

Tom Lockley: Correspondence 2 February to 16 March, 2026

Correspondence with Premiers Department; Member Legislative Council, Scott Farlow; and PMAlliance colleagues, regarding access through the Government Information Public Access (GIPA) Act, to information about decisions being made about the Powerhouse Museum.

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From: **Tom Lockley** <[.....]>
Date: **Mon, 16 Mar 2026**
Subject: **Documentation of the Powerhouse Museum development.**
To: <scott.farlow@parliament.nsw.gov.au>

The Hon. Scott Farlow, MLC
Parliament House, Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000



A8499080 - GIPA
Decision - PD letter t

Dear Mr Farlow,

I am seeking your help in a matter in which you are uniquely able to assist, namely the processes by which decisions have been made over the past twelve years regarding the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.

I am seeking documentary evidence that the New South Wales government, over the period from mid-2014 to date, has followed appropriate procedures by properly examining alternatives in the development of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.

The attached GIPA determination [9/3/2026] indicates that the Premiers Department does not hold any information on this matter. I have also repeatedly asked MAAS, Infrastructure New South Wales and related organisations and relevant government departments if they can help, with no response. It seems impossible that many major decisions have been made without appropriate written records, and this is a matter that is being pursued separately, but it is clear that at least on two occasions there was documentation.

You referred to both of these in the legislative Council debate of Wednesday, 7 August 2019,

1. The initial analysis.

You explained in 2014 the then director of MCA conducted an analysis of the need for a cultural institution in western Sydney and the suitability of the Powerhouse Museum to move, rather than creating a new cultural institution or transferring any other cultural institution. This analysis demonstrated "the suitability of the Powerhouse Museum to move, rather than creating a new cultural institution or transferring any other cultural institution".

2. The six independent reviews.

You stated that since February 2016 Infrastructure NSW undertook six independent reviews of the New Museum in Western Sydney Project, conducted by more than 30 independent reviewers, including specialists in design, planning and economics'.

These are the only recorded documents which may indicate that proper investigation was made into alternatives, as required by the appropriate Treasury documents.

Yet they cannot be found.

Can you assist in this search? You are the only person that we can find that has had contact with these documents.

I look forward to receiving information about them.

Many thanks,

Tom Lockley

(The only information we have on these independent reviews is a month date and the titles of the reviews, viz:

1. December 2016: *MAAS review report*
2. February 2017: *MAAS New Museum in Parramatta review report*
3. January 2018: *New Museum in Parramatta report*
4. March 2018: *New Museum in Western Sydney report*
5. April 2018: *MAAS Ultimo report*
6. November 2018: *New Museum in Parramatta report*

We cannot find any trace of them in any government records, including the 8.9 gigabytes of documents released under SO52 applications which, we would expect, would include some reference to these vital documents.)

Sent: Tuesday, 10 March 2026

[to PMA colleagues]

Subject: My Gipa seeking information about Powerhouse decision making

They knocked the application back, as I knew they would. But they didn't use the excuse that I thought they would. The reason given is that the Premier's Department has no records of any decisions made about the Powerhouse.

...I'm going to ask them who would have this material. I've tried INSW and its successors and offshoots and also the Museum.

I've used phone, emails and even registered letters to all these people.

Particularly I have sought information about the six review panels that stand as the only possibility of any sort of assessment of the project as a whole, (page 2 point 3) but all I've got is the title of the review panel reports and the month that they were done in.

'...I am advised that no government information falling within the scope of your application has been identified. I have therefore decided under section 58(1)(b) of the GIPA Act that the information sought is not held by the Department.

Rights of review

This decision is reviewable under section 80(e) of the GIPA Act. If you are aggrieved by the decision that the information sought is not held, you may seek review under Part 5 of the GIPA Act.

There are three forms of review:

- internal review by a senior officer of the Department,
- external review by the Information Commissioner, or
- external review by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Your review rights are summarised in the enclosed fact sheet. You have four weeks from the date of this letter to apply for an internal review, and eight weeks to apply for an external review.'

Sun 8/02/2026

Tom Lockley [.....]

[to PMA colleagues]

My last shot re THE Powerhouse MUSEUM

'The unspeakable crime that has been perpetuated at Ultimo is distressing to us all, The most annoying thing is the feeling of powerlessness in the face of all the malfeasance that has occurred. As you know, I have been making a fuss about the lack of due process throughout: there has been no response to these arguments, and the Government(s) have not even had the decency to correct blatantly wrong information that they have presented, eg to the Inquiries. It looks as though the current Inquiry (into the structure and funding of the arts sector will not give these matters any attention. I therefore have come out of inactivity and submitted a formal GIPA application seeking relevant information. I don't expect any proper response from the totalitarian regime under which we are living, but at least the request will be on permanent record. I have sent a copy to Cate Fahermann expressing my disappointment.'

This is the gist of my application:

I am requesting information **under the GIPA Act** as follows:

Records demonstrating that the NSW Government made adequate investigations into alternatives to their decisions over the period 2014 to date regarding the Powerhouse Museum at Ultimo.

