

6 April 2018

Re: Powerhouse Museum

The Berejiklian government is making a dreadful mistake in dismantling the Powerhouse Museum. Good governments build on the museum legacy of previous generations, expanding museum opportunities for the *whole* community. No credible business case can justify the \$1.2b cost of 'moving' the PHM just 23ks west to Parramatta for no net increase in cultural facilities.

We write as former trustees, benefactors and museum leaders to ask you to stop this scheme to dismember the Powerhouse Museum (PHM) at Ultimo. It will mean the break-up of Australia's only applied arts and sciences museum, founded in 1880, and redeveloped in 1988 in a Sulman award-winning museum, with state of the art facilities that are the envy of comparable museums around the world. The Museum has been in Ultimo since 1893, where it anchors an education and creative precinct reaching students across NSW. This role will cease if the Powerhouse Museum is moved. It is incomprehensible that a civilised government would close a major state museum and evict it from its purpose-built home which is readily accessible to visitors from across Sydney, NSW and the world.

This is not about building a new museum in Parramatta, which is universally supported. But the community does not accept the proposition that the government can't afford to open a new museum in Parramatta without closing the PHM in Ultimo. The obvious solution is a Smithsonian for NSW, a concept that we endorse. The Smithsonian has never closed one of its museums in the guise of meeting contemporary cultural aspirations; nor should NSW. Would the UK government close the V&A to open a new museum at Olympic Park, or close Tate Britain to open Tate Modern? It is a preposterous notion - and so is closing the Powerhouse Museum.

The Powerhouse Museum has been run into the ground. Uncertainty around the Museum's future has seen a dramatic collapse in donations to the collection, declining sponsorship, a flight of expert staff, and a deficit last year of \$10m. There has been a profound breach of trust with the Museum's visitors, donors and supporters. Longstanding benefactors have changed their wills. Former Powerhouse Museum donors are now gifting their significant collections to museums in Canberra, Melbourne and even Adelaide. At this low point, just 30 years after the Powerhouse Museum's triumphant opening, the government has put the endowment of generations of donors to the Museum at risk, thereby threatening the lifeblood of any museum - community confidence and philanthropy.

If conservative governments stand for anything it is conserving and safeguarding the legacy of previous generations.

Do members of the Berejiklian government really believe that the closure of a major state museum is consistent with conservative values?

Yours sincerely

Nicholas G Pappas AM
Trustee 1999 - 2010, President 2003 - 2010, Powerhouse Museum

For and on behalf of the Powerhouse Museum Alliance
<https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/>; 11,000 signatories to the petition presented to NSW Parliament, 25 Feb 2016; 178 signatories to the PMA's 17 Feb 2016 open letter; authors of the 133 submissions to the Upper House Inquiry who oppose the Powerhouse move - representing 94% of all the submissions about the Powerhouse; countless museum visitors and supporters from across NSW; and followers of Save the Powerhouse.