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# HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE BALLARAT - THE TIME IS NOW

**PRIORITY PROJECT**

## The Ask

\$15 million is needed (\$10 million federal, \$5 million state) for urgent works to bring Her Majesty's Theatre Ballarat up to safe and professional standard so this ageing asset can continue to operate as the performing arts centre at the cultural heart of Ballarat and the wider region for another century

Note: City of Ballarat has committed \$5.3 million in its Draft Budget

## Overview

Her Majesty's Theatre is a heritage treasure at the cultural heart of the city. The creative sector in Ballarat is emerging as a significant economic strength, a growing sector which brings entrepreneurship and helps activate the centre of the city.

Her Majesty's is 143 years old; parts of the structure of the building are potentially unsafe and do not meet current standards. It has been determined that a holistic review of the fire services should be undertaken to ensure this element of the building is compliant with current standards.

Following the completion of the proposed works, the economic impact for Ballarat's economy is estimated to be in excess of \$16 million per annum, with the creation of five jobs.

The social benefits are well-known to the Ballarat community and the extended life of the theatre will benefit the local tourism industry.

## Economic Impact

Initial economic impact assessments indicate the total (direct and flow-on) effect of construction over the two years of the project are estimated to be:

- An increase to Ballarat's economy of \$16.7 million
- Creation of 118 jobs

Following completion of the works the economic impact for Ballarat's economy is estimated to be in excess of \$12 million per annum, with the creation of five direct jobs. It will enable the further development of the creative industry and hundreds of associated jobs over the next ten years. (Source: Remplan April 2018).

## Arts and Culture in Ballarat

Ballarat City Council is committed to supporting the arts. The preservation, restoration and facilities upgrade of this grand theatre supports Ballarat's long-standing reputation as a 'city of culture and heritage'.

A City of Ballarat Creative City Strategy and Arts Precinct Masterplan has recently been commenced and is a landmark strategy to ensure Ballarat is the leading regional arts community in Australia.

Each year Her Majesty's Theatre hosts 75,000+ patrons who are entertained by the 15,000+ performers who take to its stage. It is a much loved venue which has played host to some of Australia's favourite entertainers and some of the world's best known performers. It holds a special place in the heart of generations of local residents and performers from further afield who have come to Her Majesty's to perform or to be entertained.



## Scope of Works

The building has been closed for works since late 2017, it is due to reopen in February 2019.

It is 31 years since the last major refurbishment work was carried out; a complete refurbishment of the auditorium, back of house and stage areas are now necessary to enable the continued, safe operation of the theatre.

Her Majesty's has long been the home of live performance in Ballarat, however a complete modernisation and reinvention (in line with Heritage Victoria approval) is required to:

- Address structural issues which compromise the safety of patrons and performers, the integrity of the building and also its serviceability to operate as a professional theatre in the future
- Meet current Occupational Health and Safety standards
- Meet building fire safety standards
- Meet patron and professional performer expectations
- Enable the continued operation of the theatre; current load rating on the stage structure is 220kg/m<sup>2</sup>, well below the standard for theatre facilities which is 750kg/m<sup>2</sup>.

The last significant investment and refurbishment of the theatre was \$6.8 million in 1987. However:

- The fabric of the building is ageing and needs significant restoration work to ensure its structural integrity for another 143 years
- Theatre technology and occupational health and safety requirements are currently difficult to meet
- A Feasibility Study and associated Conservation Management Plan have been prepared; the project is shovel ready

## The Theatre

Built in 1875 Her Majesty's Theatre is mainland Australia's best preserved and oldest continuously operating theatre; it is the most intact of only four surviving nineteenth century public theatres in Australia.

Her Majesty's is included on the Register of the National Estate and the Victorian Heritage Register; Australian Theatre Specialist Ross Thorne says "Her Majesty's Theatre Ballarat is probably the most significant theatre in Australia today".

- Her Majesty's has been owned and operated by the City of Ballarat since 1987 when it was deeded to the city by the Royal South Street Society
- City of Ballarat runs Her Majesty's as a professionally equipped and staffed performing arts centre
- Her Majesty's is home to the annual Royal South Street Society Competition - the Grand National Eisteddfod of Australasia
- Her Majesty's presents an annual theatre season of touring professional and local productions and is available for hire by professional tours, local productions, school concerts, dance recitals and conferences.

The City of Ballarat is entrusted to preserve the City's important historical buildings such as Her Majesty's Theatre to ensure they can be used and enjoyed by the local community and visitors to the region, and that they remain available and accessible for future generations.

# The Works

The key aims of refurbishment include:

- Restoration of all walls, ceilings and floors within the 1898 auditorium to near original condition
- Installation of front-of-house lift to all levels for improved disability access to meet current building and Disability Discrimination (DDA) codes
- Automation of orchestra pit to remove manual handling issues
- Creation of large-capacity dressing room(s) to better service high-capacity users (ie Royal South Street competitions and local amateur theatre groups)
- Extension and improvement of foyer spaces to allow greater circulation for all patrons
- Upgrade of climate control system to modern standards
- Installation of backstage passenger lift and accessible facilities to allow access for performers with disabilities and to meet DDA code
- Height increase and automation of flying system to remove manual handling issues and improve operation

## Project Status

- Shovel ready
- Feasibility Report complete
- Heritage Victoria support - \$2 million for current conservation works
- City of Ballarat \$5.3 million (Draft Budget)
- Regional Development Australia funding application (\$10 million)

## Strategic Alignment

### City of Ballarat

- City of Ballarat Creative City Strategy
- Arts Precinct Masterplan (underway)
- Council Plan 2017–2021
- Her Majesty's Feasibility Study
- Central Highlands Investment Plan

### State Government

- Victorian Government Regional Statement 2015
- Creative State 2016–2020 – Creative Victoria Strategy
- Infrastructure Victoria's 30 Year Strategy 2016 (Need 1, 5 and 12)
- Heritage Council of Victoria Strategic Plan 2016–2020



*Cracked truss above stage*



*Impact of rising damp to walls*



*Degradation of masonry and plaster due to moisture*



*Impact of water ingress, impacting all surfaces.*



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