

From: [Bill d'Anthes](#)
To: [DPE CSE Pyrmont Peninsula Mailbox](#)
Subject: The importance of retaining all existing properties of the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo
Date: Monday, 14 September 2020 11:48:46 AM

The Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy places great importance in celebrating our “culture, heritage and connection to country” in Direction 6. Therefore, I submit that we must retain all existing properties of the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo. While there can be other newer branches of the museum established elsewhere, the original museum is integral to its very own “Place Strategy”. It can no more be moved elsewhere than Uluru can be moved to a more convenient location.

Similarly Direction 10 calls for “a collaborative voice” to deliver “A cohesive, agreed approach to bring the best outcome for Pyrmont Peninsula”. In the case of the Powerhouse there is no evidence of this with every logical argument for it remaining intact and in place being dismissed by the Government.

Finally the sub-precinct of Ultimo correctly described as “A place of integration, innovation and creativity” would be denigrating rather than celebrating “Ultimo’s heritage particularly within or adjacent to heritage items and the Harris Street Heritage Conservation Area” by disturbing the Powerhouse properties.

In support of keeping the Ultimo Powerhouse free from Government machinations, I have reprinted my Opening Statement to the Powerhouse Inquiry on Friday 21 August 2020 below:

Sydney nearly lost the Rocks to Stalinist towers in the early 1970s. Almost 50 years later the NSW Government developed new plans for selling and leasing public lands for overdevelopment in Sydney. They decided to flog off the choice land occupied by the Ultimo Powerhouse Museum complex (once described by Lucy Turnbull as one of the “jewels of the cultural necklace” encircling Sydney). The original plan seems not to have gone far beyond just transplanting the contents of the Powerhouse from its home and heritage in Ultimo to some unknown location in Parramatta. Later, it was announced that the new Powerhouse would be built on a site facing the Parramatta River that is considered by many experts to be too small and worse, flood-prone. It was somewhat surprising to me that the Government didn’t back-peddle and instead order the Maritime Museum to be sold up the river on barges to an artificial harbour in the old David Jones Parking Lot. Using the same illogical reasoning, we might expect Parramatta’s Government House to be floated down to Sydney and converted into a high-end function centre on Pinch-gut Island. To get a better idea of how this thought bubble of a project was conceived, I recommend that the Inquiry again watch and listen to the evidence (including the pauses and non answers) given by previous Premier Baird. In this case the fierce expert and public opposition, the findings of this Committee, the context relating to the Powerhouse staying in Ultimo and plain common sense prevailed over political aspirations and Treasury avarice.

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>> However, the Harwood Building is yet to be secured. Some members of the community believe that the bid to grab the entire Powerhouse property in Ultimo was an ambient claim and the Harwood site was and is the major target for the Government and developers. The structure was originally built as tram sheds but also served as the temporary museum while the main Powerhouse Building was being repurposed. It is now used to service the Powerhouse by providing storage, preparation and repair of exhibits. UTS and other hungry developers need to look elsewhere for sites to devour. The Powerhouse Museum needs the Harwood Building.

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>> Parramatta is not a regional city, it is a growing metropolis with its own important perspectives in indigenous, colonial government, agriculture, early European as well as later migration histories. Even the inadequate business case and incomplete community consultation provided by the government did not naturally suggest acquiring the Powerhouse for Parramatta. Like Sydney, Parramatta will have to fight to retain its historic buildings and sites such as the Women’s Factory with the surrounding buildings. All are of undeniable heritage value. These and other buildings are in great need of preservation and defence against a high-rise contamination of their site. All additional cultural possibilities should be investigated with and by the local community. The consultation process should be provided with commensurate funding by Government.

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>> Under the embarrassing circumstances of this whole Powerhouse project and especially after the last NSW State election where pledges were made to the electors of Western Sydney to construct a cultural entity in Parramatta, the NSW Government should fund a cultural project requiring a similar financial investment to the one promised. The expense of moving the Powerhouse from Ultimo to Parramatta should be used instead to fund the required repairs to the Powerhouse as raised during previous sessions of the Inquiry. The Powerhouse

should better promote their recently renovated Powerhouse Discovery Centre in Castle Hill (11 K from Parramatta) and continue to ensure the regular loan and or exchange of exhibits with other smaller museums in NSW.

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>> I can personally attest to the benefit of exchanging exhibits between museums. My Grandfather helped establish the Mystic Seaport in the US State of Connecticut. That museum donated a 19th century whaleboat on permanent loan to the National Maritime Museum in Pyrmont. Starting from 7 years old, I have spent many hours in both museums learning about seafaring and the oceans. Finally, with all the attention being given to the Powerhouse, the importance and even the existence of smaller museums with their volunteers and other staff in regional areas should not be forgotten. My Grandmother added depth to my knowledge about colonial New England and the American Revolution by taking me around the smaller museums and pre-revolutionary era homes in Connecticut and Massachusetts many of which are staffed by volunteers. We need to support all our museums, whatever their size.

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>> W.J.D d'Anthes