

Parramatta: Powerhouse Museum relocation inquiry

A fresh inquiry into the State Government’s relocation of the Powerhouse Museum has been labelled a witch-hunt while others have welcomed it.

Joanne Vella, Parramatta Advertiser

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An artist’s impression of the Powerhouse Museum Parramatta.

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- [Berejiklian snubs questions about Willow Grove](#)

A fresh inquiry into the State Government’s \$1.5 billion relocation of the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta has polarised the community.

The Greens and Labor have backed the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers’ Party motion to launch the inquiry.

Greens MP David Shoebridge said the inquiry was made more urgent after the recent floods at the proposed new \$645 million Powerhouse site.

“We need to ensure the safety of the Powerhouse’s priceless collection and it really does beggar belief that the government is proposing to place it beside a river on a flood plain,” he said.



The design for the Powerhouse Museum at Parramatta.

“We will also be passing a close eye over the proposed budget given the billion dollar cost overruns that almost every infrastructure project has faced under the Coalition.”

Mr Shoebridge said the community’s campaign was also a key reason for maintaining scrutiny.

“There is a compelling case for Parramatta to have its own world class cultural institution that responds to its unique history from First Nations, to invasion and colonisation and the vibrant surge of migrants in the post war period,” Mr Shoebridge said.

In December, Moreau Kusunoki and Genton were chosen to design the first major museum in western Sydney.



Heritage-listed Willow Grove.

Opposition arts spokesman Walt Secord described the design as a “monstrosity on stilts”.

The design also spells the demolition of heritage-listed Willow Grove and St George’s Terrace at Phillip St. North Parramatta Residents’ Action Group welcomed the inquiry particularly about the demolition of 1870s Italianate villa Willow Grove and St George’s Terrace.

“NPRAG is very pleased to hear further scrutiny into the Powerhouse Museum debacle is starting soon,” spokeswoman Suzette Meade said.



The Powerhouse Parramatta



would be built on a flood plain.
Its lattice pattern was also described as a milk crate.

“For years NPRAG has said wrong museum, wrong location.

“Heritage destruction, flood issues, size constraints and no consultation with the community about our cultural needs – Parramatta Council and its residents deserve a much better deal from Gladys Berejikian than the one the administrator left us with.

“It’s becoming clearer that we are being robbed and NPRAG, along with organisations from all over greater Sydney will be taking part in this inquiry to make sure Parramatta gets the best.”

But Western Sydney Business Chamber executive director David Borger objected to the inquiry.

“The upper house inquiry has become a witch-hunt against western Sydney and the development of arts and culture,” he said.

“These politicians need to ... support the people of western Sydney’s access arts and culture.”

Mr Borger said while Willow Grove was a “nice building” the museum would offer a “world class cultural institution”.

He said it was natural for modern buildings to replace old structures in growing cities, and pointed to the Opera House, which was built over tram sheds.

“Cue hate mail,” he said.

Parramatta Lord Mayor said the council had “always stressed the importance of the preservation of Willow Grove and St George’s Terrace, and will continue to work with the State Government to explore opportunities for the Powerhouse design to incorporate these heritage sites”.

On December 9, Labor councillor Donna Davis said the council passed its second motion to retain Willow Grove.

“Letters were to be sent to the Premier, Minister Harwin and the local member, Geoff Lee MP,” she said.

“The significance of Willow Grove to our city, our residents, the wider community and future generations is being completely disregarded.

“What is the point of an elected council making a united stand if our requests go on deaf ears time and time again?

“Parramatta needs a world class arts and cultural precinct but we must not achieve this at the expense of our heritage.”