

22 March, 2026

## Save the Powerhouse

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“ONLY LABOR WILL SAVE PHMU” — A MAJOR BROKEN PROMISE

Just three years ago on 22 March 2023, John Graham stood on the forecourt of the Powerhouse Museum and solemnly declared: “Only Labor will save the Powerhouse Museum”

<http://tiny.cc/t1d0101>. He reminded his audience that “it was the Wran Labor Government that originally conceived the purpose-built institution on the site of the old Ultimo power station.”

Three days later, on 25 March 2023, NSW Labor was elected, and Graham became Minister for the Arts (among other portfolios) in the Minns Government.

Three years on, the outcome could not be more grim. The recently heritage-listed museum has effectively been destroyed: the Wran-era additions demolished to the ground, and only the brick façades of the original power station left standing.

Was John Graham disingenuous when he promised, 3 days before he became the Arts Minister, that “Labor will save the Powerhouse Museum”? Or is it a matter of “the tail wagging the dog” and the public service, who had planned the demolition since Gladys Berejiklian’s “backflip” in July 2020 (<http://tiny.cc/03d0101>), overruling the Minister?

Either way, this effectively constitutes a MAJOR BROKEN PRE-ELECTION PROMISE and a complete betrayal of the trust of those who listened to the Minister’s deceiving speech, many of them eminent museum professionals and/or long term supporters of the “Powerhouse Museum cause.”

The Minister continues to assert that the rebuilt “Powerhouse Ultimo” will be a genuine museum (of applied arts and sciences?), “familiar to the community” (whatever that means).

(Budget Estimates Hearing of 6 March 2026.

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/.../Transcript%20...> page 34).

But can we trust him after such a major betrayal?

There are growing concerns that the site is instead being revamped as an entertainment and event venue, similar to “Powerhouse Parramatta”, which—despite earlier promises of becoming Australia’s largest STEM museum—is increasingly being promoted as a destination centred on food and beverage with rooftop gardening experiences with all the experienced MAAS curators replaced by “creative artists”.

Even if the Minister “saved the Powerhouse Museum”, it would be four times smaller than the original, hidden behind a row of souvenir shops, and built on the ruins of the state heritage-listed Powerhouse Museum. Nothing really “familiar to the community” which supported their world-class Museum for decades!

