

May 1

From Tom Lockley re PHM heritage short version

This email is going to people who have responded positively to the idea that the PHM buildings themselves have high heritage value and must be preserved. This is a **short version for busy people**.

If you do not want to receive this information let me know, tomlockley@gmail.com.

320 copies of our little booklet have been distributed, directly to politicians. PHM trustees, history groups etc and through informal contacts, with feedback:

General: Overwhelming support – many had not realized the heritage qualities of the buildings. Many have taken action to publicise these facts and to contact MPs, journalists etc. General agreement that a co-ordinated mass movement is required.

Media: So far we have not been able to get a good newspaper article or radio / tv story just concentrating on the heritage values of the buildings.

Politicians' replies: **ALP:** mainly 'on the fence', no commitment to retaining the present buildings. **Lib / Nationals** standard reply is to say that this is a matter for the Hon Troy Grant, Minister for the Arts to whom each letter was redirected. A few renegades throughout not following the party line and expressing a desire to save the buildings. **Greens** all very supportive; notably Jamie Parker. Last batch of MP letters to go out Monday.

VIPs: no response from many like Bob Carr, Paul Keating, Lucy Turnbull etc. Clover Moore's office was very positive. Several positive letters and emails from people thanking us for the information etc eg Penelope Seidler, Professor Shine of the MAAS trustees and two other trustees.

On Thursday 28 April, 2 45pm: a long phone call from Dr Geoff Lee, MLC for Parramatta during which he said that personally he was in favour of retaining the old buildings within a new development and agreed that the proceeds of any sale of the site would be insufficient to build a suitable museum at Parramatta.

The next steps to seek an interview with Mr Baird and Mr Foley or their representatives to present our findings. The tactics for this are outlined in the long version in a separate email. Please read it if you can.



Heritage and the PHM Buildings

This email is going to people who have responded positively to the idea that, regardless of the undoubted importance of the Powerhouse Museum in to the Sydney CBD where it has developed its profile over many years, the buildings themselves have high heritage value and must be preserved. If you do not want to receive this information let me know.

320 copies of our little booklet have been distributed, and another 100 are available for immediate distribution. (If you know of anyone who would benefit from receiving a booklet contact tomlockley@gmail.com). Most have gone to the general public – to historians, museum people (mainly retired), architects and journalists. We have had a good general response, with

people taking on board the general idea and taking action to write to MPs and others. So far we have not been able to get a good newspaper article or radio / tv story just concentrating on the heritage values of the buildings, but we are keeping on trying to interest the media. The very amateur www.lockoweb.com has some information relevant to this process.

All ALP state MLAs, all Greens, 32 targeted Liberal and National party MLAs and any relevant ministers and shadow ministers have received booklets and personalized letters by registered post. We have 19 replies. Typical replies are as follows:

ALP:ALP wants to see the final budget and favours work to develop the Western Sydney area, and quotes Luke Foley's speech to the Legislative Assembly of 28 February

Lib / Nationals standard reply is to say that this is a matter for the Hon Troy Grant, Minister for the Arts to whom each letter was redirected. He received his first letter from us on 23 March and there has been no response yet.

Not a lot of response has come from ministers and shadow ministers.

Greens are all very positive, with a handwritten letter of support from Lisa Chung, (who is passing a booklet on to Dolla Merrilees of PHM). Jamie Parker has assisted with booklet printing and is very supportive and helpful.

There are some people who have not followed the party line. John Robertson (ALP Blacktown) says that there is no need to close Ultimo to build Parramatta. A very thoughtful reply came from the office of Trish Doyle, MLC for Blue Mountains.

I am out of resources to send registered mail letters but the remaining MLCs and MLAs will have hand-delivered letters and booklets by the time Parliament opens next Tuesday. What appears to hit home is when they get a booklet plus an approach from a constituent or two. 'Keep them cards and letters coming in, folks!'

Books have been sent to people like Bob Carr, Paul Keating, Lucy Turnbull etc and many have not responded. Clover Moore's office was very positive. However we have several letters and emails from people thanking us for the information etc eg Penelope Seidler, and Professor Shine of the MAAS trustees. This I did not expect: I did not send the stuff to them for their information so much as to let them know what we are doing. Altogether three trustees have responded.

Grace Cochrane AO, retired curator, noted writer and historian, and her network of associates have provided invaluable advice.

On Thursday 28 April I had a long phone call from Dr Geoff Lee, MLC for Parramatta, who failed to impress the gallery at the Legislative Council debate on 25 February. To summarise quickly, he said he personally was in favour of retaining the old buildings as part of a tower, and that there was certainly no possibility of building a museum in Parramatta solely from the proceeds of the land sale: the government would have to put in more money. I was impressed with what he had to say and also impressed by the fact that he took the time to say it. Regardless, there remains a very strong argument for keeping the Museum in the buildings, rather than adapting them for another purpose.

We have got a number of positive emails and letters from other people – representatives of historical societies and interest groups, and notably from antiques people, thanks to the influence of Marion Barker.

Historical groups have been very supportive – from members of the Benalla Aviation Museum through to the Royal Australian Historical Society. The latter have put our booklet on their website. Particularly supportive is the Pyrmont History Group; they are devoting their June meeting to discussion of the matter.

