

Parramatta project: questions of ownership, management and development procedure

Grace Cochrane, 29 October, 2017

In mid-October, 2017, a position was advertised for a 'Senior Development Officer: Museum Expert' in Parramatta. See: [AdDevManagerOct2017](#) also noted in 25 October, in <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/find-out-more/a-news-chronology/>

It was discovered shortly after that the City of Parramatta Council had placed the advertisement, but the circumstances remained unclear.

For all those waiting in anticipation for the report on the Upper House Inquiry into Museums and Galleries, and for the extended business plan to be completed regarding the future of the Powerhouse Museum, it was a shock to see that such a position had already been advertised to 'take the lead for the development and delivery of a major \$700m Museum development project', for a client described as 'a private development team within a larger corporate'.

As far as we all knew there were no published decisions about exactly what is proposed for Parramatta, or what is proposed for the Ultimo site of the existing Museum.

Then, on 27 October, Craig Limkin, Executive Director, Cultural Infrastructure Program Management Office, who is managing the government office for the 'new MAAS Museum', confirmed that:

We thought it important to look into the source of the job advertisements when we became aware of them so we could address and answer queries from the community. I can confirm that the NSW Government is not responsible for the recent job adverts managed by Capstone Recruitment for Senior Development Managers for a Theatre and Museum. Nor has the Government held any discussions with property developers in relation to this matter.

We understand that the advertisements were placed by the City of Parramatta Council. The Council advised us that they reviewed their personnel needs and commenced recruiting two Senior Development Managers to assist the Council in relation to the new museum and the redevelopment of the theatre.

In regard to the extended business case for a new museum in Western Sydney and consideration of an arts and cultural precinct in Ultimo, this work is underway and due for completion this year. The NSW Government at the 29 August Museum and Galleries Inquiry Hearing strongly encouraged the committee to conclude its work and report so that the Government can consider its recommendations as part of its decision-making process. To date, the report has not been completed.

Questions of authority and process:

As we understand that the actual details of a proposed Parramatta museum are still being negotiated, the question remains, who then has the authority to advertise for positions (and set up contracts) associated with the development of the museum, within this more complex ownership/management arrangement between state and local government?

Background:

The following extracts from 'City of Parramatta: culture and our city' provides a City of Parramatta Council summary of the agreement made between the NSW state government and the Council about the sale of the riverside property and its future ownership, development and use.

'City of Parramatta: culture and our city' (undated, August, 2017)

<https://www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/culture-and-our-city>

'... City of Parramatta Council and the NSW Government have signed a Heads of Agreement (or contract) for Council's Riverbank site and to create a new cultural precinct on the Parramatta River.

The precinct will include the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS), an enlarged and enhanced Riverside Theatres and a new pedestrian bridge across the River. All of which will be underpinned by \$40 million to deliver Council's 2017-2021 Cultural Plan.

Under the Agreement, the NSW Government will build a new world class, flagship Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (Powerhouse) by the Parramatta River. The new Museum will be built on Riverbank, a site otherwise known to locals as the old David Jones carpark site and is anticipated to open in 2022. \$100 million will be invested to enlarge and enhance the Riverside Theatres Council has used the Agreement to leverage proceeds of its land sale to fund the construction of an enlarged and upgraded Riverside Theatres on the current theatre site.... Further, Council will retain ownership of the Riverside Theatres land.

The Riverbank site is being sold for \$140 million, which is in line with Council's commercial valuations of the land.

Council acquired the site for around \$40 million of cash and through a negotiated agreement with a developer. In the Heads of Agreement, Council has agreed that \$100 million of the proceeds will be invested in the enhanced Riverside Theatres. Council has agreed it will invest the remaining cash of \$40 million to implement the Cultural Plan over the next 20 years.

What if the NSW Government does not proceed with the new museum?

The Council is entering this Agreement because it is committed to bringing a world class museum to Parramatta. Under the Heads of Agreement, the NSW Government has committed to the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum or to the establishment of a major new cutting edge science and innovation museum to be operated by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences which will be its flagship campus. If the Museum does not proceed, the Riverbank site will stay in Council's ownership and the Agreement will lapse.'

The Council paper refers, among others, to the July 2017 report by Deloitte: *Review of the Heads of Agreement between City of Parramatta Council and the NSW Government to establish an arts and cultural precinct City of Parramatta Council*, Thursday, 27 July 2017

<https://www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/sites/council/files/inline-files/Deloitte%20Review%20of%20Proposed%20Arrangement%20between%20COPC%20NSW%20Government.pdf>