

27 April, 2018

'Powerhouse Museum move despite missing business case'

Stacy Thomas, *Parramatta Advertiser*

THE Powerhouse Museum is moving to Parramatta and the State Government is expected to announce full details of the plan in days.

The business case for the relocation is expected to be part of that announcement, despite it being due yesterday, to comply with a parliamentary order. NSW Opposition Arts Walt Secord labelled the government's refusal to hand over crucial documents as "arrogant" and "contemptuous".

A fortnight ago, majority of the NSW Parliament Upper House ordered the government provide the business case behind the museum's move from its current Ultimo site to the former David Jones car park on the Parramatta River's edge. A return to order was tabled yesterday in Parliament confirming a range of government arms have no documents relating to the business case. Letters from the Premier, Minister for Arts, Planning and Environment Department including Create NSW and Infrastructure NSW offices confirmed none of them hold documents concerning the business case for the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum.

Mr Secord said the move could cost up to \$1 billion. "Either this is a massive cover up or worse, there is no business case at all," Mr Secord said. Mr Secord is seeking urgent legal advice on what measures are available to the NSW Parliament to force the government's hand to comply with the order.

A planetarium is also being considered as part of the Parramatta development. It's understood the western Sydney museum will have a focus on science and technology. But that goes against everything the western Sydney community wants, according to one local group. "Create NSW have still not released the consultation carried out last year in Parramatta of what museum the community want," North Parramatta Residents Action Group (NPRAG) president Suzette Meade said. "I attended and not one resident coveted the Powerhouse Museum from Ultimo. They all called for our own museum and heritage to be celebrated. Why isn't Gladys listening to what the people of western Sydney have told them they want? The State Government own 30 hectares of land containing the national heritage listed female factory and sacred indigenous history just 800 metres away with a proposed light rail stop." Ms Meade said this would make the perfect location to future proof a growing cultural industry in Parramatta. "Why isn't Gladys listening to what the people of western Sydney have told them they want?"

Sydney Business Chamber's Western Sydney Director David Borger said the museum could be the most iconic building in the area. "You're replacing the ugliest building with the best building," he said. "The business case is done, now we can proceed with the design, which should go to a design competition." Mr Borger said offering free entry, like MONA in Tasmania or the National Portrait Gallery in London, was the way forward at the future western Sydney-based museum. "If you want attendance to increase, dropping the fees and making the money via eateries, shopping and other avenues on the site, would help," he said. "And you should have community involvement. This is not the end, this is

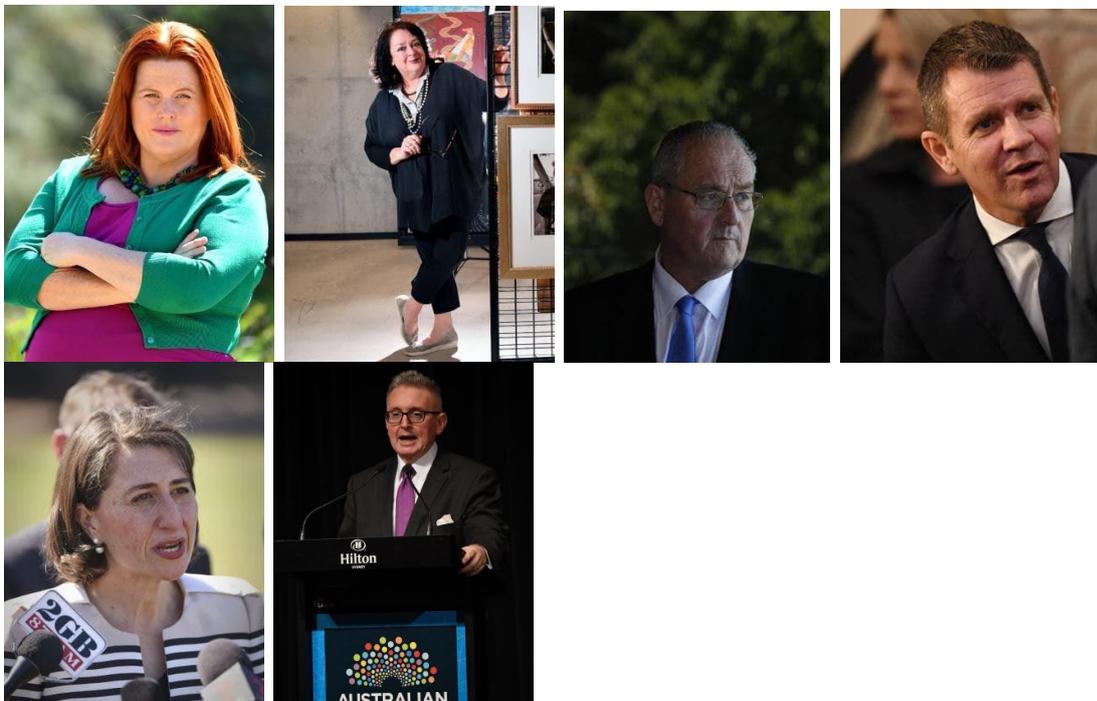
the beginning." Mr Borger said the medical, law and education precincts established in western Sydney were leading the way as great examples. Arts Minister Don Harwin gave evidence at the hearing and said the government was "committed to establishing an iconic, vibrant, interactive, world-class institution in Parramatta". "The NSW government is moving the Powerhouse to Parramatta and we are proud to be giving families in Western Sydney greater access to one of the city's great cultural icons," a spokesman for Arts Minister Don Harwin said this week.

Wendy Harmer on ABC breakfast radio this morning refused to read out Don Harwin's three-sentence statement saying she "wasn't his copy girl". People took to Twitter congratulating the presenter. "Good on you Wendy Harmer for not reading out govt spin. Let them do their own dirty work," one said.

Further to the Powerhouse Museum move, an Upper House committee inquiry into museums and galleries will hold its public hearing on May 28 with the former Premier Mike Baird due to give evidence. Another hearing will be held on June 1 for Mr Baird's former chief of staff Bay Warburton. Mr Baird made announced the museum relocation while in power back in 2015.

Committee Chair and Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party's Robert Borsak said the government had tried to keep the details secret during the 18-month inquiry. "The public has a right to know why," he said. "I am baffled by the extreme lengths the government appears to be taking to hide this decision from public scrutiny." Mr Borsak said the relocation announcement was made before a preliminary business case, including the cost and rationale, had been prepared.

The Advertiser has contacted Premier Gladys Berejiklian's office, the office of western Sydney Minister Stuart Ayres and Parramatta Liberal state MP Geoff Lee's office for comment. We're yet to hear back.



<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/parramatta/powerhouse-museum-move-despite-missing-business-case/news-story/0a3edb3788f0c0fb932afc069d17d2cb>