

Power play for Parra arts hub

Plan for \$100m theatre upgrade

EXCLUSIVE
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A \$100 million upgrade of Parramatta's Riverside Theatre will be undertaken in a bid to appease critics upset about a possible backflip on moving the entire Powerhouse Museum to Sydney's heartland.

There was speculation last night that only part of the Powerhouse would be moved to the new site — which was once the car park of Parramatta's David Jones store. Sources confirmed that was likely the case, with cabinet to consider the matter within the next two months. But Arts Minister Don Harwin denied any decision had been made saying: "The government's position has not changed."

Mr Harwin is understood to be lobbying, however, for funding for the long-awaited upgrade of the Riverside Theatre — a key aim of The

Daily Telegraph's Project Sydney — that would take it up to a 1500-seat venue.

2GB broadcaster Alan Jones and key members of the Powerhouse Museum board have lobbied the government to keep the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences at Ultimo.

Mr Harwin has confirmed it is possible some of the museum might remain at Ultimo, but he has not committed to that. Former Premier Mike Baird and then Arts Minister Troy Grant promised a \$1 billion relocation of the entire Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta in 2014.

It is understood the relocation will be kept under \$1 billion. Opposition Leader Luke Foley has described anything less than a full relocation of the museum as a slap

in face for Western Sydney.

In a parliamentary inquiry into museums in June, Mr Harwin said: "The future of the Ultimo site is entirely part, and always has been, of the business case process."

He said of its relocation: "It is something I believe Western Sydney well and truly deserves. This takes time and proper planning and the team is working closely with the City of Parramatta council to ensure that the museum forms part of a cohesive rejuvenation of their central business district as well."

"It is the Government's policy to move the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences to Parramatta." But he stressed it was a "proposal".



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