

The Daily Te

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A house of cards

EXCLUSIVE

ANNA CALDWELL

THE NSW Treasurer refused to answer when quizzed in a party room meeting if the Powerhouse Museum move would proceed as the state battles a \$10 billion virus dent in the coffers.

Dominic Perrottet told the joint party room meeting – the first of its kind conducted on video call – that the NSW government had spent “double” any other state on the pandemic.

He said the government was committed to bringing forward “shovel ready” infrastructure projects to keep the state’s economy moving, but skirted around recommitting to the Powerhouse relocation on its current terms.

It comes as multiple ministers are privately arguing that both the \$645 million Powerhouse move and the \$800 million ANZ Stadium redevelopment at Olympic Park should be scrapped for smaller projects, with division in senior ranks over the plans.

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House of cards in \$10b hit

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The stadium was not raised at yesterday’s meeting, however multiple government ministers are pushing for the project to be abandoned.

Some believe the money should be ploughed into community football grounds, while others believe there are non-sport related infrastructure projects with a better case for funding in the current climate.

The government sees infrastructure investment as central to our economic recovery and will prioritise short, shovel-ready projects with high employment prospects to stimulate the economy.

The \$10 billion pandemic budget hit is the product of lost revenue from tax concessions and stimulus measures.

The government announced a \$50 million plan yesterday to waive licence fees for 200,000 small businesses.

“It is the least we can do to support these businesses and their staff. If you’re a business that has to pay licence fees to the NSW government for the next 12 months those fees will be waived,” Premier Gladys Berejiklian said.

Upper house Liberal Matthew Mason-Cox asked about Powerhouse at yesterday’s meeting. The Daily Telegraph confirmed the exchange with three participants in the meeting, who agreed Mr Perrottet did not answer the question. A spokesman said Mr Perrottet did not comment on party room conversations.