

**Foxground, 29 July, 2025**

**SUBMISSION from DR LINDSAY SHARP  
Founding Director, Powerhouse Museum (1978-1988)**

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**POWERHOUSE ULTIMO MODIFICATION 1**

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**ADDITIONAL DEMOLITION AND REBUILD OF THE WRAN  
BUILDING, REMOVAL OF THE LOADING DOCK AND  
OTHER INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CHANGES**

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**STATE SIGNIFICANT PROJECT APPLICATION**

**SSD-67588459-Mod 1**

I completely oppose and object to these additional proposed amendments- so called 'modifications'- to an existing inappropriate, unpopular, destructive, and wasteful project.

The fact that the exhibition period is limited to 13 days is obviously an attempt to limit time for analysis, comment and submission.

This is shameless.

A classic example of bureaucrats, creating rules, who then manipulate them to both evade and avoid real scrutiny, transparency and responsibility for irrational, unprofessional and profoundly sub-optimal decisions.

A cascading tsunami of folly and professional failure, by many, or most of the 'experts' concerned- plus Government and the client.

You couldn't make this up except in a farce.

Front end summary: these extraordinary and vandalistic changes include, but are not limited to:

\*The absolute, unwarranted demolition of the Wran Building and of the Galleria without any reliable or credible justification in terms of heritage preservation, cost, waste and best practice for a museum.

\* The complete overturning of the SSD Title and intent: 'Heritage Revitalisation'- now an absolute misnomer; in fact, this 'modification' represents complete destruction of the Glendenning adaptive reuse of the Powerhouse Ultimo site

\* The complete denial of the Architect of Record's opposition to such barbaric and wasteful changes (Mr. Lionel Glendenning)

\* The avoidance of the core NBRIS statement:

'Individual buildings including the Ultimo Power House (former), Ultimo Tram Shed (or Harwood building) and Ultimo Post Office (former) have State significance beyond their individual architectural styles and histories, for their contribution since the 1980s to supporting the museum function. The contribution of the purpose-built Wran building, with its distinctive roof form (comprising two arches), and general scale, characterises the architectural influence of the 1988 museum redevelopment. Together with the complex it has State significance for its associations with political, design and museum figures including Neville Wran, Jack Ferguson, Lionel Glendenning, Richard Johnson, Lindsay Sharp and Norman Harwood. The Powerhouse Museum Complex has State social significance for people across Sydney, NSW, and Australia for whom it represents an important educational and cultural institution and tourist destination. Its changing use from power station to cultural institution and ongoing evolution to support museum exhibition, programs and operations offers insights into technological change, development, and urban renewal in NSW.' (Page 27)

And the illogical ranking of structural/building significance- contrary to Mr Croker's report- plus the illogical, self-contradictory following statements thereafter, exacerbated by a reliance on the inaccurate and misleading Curio report assumptions and history as applied to the original Wran building but not updated to take into account the faux replica building's reduced scale and degraded functionality. This NBRIS document is profoundly faulted.

\* The substitution of a completely faux pastiche 'architecture', a kind of amateur attempt, to mimic the brick structures of the two major Halls (see below) in ways which completely transgress ICOMOS heritage rules and NSW Heritage Act desiderata; as exhibited in the 'approximate replica' (sic) of the Wran building- which is 'naïf', facile, expensive and stupid

\* This complete proposed contrary action/modification against the expert advice of Australia's leading professional in the field: Mr. Alan Croker

\* This complete proposed contrary action/modification thwarting thousands of negative public comments and petitions calling for a true PHMU retention and restoration/innovative upgrade as a museum

\* The complete contrary action/modification contravening Minister Graham's many undertakings during 2023 to preserve the Powerhouse Museum, which it now appears he did not mean; it also demonstrates his lack of understanding of this heritage, carbon/ fiscal cost and pathetic architectural maladroitness, which passes way above his addled 'night time economy' comprehension.

