

The MAAS Project

Image: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Tin toy car. Photo: Marince Kojdanovski



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Public meeting summary – Monday 31 July 2017, Ultimo

Introduction

The NSW Government is committed to growing the arts and cultural sector across the whole of NSW. This includes investment in cultural infrastructure to deliver a Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS) flagship campus in Western Sydney. To deliver the best possible Museum, an extended business case has been established to ensure all options are investigated, tested and analysed. Community consultation is an important element of the business case.

This document is a summary of the public meeting held on Monday 31 July 2017 at Ultimo. A separate summary has been developed for the public meeting on Wednesday 26 July at Parramatta and is available from the MAAS Project website, new.maas.museum

Overview

Eighty-nine people attended the public meeting on Monday 31 July 2017.

The Minister for Arts, the Hon Don Harwin MP attended the Ultimo session and addressed questions about the in-principle agreement made for the Riverbank site announced that morning.

The Department of Planning and Environment provided an overview of the Department's role and the process of developing a business case, including the opportunities for community consultation.

Participants were asked to work in small groups, each with a table facilitator, to answer two key questions. In total, one third of the meeting time was spent on presentations and two thirds of the meeting time was spent seeking participant feedback.

Table facilitation

Participants were asked to consider two questions during the table facilitated session.

Question 1: If some arts and cultural presence stays at Ultimo what would you like to see, do and experience?

The key themes emerging from participant feedback included:

- » A 21st century museum strongly associated with innovation and creative industries.
- » The space should build on the strengths of the precinct such as technology, design, science and innovation. MAAS should foster greater links to universities, TAFE NSW, the ABC and involve students at nearby institutions.
- » Important that children who live nearby still have somewhere to go and explore. Collections should target children and be more interactive, and things they can "work with, discover and investigate."
- » The current building at Ultimo should be a '21st century Powerhouse' to complement the exhibits moving to Paramatta.
- » The Powerhouse should be retained at Ultimo.
- » Focus on transport history at the Powerhouse and incorporating existing collections.

- » There is a synergy between the Maritime Museum and MAAS which could be explored.
- » Museum includes a large design collection (fashion, interior design, furniture, graphics, production) which could be expanded upon with connection to nearby students. It should retain its design focus and combine working spaces and museum space.
- » Create an exemplary experience but maintain the quality of the institution, branding and profile.
- » There is a cultural identity associated with the collections in Ultimo that mean they should stay there.
- » Currently there's a suppression of energy and activity. MAAS should involve staff, volunteers and the community more.
- » The space should still be open to the public and attract international visitors as well as established audiences.
- » The Ultimo building is a unique heritage building and its future should respect its significance to the development of Sydney and the local area.
- » The building could be reimagined as a science facility with focused exhibitions, teaching spaces and strong relationships with the universities/TAFE.
- » An innovation hub and collections should focus on digital access and technology.

Question 2: What would you like to see, do and experience at the New Museum in Western Sydney? What would make it an exciting place for you and your family/friends to visit?

The key themes emerging from participant feedback included:

- » The space should be flexible and creative, incorporating performance spaces and hosting night events.
- » It's important that the whole precinct is activated and planners consider the surrounding area in terms of attracting visitors. It should be an exciting place to visit during the day and night.
- » Parramatta should offer a new and distinctive experience from the current Ultimo Powerhouse.
- » The new museum should engage with the history and significance of the Parramatta River, especially given its location.
- » Accessibility and affordability are important, and the new museum should have good transport connections. Existing transport links could be enhanced. Consider including a ferry to the New Museum.
- » The museum should create a special connection with younger audiences through early input from schools and direct engagement.
- » The New Museum should engage the community and become a meeting space for people.
- » The New Museum should embrace the diverse multicultural population of Paramatta and its Indigenous people in both a historic and future looking context.
- » The New Museum should be derived from the stories that people want to talk about in the area. For example, Parramatta's colonial history, Aboriginal history and the success of Parramatta in terms of its survival, resilience and character.
- » Visitors should be able to participate and interact. The experience should be hands on and educational.
- » A strong relationship with children, schools and educational facilities should be cultivated.
- » "It should host exhibitions of high cultural significance to its multicultural community."
- » It should be a new museum for Sydney, not just for 'Western Sydney.'

Feedback forms

A total of twenty-four feedback forms have been received.

Comments/questions on the feedback forms focused on the following themes:

1. Support for retaining some form of public space in Ultimo due to the limited recreational and cultural space in the area. Suggestions this should be targeted towards the local community and children.
2. The division of collections between Ultimo and Parramatta. Comment that Ultimo should remain a flagship MAAS museum and not be diminished in any way by what happens at the Parramatta site.
3. Comments that both sites should reflect their local history and context. Ultimo should retain collections relevant to its industrial past and reflect local innovators and designers that are situated in the Ultimo area today. Parramatta should tell its own story from indigenous communities to early settlers and engage with the Parramatta River.
4. Appreciation the Ultimo site needs to be upgraded and could become more economically viable by incorporating a creative space for design and technology students or start-up companies.
5. Questions focused on the reasoning for the move. Many participants were keen to see expert reports and research to justify the Government's decision. There was also interest in continued community consultation and engaging young people and educational institutions in the conversation.

Next steps

All the feedback received at the meetings on 26 July and 31 July 2017 will be considered as part of the extended business case.

Together with the other inputs, all feedback received during the consultation will help the Department of Planning and Environment to define emerging options.

The Department of Planning and Environment will embark upon another round of consultation on the emerging options later in 2017.