

<https://www.smh.com.au/culture/art-and-design/why-are-three-heritage-planes-dangling-from-a-ceiling-in-parramatta-20260521-p5zzds.html>

# Why are three heritage planes dangling from a ceiling in Parramatta?



[Linda Morris](#)

May 22, 2026 — 5:00am

Western Sydney's first cultural institution has taken delivery of a twin wing aircraft borrowed under a \$5 million partnership deal with Qantas that the Powerhouse Museum says brings it closer to hitting its target for private fundraising.

The historic Qantas Avro 504K aircraft, a replica of the national carrier's first plane, has joined two other aircraft from the museum's collection - an Autogiro - a forerunner of the helicopter - and an ultralight Skycraft Scout Mark 1 designed and made by aviation pioneer Ron Wheeler.

All three have been suspended in a stack from the roof of the museum's largest presentation space, the first objects to enter the massive column-free room.



Installation of the Qantas planes at the Powerhouse Museum in Parramatta.

The aircraft will feature in the opening exhibition, [Task Eternal](#), exploring space and flight. The Qantas Avro 504K aircraft is one of two replicas of the airline's first plane, built in Mascot by Qantas engineers and apprentices in 1988. It weighs more than 760 kilograms, is almost 9 metres long and comes with a wingspan of 11 metres.

Qantas captain David Thiess said seeing the Qantas Avro 504K – the first aircraft to carry the airline's name – on display was a reminder of how far Australian aviation had come. Arts Minister John Graham said it was fitting that the first object going into the museum was an important piece of aviation history.

The Flying Kangaroo is the official presenting partner for the [\\$18 million show](#), has naming rights over a public terrace overlooking the Parramatta River and will contribute to learning programs during the exhibition.

In turn the Powerhouse will preserve and digitise more than 6000 pieces from the Qantas Heritage Collection, spanning more than a century of Australian aviation history. The Catalina seaplane has been moved to a volunteer-run museum on the South Coast while the Ultimo building is being rebuilt and will return there, not to Parramatta.



Qantas's Avro sits above the two collection objects. STEVEN SIEWERT



A replica of this Avro 504 is on loan to the Parramatta Powerhouse.

The Powerhouse has been set a target by NSW Treasury to raise \$75 million towards the more than \$1 billion building opening later this year.

Of the \$5 million investment, Graham’s office said: “This partnership takes the philanthropy total raised [by the Powerhouse] to \$72.9 million.” A museum spokesperson later said the sum raised was contributed entirely in cash donations.

The museum has also entered into a partnership with the [Lang Walker Family Foundation](#), which has given \$20 million to fund access to education experiences for more than 10,000 high school students every year – including overnight stays at the museum for many of these students. University of Western Sydney has made a contribution worth \$10 million.

These agreements phase in funding and program support over 10 years.

The University of NSW has received naming rights to St George’s Terrace, a dedicated community and learning space behind the museum’s historic facade.

## EDITOR'S PICK



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