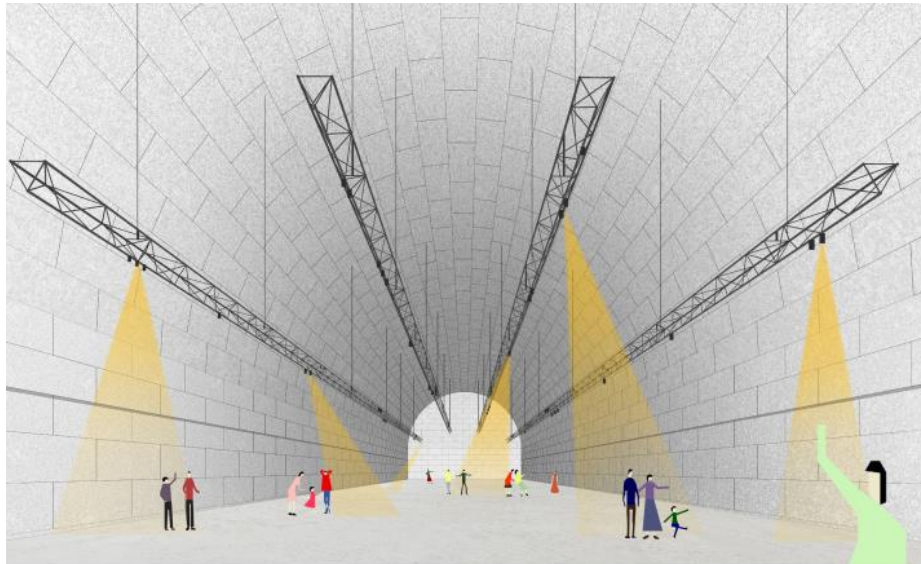
Above: Interior of the former Perth City Hall above, adapted with mezzanines and side galleries for exhibitions. This is a common feature of heritage adaptations of industrial and civic buildings for museums uses. (For example the Musée d’Orsay in Paris, Tate Modern, Young V&A and the Powerhouse Museum.) Now the exact opposite is planned for the Powerhouse Museum, where all but three of the museum’s 25 purpose designed exhibition galleries will be demolished at vast cost, leaving three empty spaces designed for performance, events and venue hire, but **not fit for purpose** for museum exhibitions. **The alleged need and rationale for this demolition program that erases all trace of the PHM remains a secret.**

7 Powerhouse Museum \$400 million + for Demolition and Downsizing

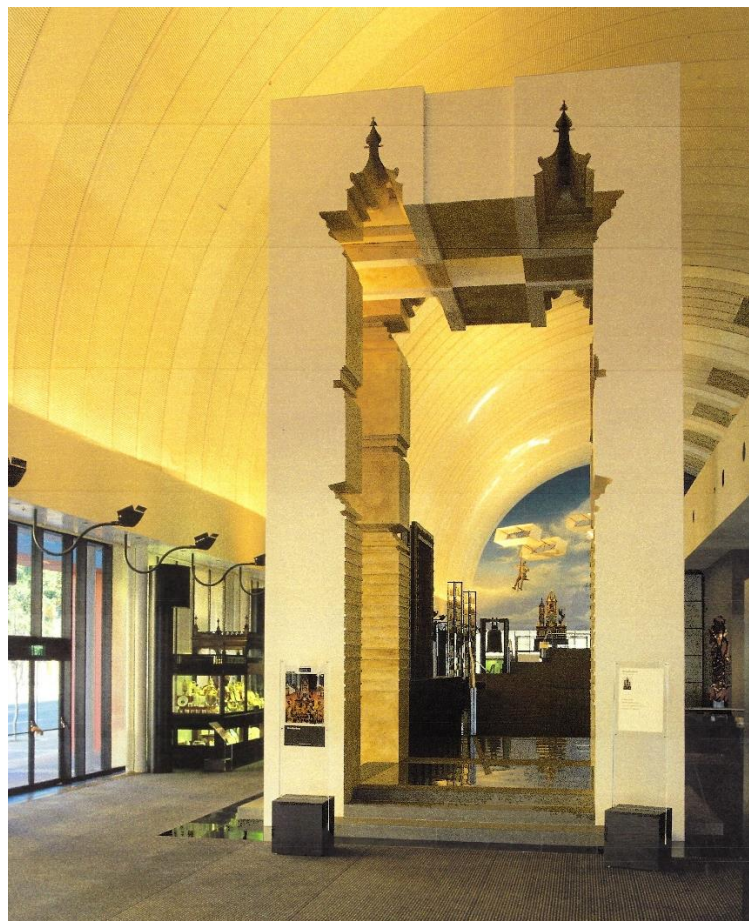
It is clear from the Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation plans in the EIS that no consideration was given to the option for the **conservation, repair and renewal** of the PHM’s buildings and its exhibitions.²¹ This is what characterises all the exemplary international museum renewal projects. And this is what people expected from Labor’s policy and Arts Minister John Graham’s announced ‘heritage revitalisation’.²² Instead the project proponents pushed on with the ‘Ultimo Presence’ demolition

