

7 January, 2025

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CoS STANDS FIRM ON DEMANDS FOR RESPECT OF HERITAGE AND EXHIBITION AREAS

Hi everyone,

In recent posts we detailed how the City of Sydney just before Christmas decided to “kick the PHM can down the road”. The Council’s formal **OPPOSITION** to the “Revitalisation” project we requested, instead of its “support in principle”, could have made a significant difference even though the “Determination” of this State Significant Development (SSD) rests with the NSW Planning Department. “*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 a senior level to the Premier and Ministers*” said Kylie Winkworth in her address to the Central Sydney Planning Committee (CSPC) meeting of 12 December <http://tiny.cc/smf1001>.

However, as promised in their letter of 19 September 2024, the City of Sydney made a new submission to the NSW Planning department on 16 December 2024.

Their September letter <http://tiny.cc/rsg4001> shared our concerns regarding –

- The demolition of heritage, especially regarding the Wran building.
- The reduction of the Museum’s exhibition area from 21,080m2 to just over 5,000m2

It advised us that the Heritage Assessment Report they commissioned from Lovell Chen would be made public, once reported to the Council.

Their December submission is now available on the NSW Government Planning Portal

<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/powerhouse-ultimo-revitalisation> and comprises a letter

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=PAE-78154458%2120241218T053703.607%20GMT> with two attachments –

- Attachment A – Draft Conditions of Consent

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=PAE-78154458%2120241218T053703.844%20GMT>

- Attachment B – Lovell Chen Report

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=PAE-78154458%2120241218T053704.094%20GMT>

It raises the same heritage and exhibition areas concerns as in September.

Heritage

The City states that “The Response to Submissions report notes that the listing of the Complex focuses on use rather than fabric. **This is NOT CONSISTENT WITH STANDARD PRACTICES dealing with development of built heritage.**”

“The heritage assessment by Lovell Chen provides an overall assessment of the complex as an **‘interrelated’ group of buildings**, with an emphasis on the conception and inspiration for the design of the Powerhouse Museum Complex, and the design of the Wran Building when the former Powerhouse complex was adaptively reused to become the Powerhouse Museum between 1978 and 1988. **The assessment documents that the fabric of the complex is of considerable significance**” their letter continues, and “**the City’s previous comments and requests for further and better information relating to the heritage impact of the proposed development remain unchanged.**”

The City recommends that “The original structure of the Wran Building is to be retained” (Attachment A page 2) and that “A more detailed assessment of fabric be provided for the entire

site...which would ensure a more thorough understanding of significant elements to be retained and conserved.

Concern is raised with regard to the significant fabric and components of the place not being identified prior to proceeding with new design for the Powerhouse Museum, and **the change in fabric to re clad the Wran Building with brick as being incongruous with the existing lightweight contemporary structure.**"

Exhibition area

"The City notes community concern regarding the quantum of existing exhibition space (approximately 20,000sqm) differing from the Proponent (INSW)'s existing and proposed gross floor area (GFA) calculation. It is recommended that the Department review this aspect of the proposal carefully to ensure that exhibition and programming spaces are not reduced. **It would be useful if a typical fitout of an exhibition space could be conceptualised.**"

The "cognitive dissonance" noted by Kylie Winkworth on 12 December, 2024 persists: the Council still approves in principle the project but keeps raising (well founded) objections condemning the "Revitalisation" project unless it is entirely re-designed.

As a matter of fact –

- Ensuring that "the exhibition and programming spaces are not reduced" condemns the proposed massive demolition of all intermediate floors in the old power plant and in the Wran extensions.
- "A more detailed assessment of fabric consistent with standard practices" would preclude the entire demolition of the Wran Building and its brick wall encasement.

After a decade of inappropriate decisions the NSW Government still has no plan acceptable to the Council, the experts and the public.

During the Council Meeting of 16 December 2024 the Lord Mayor said "I think things have reached the 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 spaces" (Listen to Council meeting webcast from 1:37:20 <https://webcast.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/archive/video24-1216.php>).

How did she reach this conclusion?

"We will be able to check that when the State has done its work" she concluded. Let's hope it will not be too late!

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