This request is made to the Premiers Department as there is copious evidence that the Premier and at least some members of Cabinet made all relevant basic decisions, and no evidence that other relevant individuals and groups had input at this level.

For example, despite claims made to the contrary, Infrastructure NSW, incorporating Arts NSW and Create NSW, took no part in the basic planning. 'The Business Case takes as its starting point the Government's decision to locate the Powerhouse Museum on the Riverbank site in Parramatta'. *Final Business Case Summary: Powerhouse Museum in Western Sydney*, April 2018, INSW, page 2. The list of bodies that were simply informed of the various decisions is huge, and no appropriate museum / arts organization has claimed involvement in these momentous decisions.

As a guideline for what is required, please refer to Treasury Position Paper TPP08-5, in force in 2104, section 2. *Evidence required for Business Cases*: these include demonstration of the case for change, identification of alternatives and demonstration that the proposal offers value for money relative to alternatives (section 4) These requirements carry through to later guideline papers, eg TPG24-29, the current document, which stresses (*Summary of Requirements*, page 3 and later, in considerable detail) the need for a case for change, proper assessment of options and early demonstration of value for money.

To enable the necessary documentation to be found quickly, indicative items sought are listed in reverse order of chronology:

1. Documentation of processes leading up to the incoming Liberal Government's 2024 decision to reverse their stated pre-election policy to preserve the Powerhouse Museum. Refer to <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/what-the-experts-say/winkworth-labors-ten-broken-promises-on-the-powerhouse-museum-and-more/> for a detailed exposition of the facts.
2. Documentation of processes leading to the declaration of the 'reprieved' museum as a fashion and design hub on July 4 2020, confirmed on 19 July 2021. The evidence indicates that this decision was taken at a senior political level over a period of no more than four days. The consensus of museum experts and the general public is that the Ultimo site should remain as a Museum of the Applied Arts and Sciences.
3. Documentation of six review panels that, it is claimed, operated during the period December 2016 to November 2018 and demonstrated the quality of the overall project.

Some explanation may assist:

The Final Report of the Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 4 — Legal Affairs Inquiry into Museums and Galleries made a finding that the Final Business Case for the Powerhouse Museum in Western Sydney Project did not comply with NSW Treasury's Guide to Cost-Benefit Analysis.

The Government's response was threefold:

- a. that Infrastructure NSW had undertaken six independent reviews conducted by more than 30 independent reviewers including specialists in design, planning and economics,
- b. that there had been guidance from peer review processes and governance panels, and
- c. that the key parameters of the Economic Appraisal were endorsed by the Project Steering Committee.

However, in regard to (b) the only documented Peer Review panel had not even met at that time and eventually held two sparsely attended meetings, with no discernible input. In regard to (c) the Project Steering Committee was not an independent review panel. It was the Government-funded delegated management authority. Further, members were demonstrably incompetent in that they did not publicly recognise that the 'peer review / governance panels' had been wrongly characterised.

In regard to (a) we have repeatedly sought release of the six review panel reports, with no success. Government assertions that they are of suitable equality must be validated. **In the absence of any other evidence, their release is vital.**

4. Processes and rationale for the decision taken by the Government when they declared as the 'base case' the Government's decision to relocate the Powerhouse Museum. This decision was made public at the first Inquiry hearing (PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 4 — LEGAL AFFAIRS, Wednesday, 12 September 2018, Legislative Council, page 30). This decision has precluded examination of the actual base case, ie the existing museum and its functions.

5. Relevant investigations carried out by Ms Elizabeth-Ann Macgregor as Cultural Ambassador for the West to provide expert advice underlying the announcement of the museum 'move; in November 2014. Hon. Scott Farlow, MLC, is recorded in *Legislative Council Hansard*, 8 August 2019 as follows: 'Liz-Anne McGregor conducted the analysis of the need for a cultural institution in western Sydney and the suitability of the Powerhouse Museum to move, rather than creating a new cultural institution or transferring any other cultural institution'.

At the outset, in late 2014-early 2015, the original 'move' project was presented as being revenue neutral: the money raised from the sale of the Ultimo site was going to pay for the new museum at Parramatta, with surplus funds used for other cultural activities in Western Sydney. (Andrew Clennel, *The Daily Telegraph*, February 25, 2015, *Fair go for the West: Powerhouse museum relocated to Parramatta*, quoting from media release).

This was absurd. It was quickly apparent that the proceeds for the land sale would barely cover the demolition of the Ultimo building and the stage of the exhibits. Yet the project has been carried on by both LNP and Labor Governments, and has morphed into the current operation, which is almost certainly the costliest museum/arts project in the world so far this millennium.

Accordingly, it is vital that the planning and control processes must be seen as appropriate, hence this application.

I will let you know the exact reason they knock this application back.

The fight to save THE Powerhouse MUSEUM has been a great joint effort, and I would particularly like to express my admiration for everyone's work, particularly the people who are still battling on!

Tom Lockley.