and museum erasure scheme which they have pursued since 2020 or before, ignoring the former Berejiklian/ Perrottet government announcement the Powerhouse Museum was saved and would be staying in Ultimo.²³

The plans will erase all trace of the Powerhouse Museum, a purpose designed museum that is only 36 years old. The eye-watering cost of more than \$400m reduces the museum's exhibition capacity, functionality, visitor amenity and education spaces, demolishing 75% of the PHM's exhibition galleries to leave just three large empty caverns for unspecified uses.



Above, the only schematic view of the proposed Powerhouse Ultimo interiors in the EIS, showing the rebuild after the demolition of the Sulman award winning Wran building, reduced to a gloomy empty void reminiscent of the interior of a Nissen hut. The space is designed not for exhibitions but for parties, events and amplified music.²⁴ Below, the Wran building in 1988, colourful, light, playful, and flexible, designed as an inspiring atrium and gathering place, a space for orientation, anticipation, **and exhibitions**. Labor promised to save the Wran building. It is inexplicable it is being demolished instead of conserved.



None of the acclaimed museum renewal projects in the UK set out to demolish fit for purpose infrastructure or the museum's heritage buildings and history. The budgets for the UK museum renewal projects discussed above are a fraction of the money that will be wasted on the PHM's extensive demolition. International museum renewal projects all include **genuine heritage conservation, museum expansion, renewal of exhibition galleries, new exhibitions, collection conservation and expanded learning spaces and programs**. Notably, international best practice museum renewal plans start with audiences and a clear vision and concept, and **all the planning documents are accessible, developed with genuine engagement, not sham consultations as we have seen with the demolition of the PHM**.

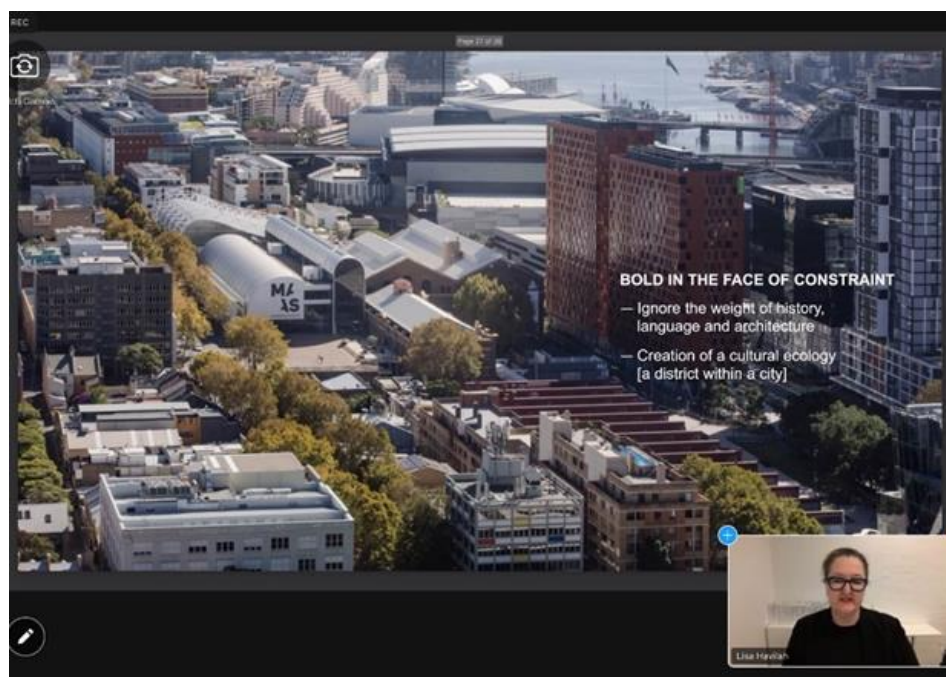
Despite Labor's promises, transparency is entirely missing from the secretive and destructive Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation scheme. This is not a renewal project but a wasteful demolition job at a cost of more than \$400m. Unlike comparable international museum projects, there is no museum concept, no vision, no design briefs, no museum plan, no exhibition plan, no masterplan and no transparency.

