

11 January, 2025

Save the Powerhouse Museum <savethepowerhouse@gmail.com>

## WHAT IS A MUSEUM?

Hi everyone,

Elizabeth Farrelly on her "The Sydneyist" program on Eastside FM 89.7 (9 January 2025) asked Museum expert Kylie Winkworth "WHAT IS A MUSEUM?"

Listen to the full podcast HERE

<https://eastsidefm.org/episodes/1736406000/> or <http://tiny.cc/r4t4001> .

"A museum is a place that shows its treasured cultural collections for the enjoyment and engagement of visitors and their education" replied Winkworth, "the premise of a museum is that it is a **PERMANENT** institution and the **OBLIGATION** on committees, on governments and managers and custodians and boards is that the legacy of previous generations will be preserved and enhanced and passed to the next generations.. A museum is an **INTERGENERATIONAL** legacy."

"Museums are permanent institutions in the **service of society**....but they are not just our society's cultural memory, **they are also part of our own personal cultural memories** and, I think, that is partly what injected such longevity into the campaign to save the Museum which is now in its tenth year" she added. "**In what other society would it be necessary to campaign for 10 years to save a great public museum which is one of the foundation cultural institutions of NSW** (with the Art Gallery of NSW, the Australian Museum and the State Library of NSW)."

"What we are looking at now is **the world's most expensive museum demolition scheme**, contrary to everything Labor promised...They said that they would keep the Powerhouse Museum open, protect the Wran Building and preserve the Wran legacy...**Not one of these promises was kept**...Five months after the Museum was closed and what is now under assessment by the Department of Planning is the same old demolition scheme which **completely erases all traces of the Powerhouse Museum as we know it**, a Sulman-awarded museum that opened with such acclaim and cultural impact in 1988."

"The 1988 building (*Wran Building, Galleria and Harris Street frontage*) will be substantially demolished and it is not clear whether the roof form or the Galleria will survive. They have not worked out (**or budgeted!**) how to demolish it! When they take out all the interiors and the mezzanine there is nothing to hold it up."

"This has been facilitated by what we call the "**HOAX HERITAGE LISTING**" in July last year when they announced the Powerhouse Museum Complex was listed, saved and will never be allowed to be redeveloped or sold. This nonsense statement (*in September, more than 2 months after the listing was gazetted, why?*) was, unfortunately, uncritically relayed by a number of media outlets including the ABC."...But "there were **the fine prints, the added exemptions which were secretly developed in collaboration with the Proponent (INSW) and their heritage consultant**. They made sure that no part of the 1988 Powerhouse Museum was protected because **the exemptions allow ALL the post-1980 fabric to be removed**."

"**All that they are protecting is what was previously protected** – the brick shell of the former power station and, with some remarkably contorted logic, some claim that **the roof form of the Wran Building will be rebuilt because that's the only bit that is significant**."

"**IT IS QUITE INSULTING** isn't it" said Elizabeth Farrelly.

"What is really appalling was that, in the four years the heritage consultant worked on various versions of their controversial plans and heritage impact statement they never spoke to the Architect

(Lionel Glendenning) and they never recognised the cultural significance of the place as a museum” said Winkworth.

For more details on the late changes to the heritage listing conditions read Kylie Winkworth “Eviscerating the aesthetic significance of the Powerhouse Museum Complex”

<http://tiny.cc/t435001>. See also our graph detailing the timing of the changes <http://tiny.cc/9935001>

“**Sydney is in the bottom 20% of global cities for the number of museums** and yet we are ripping up a well-established functional, purposed-designed museum that is only 36 years old...It is a shame that the people running this project, INSW, a body not otherwise known for its expertise in museum development and planning, and the design committee jury have failed to look at similar examples for museum renewal. A beautiful example is the Young V&A which won the Museum of the Year award in 2023. It was completely re-imagined and the cost was £13 million...At the heart of these exemplary projects in the UK is the focus on exhibitions and renewing the museum concept and vision, re-imagining what the museum can be (but also keeping the heritage fabric and the collections).”

For more details on the renewal projects read Kylie Winkworth “Cost and Planning Comparisons with UK Museum Renewal Projects” <http://tiny.cc/8a35001> .

Sign our joint petition <https://chng.it/x6r5ZRtCQK> if you have not done so yet and encourage your family and friends to do the same.

The petition has now collected more than 9,300 signatures and should soon reach the 10,000 benchmark.

It has also received 466 comments, most of them opposing the “Revitalisation” and condemning the Government’s actions <http://tiny.cc/vma4001>

*Save the Powerhouse*

