

Moving Sydney's Powerhouse Museum: apartments for old site



A digital impression of the new Powerhouse museum planned for Parramatta in Sydney's middle west.

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ANDREW CLENNELL



NSW Political Editor
Sydney
@aclennell

More than 100 apartments will be built where the Powerhouse Museum now stands in order to help fund the \$645 million move of the museum to Parramatta.

The Australian has learned that in order to help facilitate the controversial move from inner-city Ultimo to Parramatta in Sydney's west, the NSW government will look to rezone the site and build apartments, as well as keep a cultural space on site.

State cabinet on Thursday approved Premier Gladys Berejiklian's plan to move the museum but not without some concerns raised.

The Australian understands among those to raise concerns with Ms Berejiklian in cabinet were Health Minister Brad Hazzard and Education Minister Rob Stokes.

The Premier and Treasurer Dominic Perrottet are also understood to have been initially very concerned the cost of the project might balloon past \$1 billion but are happier with what has emerged after the work of Arts Minister Don Harwin.

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Move 'missing business case' ANDREW CLENNELL

The government was to announce on Saturday that early work on the new museum would begin in 2019 and the venue was expected to open to visitors in 2023.



A digital impression of the planetarium at the proposed Powerhouse museum at Parramatta

“It will be bigger and better than anything NSW has ever seen and will rival global cultural icons such as the London Science Museum and the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum,” Ms Berejiklian said.

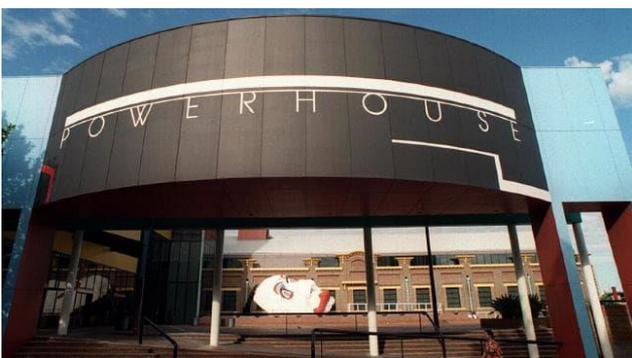
“It is so important that young people are excited and inspired by science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics because the jobs of tomorrow will rely heavily on these disciplines.

“This is a clear demonstration of the NSW Government’s commitment to western Sydney.”

The Australian revealed earlier this month that the benefit cost ratio of the project has been put at about 1.1 — only just in the black.

The benefit-cost ratio (BCR) for the project is still higher than that of the government’s two stadium rebuilds — with the \$729m knockdown and rebuild of Allianz Stadium put at 0.94 and the \$810m refurbishment of ANZ Stadium at Sydney Olympic Park given a 0.8 BCR.

None of the three business cases were shown to state cabinet as ministers made their decisions.



The entrance to the Powerhouse Museum at Ultimo in Sydney.

The government requires a project’s BCR to be greater than one in order to access funds from its Restart NSW fund, where the proceeds of asset sales such as the electricity poles and wires and Land and Property Information Service go.

The government has already spent more than \$100m buying a site on the banks of the Parramatta River to build the new museum, amid warnings the area is flood-prone.

Opposition Leader Luke Foley earlier this month did a backflip on the Powerhouse's move, after previously championing the movement of the centre to western Sydney.

But western Sydney lobby groups have fought hard to keep Ms Berejiklian to former premier Mike Baird's promise to move the museum.

Mr Baird is set to appear before an upper-house committee examining the museum move next month.

The museum will include "NSW's first major planetarium", which will be the largest of its type in Australia at more than 30 metres wide. It is also believed a live theatre is planned.