\* The extraordinary reversal, so as to obviate the previously proposed new loading dock, reextend the dedicated/designated project site's perimeter/curtilage to include the Harwood Building; in regards to which there are only three possible 'explanations' for such an egregious planning failure: all indicate profound and shocking incompetence, or delayed and misleading earlier statements and actions by Government and the authorities, or both

\* The massive increase in additional, uncalculated carbon load above and beyond the already huge, equally uncalculated carbon load caused by the staggering demolition of the 1988 Glendenning interventions inside the two major Halls- Boiler and Engine/Generator- thereby completely breaking Government's own protocols, making the project illegal and, in SSD planning terms, null and void

\* The likely- undeclared- increase in construction costs resulting from yet another profound change in project scope and project creep

\* The complete lack of any relevant Business Case- as with the last iteration in the recent SSD which utilised a summary of the 2018 Business Case- avoiding a Business Case which is germane to the Powerhouse Museum, Ultimo project, again breaking planning regulations and making the altered SSD 'plan as modified' without financial or fiscal justification. To underline this: there is no Business Case, thus making the 'modification' 'plans' null and void.

\* The now unavoidable fact that important Wran heritage structures are being replaced by pastiche 'replicas' that are significantly shorter, clad in brick walls, and hidden behind a row of souvenir shops that mock and destroy their dignity and street/site presence, while creating a tawdry shopping strip along Harris Street.

\*The further direct loss of exhibition space both on the footprint of the Wran Building, and including a substitution of a ramp in the Galleria, obviating the original designed space for the Number 1 Locomotive and Train

\*All of the above directly violates established international heritage principles and NSW Government's own planning protocols

\* In particular: Article 6 of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)' Venice Charter (1964) clearly states:

"The conservation of a monument implies preserving a setting which is not out of scale. Wherever the traditional setting exists, it must be kept. No

new construction, demolition or modification which would alter the relations of mass and colour must be allowed."

([https://admin.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Venice\\_Charter\\_EN.pdf](https://admin.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Venice_Charter_EN.pdf))

\* In particular the Heritage Council of NSW and Penny Sharpe, Minister, gazetted the "Powerhouse Museum Complex" state heritage-listing just a year ago (Gazette of 12 July, 2024  
[https://gazette.nsw.gov.au/gazette/2024/7/2024-7\\_268-gazette.pdf](https://gazette.nsw.gov.au/gazette/2024/7/2024-7_268-gazette.pdf))

\* And specifically, the City of Sydney Council and Lord Mayor, Clover Moore, supported the project "in principle" but subject to a revision of "the extent of intervention and whether this is an appropriate adaptive reuse".

\* Given the above core summary it is simply untenable that these [third] 'theme-park', faux makeover 'modifications' meet the values, criteria. and requirements of the Minister's gazettal and Sydney City Council's express requirements, let alone NSW's Planning Department's Rules and Regulations.

\* This is not 'Heritage Revitalisation'- as mis-described by Government- but 'Heritage Destruction'- a misleading misdirection destroying the stated intent of this SSD.

As the Founding Director of the Powerhouse Museum (1979-1988) and Director of four National Museums, I know whereof I write.

I am completely supportive of the public and popular movement to retain the Powerhouse Museum at its Ultimo site as a world-class Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS), a role it has successfully undertaken since opening in 1988.

And not as a commercial 'Rave space', concert venue, hotel, shopping strip and almost entirely de-contextualised (heritage/historical/cultural), occasional, vastly reduced (square metres of display) exhibition facility for sundry smaller objects- if the museum loving public are lucky.

More detailed objections:

Proposed modifications include –

- \* Complete desecration and destruction of the original 'Modernist' Structures as designed by the Architect of record- Mr. Lionel Glendenning- and as recommended for preservation by Australia's leading expert- Mr. Alan Croker (Design 5 report)
- \* The cancellation of the Macarthur Street underground loading dock and...
- \* The re-inclusion of the Harwood Building.

Until this spectacular 'U' turn 'modification', the Harwood Building had been specifically excised from the “Powerhouse Museum Ultimo Complex”, and incorrectly described as not within the curtilage of the original Power Stations- although this was essentially first created to power Sydney's then world-leading Tram Infrastructure as it grew rapidly after 1900.

#### **Attachments**

- [SSD 67588459 Mod 1 version II Additnl Demo Wran Bldg](#)