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Ryan Kwan
Alexi Demetriadi

The transformation of a Parramatta carpark into the largest public cultural institution in Australia outside Sydney is tipped to inspire a new wave of creativity and economic growth.

More than 20,000 people are expected to pass through the doors of the $915 million Powerhouse Parramatta – the largest museum in NSW history – for its launch weekend starting today.

It is already wowing visitors. Ryde mother and daughter Sascha and Chloe Bennett, 8, had a preview this week of the vast number of ways the delights awaiting up Powerhouse exhibitions, spanning fashion, aviation, exploration, local icons, indigenous culture and interactive kids displays.

Chloe joined friends in the immersive "colour room", a few with curved walls inviting through a rainbow of hues. A laughing, smiling Chloe then soaked up "The Cosmos", exploring the depths of the and outer-space exhibits, pulling her mother and her.

Bernardo said having the unique institution in Sydney's heart was a win for the community, and children like Chloe, to have fun and "We feel very proud of the (Powerhouse Parramatta) is so close to home and so accessible".



Western Sydney's Zico Gonsalves, Felicity Castagna, and Amar Singh. Picture: Justin Lloyd

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Parramatta record shop owner Peter Curnovic – depicted in The Mail – said: "I loved (The Mall), lots of nostalgia and deep history of our area. I'm honoured to be a part of it."

Western Sydney champion and Turbans 4 Australia founder Amar Singh, also celebrated in the exhibition, called the opening a boon for Parramatta and a "great for Western Sydney".

"This is the heart and hub of Sydney," Mr Singh said. "More people should be able to create locally, rather than having to drive out."

Parramatta writer Felicity Castagna did profiles on those in The Mall, saying it "has helped me understand the area even more".

Local Zico Gonsalves is shown proposing to his wife in The Mall: "When I found out I was sharing my story I was very emotional."

NSW Arts Minister John Graham called it "the largest cultural infrastructure project since the Opera House" and "equally significant".

"The opening of the Opera House was controversial. At the time, some said it was too expensive. But it became a symbol for our city and our nation. Powerhouse Parramatta will become a similar symbol of the rising confidence and cultural contribution of the west," he said.

Powerhouse Parramatta CEO Abbie Galvin said it would be transformational for Parramatta, and Western Sydney was "already humming with energy, culture, music, food, cutting edge tech and arts".

"Rather than generating something, it's supporting a culture already there."

It was a result of "sustained advocacy" by Western Sydney business and community groups, she said.

The Daily Telegraph's Fair Go for The West campaign was instrumental in the Powerhouse development, with NSW Premier Chris Minns giving "credit" to a Mike Baird-led Liberal government for starting work.

"This is a huge moment for Western Sydney. This is about having massive cultural institutions across our city – people in the west deserve world-class culture and infrastructure," he said.

Minister for Western Sydney Prue Car called it an historic milestone. "Alongside the new Western Sydney Airport and the Metro West project, this museum will cement Western Sydney as a global destination, and inspire the region's future scientists, designers and engineers."

The Powerhouse's Ultimo site is undergoing a $300m revitalisation.

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Designer Es Devlin, with installations for her exhibition The Turning at Powerhouse Parramatta, says the museum will put Parramatta on the world map. Picture: Richard Dobson

NEWS 07



"It's going to help Parramatta become a global destination"
Es Devlin
Artist

Shining on global stage

Alexi Demetriadi

A world-renowned artist who collaborated with superstars Lady Gaga and Miley Cyrus declares Powerhouse Parramatta unlike anything she has seen, predicting the "ambitious" museum would cement Western Sydney as a "global destination".

Visible from across the Parramatta River, and nestled between the Powerhouse's two imposing exoskeleton buildings, is Es Devlin's Come Home Again – an egg-shaped structure ornately filled with the state's diverse wildlife.

At sunset, it fills the darkening sky with a golden glow.

"(The museum) is going to form a cultural meeting point globally, and I think it's going to help Parramatta become a global destination.

"The scale and the ambition and the imagination – not only of the building, but also the materials, and programming – I have never come across this level of ambition," she said.

"Parramatta is a special place... and the scale of (the Powerhouse) is like nothing I've ever been a part of before."

Six installations make up Devlin's debut exhibition in Australia, and the museum.

Called the The Turning, it is inspired by the history of Parramatta and its surrounds, but also the river and wildlife, as well as Indigenous Australians and Australia's now-diverse diasporas.

"It's a great privilege to be invited to be part of the inaugural set of works for this amazing building," she said.



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HOW TO GET THERE

When making your way to Powerhouse Parramatta, public transport is king. The ambitious museum in the heart of Parramatta is connected to one of the largest public transport hubs in NSW. Visitors can get there by train, light rail, bus or ferry when it opens in 2025. Parramatta Station is a 10-minute walk from the museum by Sydney Trains and regional services. Howarth Care is the closest port for NSW Ferries transport. Mountain Central is a 15-minute walk from the museum. Visitors...

Years of blood, sweat, tears, 4000

Alexi Demetriadi

Sydney's most-unique structure since the Opera House has been seven years in the making, many years of planning prior, cost $915m, and employed 4000 construction workers for a staggering 2.7 million hours of work.

Powerhouse Parramatta finally opens today after four years of construction to become the latest – and grandest – jewel in Western Sydney's crown. Its launch comes hot on the heels of the newly-opened Western Sydney International Airport and before a new Metro links the area with the CBD.

The Saturday Telegraph has crunched the numbers on the data underpinning the mammoth effort behind Powerhouse Parramatta, with more than 60 per cent of the expected 26,000 people across its opening weekend coming from Western Sydney.

A festival coinciding with the launch this month features 179 events.

Construction started with a first sod turn in June 2022, on land bought by the state government three years prior.

The exoskeleton shell hugging the museum's two adjoining buildings started in April 2023, with construction finished exactly three years later.

Since the land was purchased, about 4000 construction workers have supported the project across seven years.

In the years before today's opening, more than 400 museum staff worked on ensuring each exhibition was ready to go, with 3000 objects now on display.

workers, 2.7m hours and $915m later

The biggest is an 8400kg F1 spacerocket while the smallest is a pea, specimen preserved from 1882.

The oldest volunteer is 100-year-old Meg Stevenson, who has volunteered with the Powerhouse at Ultimo for 30 years. The youngest are four-year-olds Theodore Bui, Jason Cilia and Tyler Pham Luu, who donated an array of toys.

Powerhouse Parramatta head of collection Lucy Clark said bringing in, moving and conserving the thousands of object had been a team effort.

"There's a huge range of things involved in getting objects ready for exhibition," she said.

"Some of the engines (in one exhibition) have had at least 100 hours of conservation cleaning and treatment. We've got expert mount-making teams, who've made custom mounts (to move objects)."

Ms Clark said it was a mix of sweat, tears and smiles to get the museum ready.

"There's a huge range of things involved to get these projects ready for exhibition – hours of conservation work and cleaning, and that's not even including the logistics."

Collection logistics manager Charnn Watts said some pieces weighed "serious tonnage" with a huge team effort to get a Qantas 747 engine in place.

"We've been able to get things by the millimetre into position – and you'll see that accuracy in all the displays. I feel incredibly proud.

"It's hard sometimes for people to really understand what our role is.

"But as soon as they see our exhibition, they'll realise the scale ... It's wonderful to share it with them."



Lucy Clark and