

FINAL REPORT RELEASED ON ARTS, MUSIC, NIGHT ECONOMY AND TRANSPORT

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Hi everyone,

The NSW Legislative Council's Portfolio Committee No. 6 (Transport and the Arts) have published their final report on their "Structure and funding of the arts, music, night time economy, and transport portfolios" inquiry.

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/3150/Report%2027%20-%20PC%206%20-%20Transport%20and%20the%20Arts%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

In her foreword (page xi), the Committee's Chair Cate Faehrmann MLC observes "that major organisational restructures are proceeding **WITHOUT ADEQUATE TRANSPARENCY**, and increasing pressure is being placed on both the workforce and the sectors they are intended to support."

However, transparency was a key promise of the Minns Government when it declared, **two days before the 2023 election** (23 March <http://tiny.cc/59r2101>), that "the NSW Parliament Select Committee on the management of the Powerhouse Museum has revealed the **shroud of secrecy** that the (*Coalition*) NSW Government has sought to apply across the operations of The Powerhouse Museum for the past 12 years... **A NSW Labor government will release key details of the plans for the Ultimo and Parramatta sites** that until now have been kept secret."

Faehrmann adds "the **NSW Government's decision to PRIORITISE THE 24-HOUR ECONOMY AND CONTEMPORARY MUSIC** portfolios has come at the expense of other forms of art, music and culture."

Again, this contradicts the pre-election promise that "NSW Labor remains concerned about the **focus on events rather than museum spaces** in the (*Coalition*) Government's plans. This reflects the (*Coalition*) Government's **obsession with commercialisation and privatisation.**"

The final report (recommendation 16 page 98) found that –

- "Decisions related to the (*MAAS*) projects lacked adequate oversight, with **updated business cases not publicly released.**"
- "**Significant curatorial expertise has been lost** due to restructuring, attrition and reallocation of roles."

And noted "(*stakeholder*) concerns regarding recruitment practices and the **APPOINTMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITHOUT TRADITIONAL MUSEUM EXPERIENCE** to senior or specialist roles, resulting in deskilling and potential risk to the museum's operational capacity."

It noted further (recommendation 17 page 99) "that the committee considers that **public confidence** in the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences will depend on clear evidence that strategic decisions, programming choices and staffing structures remain anchored to **the institution's legislative purpose** (*MAAS Act 1945* <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1945-031>), collections responsibilities and long-term public value."

Unfortunately the Committee's findings, which reflect the problems Save the Powerhouse, the Powerhouse Museum Alliance and many others have highlighted for the past 11 years, comes too late to change the situation.

The "Revitalisation" of the MAAS **public institution** –

- Has cost the NSW taxpayer \$2 Billion, resulting in drastic funding reductions of many other cultural institutions in NSW.
- The Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo's Wran extensions have been bulldozed to the ground and –
- The Milkcrate in Parramatta, which is not a museum but an event and entertainment centre, is complete and is set to open at the end of 2026 (September according to Premier Minns?)

The recommendation (no 16 page 98) that the NSW Government "commits to the full implementation of any findings and recommendations arising from the NSW Auditor-General's audit of the effectiveness of the planning, design and construction for the Powerhouse Museum Parramatta and Ultimo projects", due in 2027, <https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/annual-work-program-2024-27> is also "too little too late."

Finally, Save is disappointed that the significant loss of heritage in Ultimo is ignored by the report. Probably because it was not considered as relevant to the Inquiry's terms of reference.

Meanwhile the structural completion of the Milkcrate in Parramatta, is hailed by the media (read ABC News of 1 May <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-05-01/parramatta-powerhouse-construction-ends-as-opening-date-nears/106629094>) in a way somewhat similar to the recent Fish Market opening.

We learn that -

- "Arts Minister John Graham said entry to the museum would be free with some exhibits like Task Eternal requiring paid entry." Does he mean that visitors will freely enter the building to patronise its bars, restaurants and shops but will be charged to view the exhibitions?
- "Seven expansive zones are part of the museum, including an 18-metre high space over 2,200 square metres, which will feature Task Eternal, the largest exhibition about space exploration in Australia" and that "CEO Lisa Havilah's team will now start installing five exhibitions for the museum's opening." Less than 6 months before the opening, no exhibition detail or theme is provided, except for "Task eternal".

Only five exhibitions?

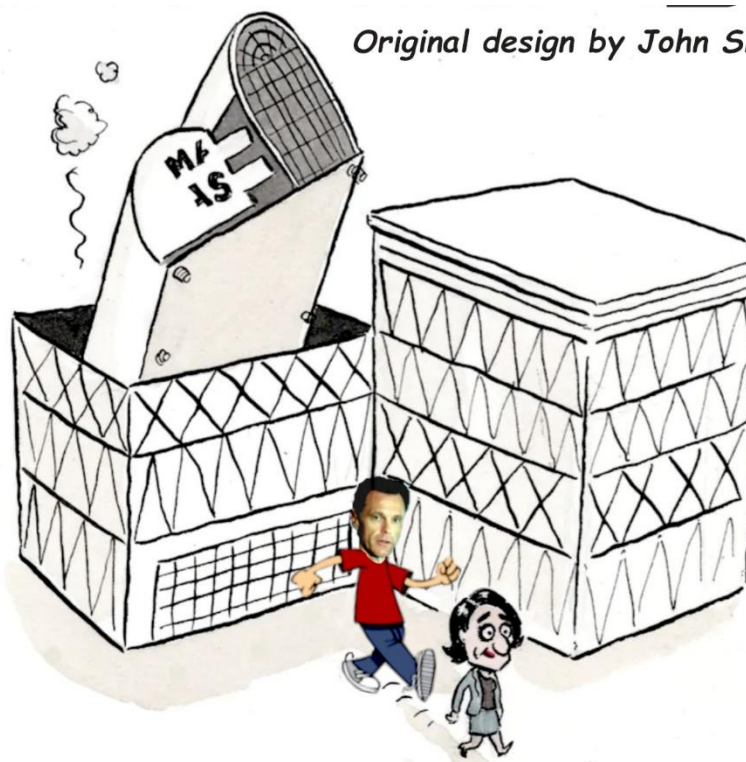
- This poorly compares with the 25 exhibitions "arranged into five thematic groups, including Science, Technology and People, and Australian design" for the opening of the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo in 1988. Their themes were made public years before the Museum's grand opening.
- Seven "expansive zones", so what is the purpose of the two other "zones"?

The “18-metre high space over 2,200m²” “Task eternal” space had to be divided up into smaller “spaces” with a \$18M steel structure, an extravagant investment for a 2-year exhibition.

This, again, proves that very large “spaces”, such as those under construction in Ultimo, are more suited for performing arts and events than for the exhibition of the Powerhouse Museum diverse collections.

Finally we are told that the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo “is expected to reopen to the public in 2027”...which appears impossible!

Save the Powerhouse



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