

Bulletin 14: A couple of snippets:

4 December 2016

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Is Infrastructure NSW responsible for the Parramatta plan?

'It is uncontested that government accepted a recommendation from Infrastructure NSW to relocate the museum from the current site in Ultimo to a site in Parramatta.' This was the evidence of Ms Samantha Torres, Upper House Inquiry, Monday, 14 November 2016 Page 2. This is rubbish!

Throughout the Infrastructure documents, all that is said is that 'consideration will be given to relocating the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (the Powerhouse) collection to Parramatta'.

There is no evidence that any such consideration has been given: the government has simply announced that the move will take place. As such the Infrastructure NSW sponsorship of the move idea does not negate any of the arguments put up by opponents of the 'move'.

For example, a supporting document tabled the same day by Ms Torres:

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/DBAssets/InquiryOther/Transcript/10436/Infrastructure%20NSW%20State%20Infrastructure%20Strategy%20-%20Samantha%20Torres%20-%20Arts%20NSW.PDF>

Relevant extracts (all mentions of the Powerhouse Museum / MAAS move to Parramatta: my emphases)

Page 8: *As part of the Parramatta North Urban Renewable Program a cultural precinct should be established around the Old Kings School **potentially** including a relocated Powerhouse Museum.*

Page 114: (strategic objective – A new Parramatta Cultural Precinct) involving:

- *Plan for and promote investment in a new Parramatta Cultural Precinct based around the Riverside Theatre complex, the old David Jones site, Parramatta stadium and Old Kings School;*

- **Urgently consider** relocation of the Powerhouse Museum to the Parramatta Cultural Precinct.

Page 117: To anchor the new Parramatta cultural precinct Infrastructure NSW recommends **giving consideration** to relocating the Powerhouse Museum. A relocated Powerhouse could be a core asset in the Parramatta precinct and a major addition to cultural infrastructure in the west.

Who are Infrastructure NSW?

The chairman of Infrastructure NSW is Mr Graham Bradley AM (a banker, with wide skills and experience⁽ⁱⁱ⁾). The group's core paper identified the 'highest value, most needed and most productive new infrastructure projects that could be delivered if substantial additional funding becomes available from the Rebuilding NSW initiative (financed by the sale of electrical poles and wires). These projects, he wrote, 'must now be subject to the strengthened disciplines that apply to the State's major infrastructure investments to ensure best value for money for taxpayers'. 'The funds provided through Rebuilding NSW must be invested wisely, and with a full understanding of where, when and how maximum value can be extracted from their allocation'. Growth of about 3.6% of gross state product was forecast by 2035, with about 122 000 more jobs. This is facilitated by transport improvements including road-building.

The Sydney City area 'cultural ribbon'.

This is the best summary found of the reasons for the demolition of PHM. In the interests of impartiality this website is publicizing these recommendations of Infrastructure NSW: contrary arguments in **red**:

In the Sydney City area a cultural ribbon would be developed, with revitalized Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney Opera House, State Library of NSW, the Australian Museum and the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, all within 10 years. The Walsh Bay precinct will also be developed, subject to financial considerations.

In regard to the Powerhouse Museum:

- It is relatively remote from the proposed CBD cultural precinct **but close to the two main Sydney universities and easily accessible from Darling Harbour, and from Central Station via the recently completed \$15 million 'goods line' walkway.**
- It occupies a constrained (but very valuable) site adjacent to Darling Harbour **but the new space proposed at Parramatta is more constrained, and no bigger. The Darling Harbour site, particularly under current**

constraints, will raise barely enough money to cover the removal and storage of exhibits, much less the purchase of the Parramatta site and the construction of a new museum.

- It will require significant reconfiguration to remain at its current location and comply with the exhibition and security standards of international and national lending institutions. **No detail, evidence or justification is given for this assertion.**
- If moved to Parramatta it will be a 'good fit for the growing population of the area' **but no reason is given to support this assertion which is countered by the relevance of the existing museum to its existing site.**^[iii]
- Its relocation could be partly funded by realising the commercial value of its existing site. **(The government has at its disposal a preliminary business case for the relocation. This has not been released. Expert opinion is that the amount realised would be barely sufficient to remove and store the exhibits pending the construction of the new museum).**
- The Museum would be a core asset – and potentially an iconic and popular one – in a cultural precinct in Sydney's west **but the evidence is clear that the Parramatta people overwhelmingly prefer other options.**^[iiii]

The Sydney CBD Cultural Precinct logically should be a cluster around 'the Sydney Opera House, the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Walsh Bay Arts precinct, the State Library of NSW, the Art Gallery of NSW and the Australian Museum'. is logical. Development of all of these will be subject to a business case. Proposed cultural facilities at Barangaroo^[iv] (basically 'a large lyric theatre venue, an outdoor venue for 20 000 people, artists' studios and art' with 'a focus on new technologies, progressive and digital media' would also be accessible to this cluster, although the Powerhouse Museum is not^[v]. **PHM is readily accessible from UTS and Sydney University, while the other institutions are isolated from such facilities. The Australian Museum is almost as isolated as is PHM.**

Conclusion

Thus, the Infrastructure report continually stresses that the moving of the museum should be investigated, nothing more. There is no evidence that this investigation has been carried out. The grounds for excluding PHM from the Sydney CBD cultural precinct are shaky.

It is also interesting to note that the creation of the Parramatta cultural precinct is not costed in the 'over ten billion in projects that benefit Western Sydney' under

the heading 'Metropolitan Projects, Western Sydney'^[vi]. Perhaps they are relying on windfall profits from the sale of PHM, but this possibility is disproved elsewhere.

^[ii] <http://www.infrastructure.nsw.gov.au/about-us/our-board/graham-bradley-am.aspx>

^[iii] See *Heritage of the Powerhouse Museum*, online at www.lockoweb.com/phm

^[iiii] Research into the move has been dominated by the assumption that the move will proceed

[iii]. The best consultation to date has been carried out by North Parramatta Regional Action Group. Basically they recommend the development of the authentic 'Fleet Street' area into a multipurpose cultural precinct. Upper House Inquiry submissions almost universally request comprehensive local consultation to meet local needs. As well as NPRAG, the 'Fleet Street' concept is strongly supported by submissions 21, 117, 142, 142b and 149. Specific topics for consideration include migration (13, 21, 37, 51, 149), early history (NPRAG and subs 21, 42, 119, 143), 149 with special emphasis on Aboriginal history (21, 31, 51, 149), a multipurpose display area (36, 51, 149, 143, 96b, 142b). There are many options, and great enthusiasm which must be fostered by consultation!

^[iv] <http://www.barangaroo.com/media/65748/barangaroo%20cultural%20study%20final.pdf>

^[v] http://www.infrastructure.nsw.gov.au/media/42966/inf_j14_871_sis_report_ch09_web.pdf

^[vi] <http://www.nsw.gov.au/initiative/state-infrastructure-strategy> heading Metropolitan Development . Western Sydney

SAVE THE POWERHOUSE

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<https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/> See

also: <https://www.facebook.com/savepowerhousemuseum/> <https://www.facebook.com/savethepowerhouse/> <http://lockoweb.com/phm/>