What does Sydney get for \$400 million plus? At the end the Powerhouse Museum will be gutted and downsized to create three large empty spaces on a scale unsuitable for museum exhibitions and international blockbusters – except for the power and transport collections which have been evicted from the museum that was purpose designed for their exhibition. Only three large objects will return as 'way finders' and party props, devoid of context and narrative purpose. All the museum's medium and small-scale exhibition galleries will be demolished, along with three flexible theatres and all the museum's education studios and learning spaces.²⁵ These are the galleries that have hosted numerous international exhibitions, and exhibitions from the museum's applied arts, history, design, science and technology collections. Total exhibition space set for demolition: 15,980sqm, or 75% of the museum's exhibition galleries. And the \$400m+ cost **doesn't include museum fit out or exhibitions** – if there is even any intention of having exhibitions. The proponents have offered no explanation for the alleged need for 'large volume programmable spaces', or what such uses might be for. There are no museum exhibitions, activities or events that could not be held in the Powerhouse Museum's flexible galleries, as they were designed.²⁶ And as the PMA has demonstrated, the claim the PHM needs extensive demolition so it can show international exhibitions is false.²⁷

The Australian Museum developed its new 3,000sqm temporary exhibition space at a cost to taxpayers of just \$50.5m. The exhibition space bears no resemblance to the scale of the spaces proposed for Powerhouse Ultimo, claimed to be necessary to show international exhibitions. The results from the Australian Museum's modest expenditure are impressive. The 2023-24 annual report shows there were 508,223 ticketed admissions to the *Ramses and the Gold of the Pharaohs* exhibition, and more than 1.5m onsite visitors, a 63% increase. There were 72,738 education participants on site and 59,689 school students on site. The price of success? Government funding of \$59.4m, \$17.9m in self-generated revenue, and income from the sale of goods and services was \$12,969m.²⁸ The contrast with the poor performance of MAAS over five years is stark.²⁹

If the cost to NSW taxpayers for Sydney Modern was only \$244 million why will taxpayers be slugged what will be double this cost to demolish and erase all trace of the Powerhouse Museum on the basis of secret design briefs, no vision, no museum concept, no museum plan, no exhibition plan, and the pathetic promise that just three large objects will be returned to the former museum that was purpose designed to exhibit the power and transport collections? Perhaps this is a question the NSW Audit Office will consider in its planned performance audit of the bloated Powerhouse Parramatta and Ultimo demolition scheme.³⁰ The likely cost of these ill-conceived and utterly wasteful projects will be more than \$1.7 billion. What's left of the real Powerhouse Museum, a 144 year old cultural institution, based in Ultimo since 1893, will be buried at Castle Hill.

The Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation is essentially the same scheme as the discredited Powerhouse Renewal concept, costed at \$500m in 2021, and withdrawn by the Minns government in 2023. The antecedents of this scheme are from the 'Ultimo Presence Project' in the 2018 business case, proposing a creative industries and theatre complex on the former PHM site, the costs to be off-set by development of the site.³¹ After promising ***a museum of the highest excellence at the Ultimo site that had a clear and distinct identity, and which built on its traditional focus on science, engineering, transport, design, the technical arts and education***, the Labor government has done the exact opposite.³² Inexplicably the Minns government retained the same architects, reworking the same design scheme, the same 'see-no-heritage-here' consultants, and maintained the shroud of secrecy to hide the real intent of the project. Instead of the promised heritage revitalisation, the government is delivering a \$400 million plus museum and heritage demolition scheme, courtesy of its hoax heritage listing where no part of the 1988 Powerhouse Museum is protected or conserved by the recent state heritage listing.³³



The Powerhouse Museum is not saved. Two governments promised the Powerhouse Museum was staying in Ultimo, retaining its traditional focus on technology, transport, engineering, science, applied arts and design. But behind the scenes public servants carried on with plans to convert the Powerhouse Museum into the Ultimo Presence; a creative industries, fashion, design, theatre, performance and venue hire facility.³⁴ Spruiking her vision for the former Powerhouse Museum, the CEO told the Committee for Sydney in August 2021 the project would *ignore the weight of history, language and architecture*, see slide above.³⁵ If there is a vision for the former PHM site, it's for the erasure, break-up and repurposing of the Sulman award winning Powerhouse Museum, designed for a working life of more than 100 years, now set for demolition after just 36 years as an influential state museum. It's a staggering wastage of museum infrastructure, akin to demolishing a house because the owners don't care for maintenance. There will be no museum left when the project is done. The renowned Powerhouse Museum will be reduced to Powerhouse Ultimo, another Sydney-type empty arts and performance facility, hidden behind a row of shops, designed for commercial events and venue hire, not collections, exhibitions and audiences interested in the museum.

