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Media Release
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POWERHOUSE PARRAMATTA OPENING FESTIVAL PROGRAM

A special twenty-three-day Powerhouse Parramatta Opening Festival will feature a veteran astronaut, an acclaimed industrial designer and local Western Sydney acts performing.

Across three weeks and four weekends in November, Powerhouse Parramatta's Opening Festival program features 179 events ranging across First Nations culture; space, science, technology and transport; design, architecture, music, food and film.

Sixty-five percent of the opening program events are free, and all people under sixteen years old will receive free entry for all exhibitions.

The Museum will open seven days a week and during the opening festival the museum will stay open until 9pm on Thursday to Sunday. Mondays to Wednesday the museum will open 10am to 5pm.

Developed in collaboration with Western Sydney communities and running across November, audiences will enjoy programs featuring leading Australian and international innovators, thinkers, creatives and artists, sharing new works, bold ideas, and immersive contemporary experiences.

Highlights from the 179-event program include:

Space, science, technology and transport:

- **Charles F. Bolden Jr.:** Veteran astronaut and former 12th NASA administrator reflects on a lifetime of leadership in space exploration
- **Off Earth:** A conversation with space architect Melodie Yashar, artist and engineer Xin Liu, spacesuit developer Kiriti Rambhatla and artist Tavares Strachan about living in space.
- **Ted Chiang:** Internationally acclaimed science fiction author Ted Chiang, whose short story Tower of Babylon inspired the design of the Task Eternal exhibition, talks on the pleasures and perils of the pursuit of immortality.

- **New Tech Entrepreneurs:** Ideas to spark change: Hear from leading tech entrepreneurs about emerging technologies that are changing the world, from bio-manufacturing and space technologies to AI medical diagnostics.
- **Historic trains and buses:** On the historic opening weekend, visitors can travel aboard steam trains and vintage buses operating on November 7 and 8, to celebrate the opening. The NSW Railway Band will welcome train travelers with a performance at Parramatta station.

Western Sydney collaborators:

- **The Pride:** Jin Wu Koon unveils The Pride, a major new commission featuring bespoke lion and dragon dance costumes and a celebratory performance for the opening.
- **Matavai Pacific Cultural Arts:** a major new performance by a collective of Pacific community groups that uses the power of Pacific artistry and ceremony to open the new Powerhouse Parramatta and reveal the newly commissioned Te Waka Whakakotahi (a Maori watercraft) and Pacific weaving mats.
- **Pasifika Film Festival:** inspiring Pasifika creatives working across all aspects of film and digital media to explore links to their culture, the annual festival showcases scripted and documentary films across short and feature length formats, animation, music videos and digital installation works.

Design, music and performance:

- **Marc Newson:** Internationally acclaimed Australian industrial designer, Marc Newson reflects on his four decades of influential design.
- **Come Home Again:** Over 11 nights, British artist Es Devlin presents her large-scale installation featuring hand-drawn depictions of endangered species from NSW and live choral performances by Western Sydney choir River City Voices, intercultural singer collective Barayagal, and Noqu Vanua, led by Sydney Chamber Opera.
- **A Swell of Stars, and Gather Up Your World in One Long Breath: S**. Shakthidharan's award winning memoir Gather Up Your World In One Long Breath is reimagined in a series of large scale, communal workshops and performances.
- **Diwali Day Party:** a celebration of the sounds, dances and community practices that connect South Asian communities across Western Sydney.

First Nations:

- **Jannawi:** Through dance, song and storytelling, Jannawi Dance Clan and collaborators will officially welcome audiences to Country and to the Powerhouse Parramatta site.
- **Eseli's Story:** For the first time outside of the Torres Strait Islands, 44 male dancers and 8 singers and musicians from Badu Island will perform a story dance inspired by childhood memories of watching World War II fighter planes taking off from Ngurapai (Horn Island).
- **Aunt Beryl Van-Oploo OA & Sharon Winsor:** Respected Gamilaroi Elder, cookbook author and founder of Yaama Barrgay Catering, Aunty

Beryl Van-Oploo OAM, and Ngemba Weilwan woman Sharon Winsor, founder of native food and botanicals venture Indigiearth, join with Julie Gibbs for a discussion shaped by shared knowledge, connection and cultural continuity.

There is also a strong program for families and young people, ranging from family friendly events on the weekend, to a special school summit with local Parramatta primary and high school students.

The Opening Festival runs from 7 – 29 November, the full program is available here.

Minister for the Arts, John Graham said, "This expansive Opening Program offers 179 opportunities to come and explore the new museum, the bold ideas, the brilliant creativity of Western Sydney.

"It's a great way to ease pressure on the budget as the majority of events are free.

"Opening late Thursday through Sunday during the Opening Festival will allow communities across Sydney time to come and explore the museum and its exhibitions; listen to great talks, performances; or simply enjoy the waterfront, gardens and summer evenings."

Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts, Julia Finn said, "The opening of Powerhouse Parramatta will be a huge celebration for the people of Western Sydney.

"Looking at this program, I feel a great sense of excitement. This is a world class program, and it features 51% of collaborators from Western Sydney."

Member for Parramatta, Donna Davis said, "November is going to be one big month-long celebration in Parramatta, as people explore the new Powerhouse, its free programs, beautiful and thoughtfully designed community collaborations and ceremonies, and late-night opening four nights a week!

"The opening signals to Australia, and the world that Western Sydney is home to a bold new contemporary cultural destination."

Powerhouse Interim CEO, Abbie Galvin said, "The Powerhouse Parramatta Opening Festival Program is a celebration of local Western Sydney communities, industries in the applied arts and sciences, and education.

"The team have worked so hard to deliver this extraordinary program. It's full of passion for Western Sydney, for science, creativity, and culture. I would like to thank the whole team, and over 1,200 collaborators who are contributing to this twenty-three-day celebration."

Western Sydney University Executive Dean, Faculty of Engineering, Computing, and Science and Task Eternal industry advisor, Professor Brian Falzon said, "Powerhouse Parramatta creates an extraordinary opportunity to connect the next generation with engineering, science and the ideas shaping our future.

“Bringing universities, industry and the community together through programs such as making Task Eternal opens up conversations about how technology and human ingenuity can tackle some of the biggest questions of our time.”

Powerhouse Parramatta Waka Project Manager Jannike Seiuli said, “Te Waka Whakakotahi - The Waka of Unity - has been created through a remarkable collaboration between artists, cultural practitioners and communities, with each contribution carrying its own story and cultural meaning.
“For those of us who were involved in Sydney’s first waka build more than two decades ago, this project has been a very special full-circle moment. We are proud to share a new waka that honours cultural knowledge while creating something for the generations who will follow.

“When Te Waka Whakakotahi is revealed at Powerhouse Parramatta in November, we hope people see not only the waka itself, but the many hands, voices and communities that came together to create it.”

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ABOUT POWERHOUSE

Powerhouse sits at the intersection of arts, design, science and technology and plays a critical role in engaging communities with contemporary ideas and issues. We are undertaking a landmark $1.2 billion infrastructure renewal program, spearheaded by the creation of the new museum, Powerhouse Parramatta; expanded research and public facilities at Powerhouse Castle Hill; the renewal of the iconic Powerhouse Ultimo; and the ongoing operation of Sydney Observatory. The museum is custodian to over half a million objects of national and international significance and is considered one of the finest and most diverse collections in Australia. We are also undertaking an expansive digitisation project that will provide new levels of access to the Powerhouse Collection(opens in new tab).