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Delays to opening of million-dollar museum apartments as Powerhouse ticket prices revealed



Linda Morris
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The opening of 30 serviced apartments built on the top floor of the Powerhouse Parramatta and fitted out at a cost of more than $3 million has been delayed, and the landmark feature will remain closed when the flagship museum admits its first public visitors on November 7.
The museum confirmed the setback, as admission fees were quietly dropped on its website for the largest of the five public exhibitions, with a family of four to be charged $60 for entry to the 33-room aerospace show *Task Eternal*.



Powerhouse Parramatta billboard advertising in Paddington STEVEN SIEWERT

While children aged 16 years and younger are free, adult tickets will cost $30 each and concessions $20 under the new ticket structure. The same family of four will be up for an extra $40 to experience James Turrell's colour and sensory-distorting installation, *Shangrila (Over the Hump)*. All other shows are free entry.

By comparison, adult entry to the Art Gallery of NSW's major survey of Sidney Nolan is $35 per adult and the Australian Museum's *Bloodsuckers* is $24.

Asked if the pricing represented value for money in a cost of living crisis the museum said general admission to Powerhouse Parramatta was free, as were four of its five opening exhibitions.

"Across the 23-day Opening Festival, 65 per cent of the 179 events are free. Children under 16 can visit *Task Eternal* free of charge. For families choosing to visit *Task Eternal*, a ticket for two adults and two children under 16 is $60. A combined family ticket for *Task Eternal* and the James Turrell experience is $100. Ticket prices have been benchmarked against comparable offerings at local and national cultural institutions."



Render of the dining room of The Residence, sitting among 30 studio apartments.
POWERHOUSE

The new leadership team of acting chief executive officer Abbie Galvin and Louise Herron are rushing to deliver the billion-dollar project without chief executive Lisa Havilah, who has been stood aside as she and one other executive defend allegations around procurement and governance as part of a formal misconduct investigation.

The studios and offices for staff, on levels 7 and 6 respectively, of the west wing will open in the first quarter of 2027 as a “staged activation of non-public facing facilities” and a “planned, standard approach for a project of this scale” to support opening operations, the museum said.

“The residences remain an important part of the Powerhouse program and will be available in the new year. Our immediate priority is delivering the best possible public experience for the thousands of visitors coming through the doors when Powerhouse Parramatta opens,” Galvin said.

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“It’s simply a matter of sequencing – right now, our focus is on the public opening and delivering an experience everyone can enjoy. In the meantime, we’ll continue to arrange accommodation for visiting artists and collaborators as needed. The Lang Walker Family Academy overnight school program remains unchanged.”

The academy will be fully operational with the first of 10,000 children attending an inaugural program of nights at the museum. On any given night, the Lang Walker Family Academy will sleep 60 teachers and their students.

The residences’ concept was locked into the 2019 business case, contracted with builder Lendlease, and endorsed by both the Perrottet and Minns governments. It forms a unique cornerstone of Havilah’s long-standing vision for a commercially porous and 24-hour activated museum building. Other international museums like the Louvre have the odd overnight sleeping quarters but none have been purposely built and embedded into a museum’s program offering.

As revealed by this masthead, the studios have been fitted to hotel standard and involved hiring a high-profile interior designer ($278,000), 40 custom rugs costing roughly $4000 apiece, several bespoke designer piece

furnishings commissioned at a cost of $175,406 and $2 million for customised wardrobes and bedheads.

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Their design features were the subject of a recent photo shoot for *Vogue Australia*, publication of which has been put on pause.

Under the residences program, visiting artists, designers, and researchers are to reside on-site short-term, tutoring young overnighting students and conducting talks and demonstrations. The cost of their stay is to be covered by corporate sponsorship.

The largest of the rooms is listed as a venue hire opportunity and comes with its own kitchen and bathroom facilities and is said to be ideal for intimate VIP events, meetings, launches and long-table lunches or dinners.

To support the residences program, the Powerhouse under Havilah's vision established a quasi-commercial hotel apparatus inside the public museum.

Each room is a fully serviced private suite equipped with digital access, individual climate control, private en suites, and in-room kitchenettes or catering.

Operations are to include 24/7 concierge support, regular room cleaning, managed towel and linen services, kitchen maintenance, and regular maintenance.

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