

TURNED TO ASH



Scrap Powerhouse move, use money for fires: NSW Labor

SPENDING
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The NSW Labor opposition has urged the Premier to abandon plans for the \$1 billion-plus relocation of Sydney's Powerhouse Museum and redirect the funds to the bushfire crisis and longer-term drought management and fire resilience.

Labor leader Jodi McKay criticised the decision to press ahead with the relocation of the museum to Parramatta as an "indulgent use of taxpayer funds".

"Spending at least \$1.5 billion to move a museum is a colossal indulgence at any time - but especially when the state is burning and in



drought, and our volunteer firefighters don't have respirators.

"Parramatta deserves a cultural facility, but this could be delivered at a fraction of the price while respecting local heritage."

Ms McKay's comments come

days after the NSW government unveiled the winning design for the new museum, which the opposition branded a "monstrosity on stilts".

Premier Gladys Berejiklian declined to comment.

However, NSW Rural Fire Ser-

vice Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons has previously defended the organisation's level of resourcing.

"We have got more money today than we have ever had before in the history of the organisation," Mr Fitzsimmons said last month, dismissing as "rubbish" Labor's claims the RFS budget had been cut.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that, while NSW was responsible for the operational response to the bushfires, the RFS would "continue to get everything they need from the Commonwealth".

"This is a time when Australia should be very, very proud that we have the best resourced, most co-ordinated, best equipped fire services of any nation on earth to deal

with this," Mr Morrison said at a press conference at the RFS headquarters in Homebush yesterday.

The NSW government has put the "net cost" of the Powerhouse Museum move at \$645 million, but this is estimated to be \$1.179 billion

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once land purchase and moving operations are factored in.

A NSW upper house inquiry in 2017 estimated the plan could cost up to \$1.5 billion. A revised business case is due to be presented to cabinet in 2020 for a creative industries precinct at Ultimo when the museum vacates the site.