

Bulletin 17: 18 February 2017: A very quick rundown on the Upper House Inquiry.

Three points are incontrovertible:

1. There has never been an assessment of the desirability of moving the museum to Parramatta.

The government, directly or indirectly, appointed a task force to plan the move, getting advice from architects, financiers, logistics experts, researchers and others, all of whom had the sole brief of making the move happen. All the relevant people, when asked if they had assessed the desirability of the move, stated that this decision had been the responsibility of the government. The idea was proposed for examination by Infrastructure Australia, but it was never examined. See [Bulletin 13](#). No notice has been taken of extensive consultation among Parramatta groups which produced a well-founded proposal for a cultural precinct that will be far cheaper than the government proposal.

2a. The government has obtained financial information about the costs of the move but has refused to divulge this.

Particularly at the last session, the Inquiry pressed the witnesses for information regarding the financial basis of the move. All stated that the government had told them that their reports would be not publicly divulged and all refused to provide any information on this subject: it was claimed to be 'cabinet in confidence'.

It is reasonable for discussions within cabinet to be confidential. The cabinet should be able to discuss issues freely. The convention has been that once a decision has been made within cabinet, it is supported by all participants regardless of their personal views. This is reasonable, and good governmental practice.

But here we have public money spent on determining the costs of interfering with public assets. As some members of the Inquiry pointed out, there is no reason why the information could not be made available: 'the project does not involve national security'.

2b. Nevertheless it is clear that the dissidents' estimate of costs – over a thousand million dollars – is certainly understated.

At last Friday's inquiry Mr Michael Parry, the Project Director, stated that the construction costs alone would be in the region of 600 to 800 million dollars. Also, the figure of \$150 million for purchase of part of the site at Parramatta was not disputed. The cost of removing items from the Powerhouse and preparing the site for sale will be at least \$200 million. The inquiry responses indicated that the difficulties of moving exhibits has not been adequately assessed.

The figure of over a thousand million dollars is the consensus of opinion among the opponents of the 'move', and these people would have a combined experience in relevant fields totaling thousands of years, with hundreds of years of appropriate qualifications.

If the figures are substantially wrong, then surely the government would release the information that has been obtained

3. The government has learnt nothing and forgotten nothing over the past few years.

Despite the facts presented by the opponents of the 'move' we are still getting the same form letters as we received a year ago. Our little group has twice sent individual letters, with copies of the two booklets produced (see here and [here](#)) to all MLCs and MLAs. Responses received from the government typically include a standard paragraph extolling the virtues of the move: see bulletin 16.

The opposition's standard reply is that they are awaiting further details before deciding their attitude.

Only a very few MPs – apart from the Greens – have given a thoughtful response. One of these has been Dr Lee, MP for Parramatta. This is greatly appreciated, even though he obviously still supports the government line.

If you are feeling masochistic, read the attachment, a selection of the responses received from the government over the last years. The Bourbons, restored after the fall of Napoleon, were famously said to have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing, and the present government might be well advised to study their historical fate.

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

<http://lockoweb.com/phm/>

Remember the Mummies exhibition!