No MAAS staff member has been involved. A perception is that the same rules apply to the museum industry as to the merged councils: unless you support the government line you will not get a job. Both paid staff and volunteers are constrained by orders from above that the new museum is a very exciting opportunity and that all comment is to be made from the MAAS public relations people.

I really appreciate your input. Three things to stress:

1. We are not trying to take over the role of bigger organisations such as <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/> and <https://www.facebook.com/savethepowerhouse/> but in fact want to co-operate as a contributing part of this huge process.
2. There is need of some form of overall co-ordination and improved communication among the various forces which are campaigning against the destruction of PHM, eg the appointment of a paid professional campaign manager.
3. This is not an inner city trendies vs Parramatta westies affair. Those stereotypes are not at all valid. Everyone recognizes that Parramatta has a proud tradition as a cultural centre over the decades and deserves its own museum and gallery as part of its own history and society.

Matters of tactics

There is general support for forcefully putting the point that the buildings are of such value that their destruction is wrong, even in purely economic terms. We will seek interviews with Mr Baird and Mr Foley, but will settle for time with their parliamentary secretary or even a staffer to press our case. This is just a part of the overall effort and we seek to complement the huge efforts being made by everyone else.

There are two schools of thought about how to go about saving the Powerhouse.

1. Most people who initially supported the writing of the booklet thought that the best procedure was first to get an undertaking that the buildings would not be destroyed, and then press for retention of at least part of the building as a museum.
2. However in the email debate that followed the distribution of the book it is fair to say that the majority of these respondents preferred to look at it from the other direction: Keep the whole building as is, and keep and expand the museum as a flagship enterprise of world standard, and also have an appropriate museum at Parramatta.

So what I am floating in this email is this idea for tactics when we do meet the people as above.

We emphasise the overall heritage value of the enterprise at its present site.

First of all, the remarkable qualities of the building as it stands, as a monument to the enterprise and skill of the builders. Comments made during the email debate include references to Manchester's recycled museum, places like the Quay d'Orsay, the practice in New York of preserving every scrap of heritage building in any

redevelopment.

Secondly, the special value given to some of the exhibits because of the location in which they are placed. Prime among these is the steam gallery, certainly the best collection of its type in the southern hemisphere, and it bears comparison with any such museum in the world, especially considering the Boulton and Watt machine. The fact that it is in the turbine hall of the first large power station to be built in Sydney, overhung by the original, probably unique, Case cranes, gives this collection an added value that would be lost when transferred to a new building. The tram, and even the horse tram are likewise enhanced by their current setting

Thirdly, the museum is the direct successor to the exhibition buildings of 1879 and the 1893-1988 MAAS museum in Harris Street. Among the many, many Items directly received from Harris Street are the Strasburg clock, the Boulton and Watt engine, Hargraves' kites, and my particular favourite, the undervalued Bleriot of Maurice Guillaux. They have thus been locally displayed for over 100 years, establishing a local tradition that should not be destroyed.

Fourthly, the total museum is a monument to the bicentenary commemorations, an important marker of our history. The demolition of the 1988 award-winning buildings at Darling Harbour, designed by Phillip Cox and John Andrews, excited considerable unfavourable comment, and here is a chance to preserve an award-winning example of the architecture of this period. It also is a good marker of the way that Australian culture was developing at that time. Within the museum, the 'what's in store' display gives a concrete demonstration of Australia's growing realization of the contribution of non-Anglos to the basic development of Australia. For example, the Kings Cinema pays homage to the golden era of cinema; the donation of the Fotoplayer by Mastertouch signalled the end of the musical automata as well as the changing role and technology of the cinema, and it is one of very few on display throughout the world.

Academics who specialize in heritage studies can actually calculate the monetary value of these associations. For example see http://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/pdf_publications/pdf/assessing.pdf

This must be taken into account in the present situation. At a recent lecture A/C Mark Lax spoke in a different context of measurable financial benefits to an organization of preserving heritage as opposed to the harm caused to the reputation, and consequently to the financial value, of an organization when heritage is destroyed. Nowhere is this more relevant than to our present situation.

In addition to the costs to the organization of the destruction of this heritage, and the erection of a new building, there are several other huge costly aspects of the relocation, for example:

- Demolition, clearing and probable decontamination of the sloping site, which is pitted with large basement and sub-basement areas
- The re-establishment of steam generation and distribution apparatus
- Disassembly, packing, transport, unpacking, reassembly and mounting of exhibits and

specialized areas such as the Kings Theatre

- Provision of appropriate display areas

Further, it is recognized that the relocation of the museum to Parramatta will make it more accessible to a wide range of people, but this has to be discounted by the diminution of patronage caused by the more difficult access for people from the north and south coast, and for short-term visitors to Sydney from overseas and elsewhere.

The main purpose of the proposed meeting is to request that the costing of the establishment of any development in Parramatta be reviewed in the light of all costing benefits that are apparent from retention of the current building. It is noted that there does seem to be a realization that whatever is done to market the Pyrmont site additional funds will be needed to erect a suitable building at Parramatta. This is a healthy sign that the project now has a more realistic basis.

The public is entitled to know the all financial implications of this project. If the process is indeed financially suspect then there can be no justification at all for proceeding.

Thanks for reading this far. If there is any problem with what is in this email please contact me. I will not be offended by any criticism!
