

## SCOOP

# Very big night at museum

CLARISSA BYE

*Daily Telegraph*

**POWERHOUSE** Museum staff were drunk and slurping French champagne "in the presence of white powder" at a "debauched" party after a swanky fundraiser at the inner city venue last month, parliament has heard.

Arts Minister Don Harwin has demanded answers from museum CEO Dolla Merrillees after allegations were raised in Parliament yesterday that prominent employees were involved in the wild celebrations.

Model Jesinta Franklin and Foreign Minister Julie Bishop were among the guests at the first ever "MAAS Fashion Ball" attended by 300 celebrities on

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# Claims a big blight on the museum

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February 1. Ms Bishop and other identities attended the ball but were not present at the after-party which is the subject of the allegations.

Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party MLC Robert Borsak told Parliament he had been informed that on the night of the event senior security personnel attended the upstairs executive offices at the museum to investigate a noise complaint.

"Security staff observed several prominent museum staff intoxicated, drinking Moët and Chandon in the presence of a white powder," said Mr

Borsak, who is chairing a parliamentary inquiry into the government's plan to move the museum to Parramatta.

He asked **Julie Bishop.** Mr Harwin if he would refer the incident to the police and whether members of the museum's senior executive team were among those present.

Mr Harwin took the question on notice, and his office later told The Daily Telegraph he had no knowledge of the alleged incident.

"The minister has requested a full report into the incident from the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences director and chief executive officer," his office said in a statement.

Mr Borsak said he was concerned about reports of illicit drug use and wanted to ensure the security guards involved were not targeted for "blowing the whistle on this debauchery", adding: "Taxpayers want value for money when they fund arts projects, not the sort of self-centred largesse that's alleged here."

The museum code of conduct states staff "must not be under the influence or in possession of ... a substance that is illegal to possess ... and must not work whilst under the influence of alcohol."