Kylie Winkworth, November 2024

¹ For a summary of the PHM's demolition and shrinking exhibition and education spaces see parts 7 and 8 the PMA's submission to the EIS <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/PowerhouseMuseumAlliance-Winkworth.pdf>

² The new loading dock is designed to facilitate the redevelopment and sale of the PHM's Harwood building. This explains why the Harwood building has been excised from the Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation project. The former tram depot is an integral part of the PHM's industrial and transport history. It was adapted in 1981 as a state-of-the-art conservation, collection store, workshops and research facility, and it remains an essential part of the museum's design conception and functionality.

³ 'A NSW Labor government will release key details of the plans for the Ultimo and Parramatta sites that until now have been kept secret'; John Graham, Media Release, Only Labor will Save the Powerhouse Museum, 22 March 2023, <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Labor-media-release-22-March-23.pdf> And *John Graham has ordered transparency around the planned rebuild.....*[John Graham says] *the government remained committed to the Wran legacy and transparency.* Linda Morris, 'Say goodbye: Powerhouse Museum set to shut its doors for almost three years', Sydney Morning Herald 10 May 2023. <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/SMH-10-May-2023.pdf>

⁴ None of this intervention is necessary to create a new entry from the Goods Line.

⁵ After all the demolition works, and building new education and public program spaces in the Switch House, the PHM's education and learning spaces will shrink by more than 50%

⁶ The EIS reveals the architects have not resolved exactly how to demolish and rebuild the Wran building and Galleria, let alone accurately cost the scope of work.

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=EXH-70255721%2120240909T061931.822%20GMT> The demolition works include all the education spaces and theatres on level three, all the visitor ramps linking four levels of the museum, all the mezzanine galleries, office spaces and the board room, the walls and roof form of the Wran building, and the floor slabs. It is laughable that the government calls this cultural destruction a heritage revitalisation.

⁷ The adaptation of all large-scale industrial heritage buildings for museum use requires the insertion of side galleries and mezzanine galleries to create exhibition spaces of suitable scale for collections and exhibitions. This was pioneered in the Powerhouse Museum's adaptation and is seen every adaptive reuse of industrial heritage buildings for museum purposes, including the Musée d'Orsay and Tate Britain. It is inexplicable that all trace of the PHM's design and heritage adaptation will be erased to create just three large volumes in a form unsuitable for 97% of the PHM's collections, and all international travelling exhibitions. The only conclusion is that the spaces are primarily intended for commercial events, performance and venue hire, not museum exhibitions.

⁸ The Powerhouse Museum's Wran building was one of the great museum atriums of the 20th century, accessed from the sunny Harris St forecourt. It will be effectively demolished, replaced by a small concierge desk for ticket sales accessible from the southeastern courtyard, which is mired in shadow for most of the year. The PHM will have no street address or presence and visitors will be left without an accessible sheltered entry.

⁹ Museums 1-3 were short listed for the UK's Art Fund Museum of the Year award, 2024

¹⁰ <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/young/young-va-wins-art-fund-museum-of-the-year-2024>
<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/article/2024/jul/10/young-va-wins-museum-of-the-year-award>
See also The Guardian review 27 June 2023 <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2023/jun/27/light-colour-newly-renovated-young-v-and-a> And

¹¹ Meanwhile at the PHM, families and young children were jettisoned from the exhibition program by the current management more focussed on funding creatives than appealing to families. No thought has been given to the museum's audiences in the Powerhouse Ultimo redevelopment.

