

20 March 2020

Tim Smith
Director Operations
Heritage Council of NSW
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PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

Via email : heritagemailbox@environment.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir

**Re : Ultimo Tramways Power House (under consideration)
Support for the Notice of Intention to Consider Listing on the State Heritage Register**

Thank you for your letter dated 25 February 2020, informing the Institute of the Heritage Council's intention to consider listing the Ultimo Tramways Power House on the State Heritage Register of NSW.

The Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) NSW Chapter supports the listing of this building on the SHR but requests that the curtilage be extended to include the 1988 additions of the Power House Museum as this important group recognises the significant contribution to the development of Sydney and the State of NSW. The former Ultimo Tramways Power House, later successfully adapted by the NSW Government Architect as the Power House Museum, was one of four power stations of similar type built in Sydney from 1897 up until around World War I. Other power stations included the former Pyrmont "A" 1904 (demolished), Balmain Phase I 1909 (demolished) and the White Bay Power Station 1917. Each of these power stations were adapted and approved throughout the early and mid-twentieth Century and provided a vital source of electricity that enabled the economic expansion of Sydney and New South Wales. The Ultimo Tramways Power House retains substantial structures from this period.

The former Ultimo Tramways Power House, including the 1988 additions has the potential to have a high level of historic and social significance at the State level for its re-use as the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS), previously known as the Powerhouse Museum. Commissioned as a significant Bicentenary project opened in 1988, the Powerhouse Museum has been a flagship science, technology and arts museum with significant educational and tourism benefits for Sydney and the state of New South Wales. Its success as an adaptation project and an important tourist destination, certainly predates Tate Modern, London.

The adaptive reuse of the former Power House, which includes the 1988 additions, has significance for the NSW architectural profession, firstly as an important work by the NSW Government Architect and secondly, as a recipient of the Sir John Sulman Medal in 1988. First awarded in 1932, the Sulman Medal is bestowed by the NSW Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects, usually for buildings of public or commercial nature. In this time, it is widely regarded as the premier award for Architecture in NSW. Other Sulman Award buildings include the Sydney Opera House, The former Darling Harbour Exhibition Centre, Australia Square and Governor Phillip Tower. These buildings, together with the architects and organisations that design them, hold great importance to the architectural community and the public.

In summary the complex of buildings, including the 1988 additions have potential to meet the following criterion for state listing:

Under Criterion A: forming part of the redevelopment of a former industrial and railway yard to become "Darling Harbour" – an important bicentenary project of national importance

Under Criterion B: having a strong association with the NSW Government Architect's Office (GAO); the GAO played an important role in the changing nature of Australian public architecture well into the 1980s

Under Criterion C: the addition is an example of Post-Modern architecture (designed with two plazas), as applied to NSW public architecture.

Under Criterion D: having an important association with the Institute (NSW Chapter) as a significant late 20th century building; having a high regard in which it is held by the architectural design community, the project was awarded the Sulman Medal

Under Criterion E: the addition is a seminal (and award winning) example of NSW public architecture in the Post-Modern style; an important benchmark of its type as it demonstrates a successful adaptation, and with original industrial fabric retained, was detailed to house a unique collection

Under Criterion F: enhanced at a state level as the complex is part of a large citywide adaptation project; designed to house a unique collection

Under Criterion G: the addition is a representative example of the Post-Modern style yet within the context of repurposing a former industrial complex

Since the late 1960s, the NSW Chapter of the Institute has maintained a Register of Significant Architecture in NSW to promote the recognition and protection of important Buildings with a focus on the twentieth century and beyond. We acknowledge that the Heritage Council has supported this work financially for many years and we take this opportunity to express our gratitude for this. The Institute Register differs from other heritage registers by reflecting the specialist interests of the Institute including an emphasis on architectural merit, aesthetic qualities and the work of leading architects and practices. The former Ultimo Tramways Power House together with the 1988 additions is listed on the Register of Significant Architecture in NSW as the Power House Museum, item 4701884.

The Institute supports the application for SHR listing and strongly recommends that the 1988 additions, as an integral part of the 1988 Sulman Medal Award, are included within the listing boundary. Recognising the heritage significance of this complex of buildings, and its collection will ensure that this complex of buildings, together with its history and context, can be recognised and have appropriate consideration for protection and reuse into the future.

For any additional information or comment, please do not hesitate to contact the NSW Chapter.

Sincerely

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