

NSW GOVERNMENT TO REPLACE THE WRAN HERITAGE WITH A THEME-PARK PASTICHE

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Hi everyone,

Infrastructure NSW (INSW) has now confirmed that a modification to the approved State Significant Development Application (SSDA) will be on exhibition on the planning portal <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/powerhouse-ultimo-revitalisation> next week (starting 30 June), This will be **our last opportunity to reject the ill-conceived “Powerhouse Revitalisation” project.**

The modification consists chiefly of the **complete demolition of the heritage-listed “Wran heritage”** (Wran Building and Galleria) to be replaced by an approximate replica, with its southern part cut off and a roof with a vague resemblance to the original one.

This reminds us of Willow Grove’s fate which the previous NSW Government bulldozed and planned to replicate on another location in Parramatta. A replica of the “Wran heritage” buildings cannot be a substitute for the authentic original. To say that they are the same is to **equate heritage with mimicry**. The replica will be to the original Wran-era Powerhouse what the Las Vegas Eiffel Tower is to the one in Paris — a hollow reproduction, stripped of cultural context and historical integrity.

This approach to heritage — one that favours symbolic gestures over preservation — undermines public trust in cultural stewardship. It treats history as stage décor, not as something to be conserved and respected. **The public deserves better than a theme-park pastiche masquerading as heritage.**



Experts have warned us for a long time that white elephants like the Sydney Modern or the “Powerhouse” destructive project not only cost the taxpayers billions to build but that their inflated running costs would strain the NSW arts budget for decades to come. This can be seen in the recently-announced NSW budget.

In his latest editorial <https://www.everythingthe.com/p/beggars-banquet> called “Beggars’ Banquet” distinguished arts critic John McDonald deplores the defunding of NSW cultural institutions “continually nibbling away at grants and allocations.” He adds “The recent NSW government cuts to the state arts agency, Create NSW, will require the retrenchment of a quarter of its 91 staff” and “Australian Design Centre’s CEO, Lisa Cahill just announced that “ADC has been defunded by both state and federal governments losing a combined \$500K per annum in operational funding.”

Though “Australia has some of the world’s outstanding artists in the fields of ceramics, glass, textiles and other **applied arts**”, the defunding “will leave NSW as the only state/territory without a government funded organisation.”

Using Government’s “official” jargon, Arts Minister John Graham summarises it as follows: “The former government made some great investments in infrastructure. Our focus is now filling those great buildings to make the most of the great infrastructure.” Presumably, says McDonald,” the “great investments” and “great infrastructure” refer to that utterly inappropriate piece of architecture, Sydney Modern and the most expensive three-headed white elephant in captivity - the terrible mutation we call Powerhouse.”

“Does John Graham honestly expect us to believe that the ADC, in operation since 1964, is expendable, while the Powerhouse – once known as Sydney’s leading museum of art and design – should absorb about \$150 million in taxpayers’ hard-earned, to pay huge salaries to mates for ‘creative’ ideas; to bankroll overseas residencies for people who don’t even live in NSW; to hold a range of Mickey Mouse competitions, such as writing stories about the Parramatta River; to get Kylie Kwong to do tours of Indian restaurants in the burbs, and on, and on? Not to mention three end-of-year parties where the Minister and staff whooped it up, at a combined cost of slightly less than \$100,000?” asks McDonald, adding that “**perhaps the Australian Design Centre should have sponsored more rave parties.**”

“It’s the government’s responsibility to fund museums adequately and help foster a greater sense of philanthropy in the community” concludes McDonald, “instead, John Graham has chosen the contrary route. **Rather than promoting long-term growth, he is celebrating short-term waste. In place of strategic initiatives, he is giving us empty spin.** But no amount of hyperbole can replace the millions that have been withdrawn or withheld from every organisation that is not called Powerhouse.” Well said John!

Save the Powerhouse

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