<https://www.materialsource.co.uk/playfulness-personified-young-va-has-been-designed-entirely-for-children/>

¹² The NPG project was a highly successful balance of conservation, renewal, and reimagining, expanding exhibition and public spaces by 20%. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/national-portrait-gallery-reopens-to-the-public-after-major-revamp>

¹³ *As part of the University of Manchester, research and learning is in our DNA, but now we're aiming to build stronger emotional connections with visitors too, creating a space where everyone feels they belong. Wander through our beautiful 130-year-old building and lose yourself in stories of what it means to be human, including the moving, personal narratives of the South Asia Gallery, co-curated with 30 inspiring community members.* <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/about/magazine/features/the-new-manchester-museum/>

¹⁴ The Powerhouse Ultimo plans will destroy the PHM's great atrium and entry experience in the Wran building. The CEO's concept is to reduce the entry experience to a transactional concierge desk, instead of a place for anticipation and wonder.

¹⁵ When Arts Minister John Graham was asked by Mark Banasiak about the poor performance of MAAS at budget estimates 5 March 2024, relative to the performance of the Australian Museum, he blamed ***the lack of a common vision for what this institution should be***. This is a staggering admission a year after the Labor government came to office with a precise set of promises for the Powerhouse Museum. Nearly six years after the MAAS CEO was appointed there is still no vision for the museum, no concept, no strategic plan and no information whatsoever to justify the expenditure of \$1.5 billion in taxpayers' funding. The follow up question should be why is the government showering more money on a failing management team, allowing them to blow up the Powerhouse Museum when after five years they can't even come up with a vision and concept for the museum – or not one they're willing to make public?

[https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/transcripts/3211/Transcript%20-%20CORRECTED%20-%20PC6%20-%20Budget%20Estimates%20\(Graham\)%20-%2005%20March%202024.pdf](https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/transcripts/3211/Transcript%20-%20CORRECTED%20-%20PC6%20-%20Budget%20Estimates%20(Graham)%20-%2005%20March%202024.pdf) p.44

¹⁶ For the masterplan online <https://www.railwaymuseum.org.uk/ourmasterplan> Blog home: <https://blog.railwaymuseum.org.uk/> See also <https://blog.railwaymuseum.org.uk/category/museum-transformation/>

¹⁷ <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2024/05/british-museum-launches-design-competition-for-gallery-redevelopment/> and <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2024/08/five-architect-teams-shortlisted-for-british-museum-design-competition/>

¹⁸ Equivalent to the amount of exhibition space to be demolished in the Powerhouse Museum.

¹⁹ The Art Newspaper 29 August 2024 <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2024/08/29/british-museum-architects-shortlist-renovation-competition-western-range>

²⁰ Shortlisted for Museum Openings of 2024 award, Apollo Magazine <https://perthmuseum.co.uk/> and <https://perthmuseum.co.uk/about-the-museum/>

²¹ See parts 5 and 6 in Kylie Winkworth for the Powerhouse Museum Alliance Objection to Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation SSD-67588459, May 2024 <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/PowerhouseMuseumAlliance-Winkworth.pdf>

²² <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/enterprise-investment-and-trade/ministerial-media-releases/powerhouse-museum-ultimo-revitalised> Among the broken promises in Labor's announced heritage revitalisation on 2 September 2023: the Wran building will be saved; the cost will be \$250m; and "we promised at the election that we would preserve the Wran legacy and keep the Powerhouse Museum at Ultimo open". Instead, five months later the PHM was closed. The EIS plans reveal the extensive demolition of all trace of the 1988 Powerhouse Museum that Labor promised to save. There is no heritage conservation of the PHM or museum renewal. Instead there is a secret heritage adaptation to create spaces suitable for performance and venue hire, not museum exhibitions. Neither the Wran building nor any part of the 1988 museum survives the demolition plans, courtesy of Labor's hoax heritage listing. Kylie Winkworth, The Fake News of Labor's Powerhouse Ultimo Heritage Hoax, Sept 2024 <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Winkworth-Fake-News-and-Labors-Heritage-Hoax-29-Sept-2024.pdf>

²³ In a memorable exchange the former Premier Perrottet was questioned in 2022 at budget estimates by the Hon. Robert Borsak about the PHM being stripped of its collections and set for demolition, with the sham 'renewal' project not reflecting the government's explicit commitments on the PHM in the 4 July 2020 announcement the PHM was saved. <https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/more-powerhouse-for-people-%E2%80%93-nsw-government-to-retain-ultimo-museum>

His answer: **Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:....** I remember speaking to the then Premier in relation to my view in respect of saving the Powerhouse Museum at Ultimo, and that was the decision the Government made. **So if someone somewhere in the depths of the public service has decided to take a different approach, I will be redirecting them back to the approach that we announced.**

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: That will be interesting because someone in the depths of the public service, as directed perhaps by the Minister at the time—there have been at least four or five business cases prepared on these projects, whether it's Parramatta or whether it's Ultimo and how it all works in relation to Castle Hill as well, that we have not been able to see. I think out of the five business cases—and I don't think any of them has come up to a figure of one in the justification of it— Budget Estimates Portfolio Committee No.1 Premier and Finance 7 September 2022, transcript p.25 The Premier didn't around to redirecting his public servants. Five months later the Ultimo Renewal concept SSD was approved on the eve of the state election in February 2023.

²⁴ See Appendix F Amended Design Report, p.10

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=EXH-70255721%2120240909T061937.655%20GMT>

²⁵ New education and public program spaces will be built in the Switch House in what were exhibition galleries, but the education spaces will be reduced by more than 50% in size from the learning spaces in the real Powerhouse Museum.

²⁶ Furthermore, the Parramatta Powerhouse has presentation spaces with 10 and 20 metre ceiling heights, designed for performance and venue hire, so there is no need to create more over-scaled spaces of this type which are expensive to use for exhibitions. Presenting exhibitions in large volume spaces requires the construction of an expensive exhibition framework with a series of panels, plinths and rooms to mediate the 9

scale of the space and provide structure for the interpretation, showcases and plinths for the objects. This is costly and inherently wasteful and unsustainable. For example all the exhibition infrastructure for *1001 Remarkable Objects* shown at the PHM from August 2022- February 2024 was given away or sent to the tip after just six months. The cost? More than \$3 million, although unconfirmed sources say the total budget was \$6m.

²⁷ See Powerhouse Museum Alliance Objection to the Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation SSD-67588459, part 5 and Appendix 1, May 2024 <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/PowerhouseMuseumAlliance-Winkworth.pdf>

²⁸ In another year of rewarding failure, total government payments to MAAS were \$155,667m, \$52m higher than budgeted, while the sale of goods and services was just \$1,711m.

²⁹ See Winkworth MAAS Visitor Numbers and Stats: Charting Decline and Failure <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Winkworth-MAAS-Visitor-Nos-Stats-Charting-Decline-2024.pdf>

³⁰ *This audit will examine the effectiveness of the planning, design and construction for the Powerhouse Museum Parramatta and Ultimo projects.* <https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/annual-work-program-2024-27>

³¹ Ultimo Presence Project 1 Project Definition, Johnstaff, July, 2017 <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ultimo-presence-project-1-project-definition.pdf> For the 2018 business case papers for Parramatta, Castle Hill and the Ultimo Presence Project see <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/find-out-more/business-cases-access-to-documents/> The Ultimo Presence business case papers are Part C.

³² Quoted in Linda Morris, 'Say goodbye: Powerhouse Museum set to shut its doors for almost three years', Sydney Morning Herald 10 May 2023. <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/SMH-10-May-2023.pdf>

³³ Far from protecting and conserving the Powerhouse Museum, the hoax heritage listing greenlights the demolition of the museum that Labor promised to save. An extensive list of site-specific exemptions gazetted with the listing of the Powerhouse Museum Complex permits the demolition of all the fabric of the museum that is post 1980. See Kylie Winkworth, The Fake News of the Labor's Powerhouse Ultimo Heritage Hoax, September 2024, <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Winkworth-Fake-News-and-Labors-Heritage-Hoax-29-Sept-2024.pdf>

³⁴ On 4 July 2020 the Berejiklian government announced that the Powerhouse Museum would be staying in Ultimo and would *continue to welcome visitors to its world renowned exhibits*. The media release stated that the Powerhouse Museum *would continue to provide an **outstanding visitor experience in the areas of technology, science, engineering and design...** would complement the future focussed Parramatta facility....would retain jobs at Ultimo and would explore if some of the funds earmarked for relocation costs could be used on renovations*. None of these commitments were kept. Going their own way, the project proponents MAAS, INSW and Create NSW, continued to execute the wasteful collection eviction and museum demolition scheme. <https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/more-powerhouse-for-people-%E2%80%93-nsw-government-to-retain-ultimo-museum>

³⁵ In her June 2021 lecture to the Hawke Institute in Adelaide on 'Undoing the Institution' the CEO promised *the Powerhouse will not be a museum that bows down on its knees to the monuments of the 20th century*. This is an extraordinary statement from a museum leader where the protection of cultural heritage is in the DNA and raison d'être of every museum.