



PHOENIXPLAYERS

Phoenix Players Inc Submission to ACT Treasury re funding for preliminary works for the Completion of Belconnen Arts Centre – for inclusion in the 2012 Budget



This submission is made on behalf of Phoenix Players Inc in relation to the completion of the Belconnen Arts Centre. We strongly support the completion as we would like to be able to use the facility that would then be available.

Phoenix Players commenced operation as an amateur theatre company 22 years ago, having its first meetings at the Labor Club at Belconnen. Its initial aim was to bring quality musical theatre productions to Belconnen. Our first production, "Salad Days", was performed at the Labor Club, which went on to designate us as a sub-club until they believed we could survive on our own. We moved to the Belconnen Theatre at the Belconnen Community Centre for our next production. We continued to operate from that venue for the next 12 years, until the facilities proved to be inadequate for our developing company. Since then our productions have been performed at the Street Theatre, Theatre 3, The Q, and the ANU theatre. Throughout all of this time the Labor Club at Belconnen and Charnwood have been the venues for auditions, rehearsals, and committee meetings. The Labor Club has remained one of our major sponsors throughout the whole of our history.

We are presently tenants at the Cook Hub, sharing rehearsal and storage space with two other theatre companies.

Our roots are in Belconnen and many of our company, young and old, maintain a desire to return to performing in Belconnen. We are aware that the completion of the Belconnen Arts Centre will occur. We would like it to happen as soon as possible developing a facility that is suitable for the type of production that we do. We believe that the people of Belconnen deserve to have the best that is available and we have waited such a long time for a facility in Belconnen in which to present our productions. We would like adequate funds made available in the next ACT budget to do the preliminary work necessary before a building can be erected. We are aware that a sum of \$450 000 would be required for this purpose. We would hope that this would lead to an accelerated planning and building program, which, in turn, could lead us to performing a musical production in the facility as part of the Centenary year in 2013 or during 2014.

Our preference for the completion of The BAC would be a fully setup, permanent performance space with all of the features mentioned below, with raked seating being a permanent feature. Our main reason for this recommendation is that there are few other theatre facilities that are readily accessible for amateur theatre groups in Belconnen. The Belconnen Theatre is too small, has few of the facilities that we require and is usually used for children's productions. The college theatres are of a reasonable size but their availability for use by community theatre groups is prefaced on the requirements of the drama, movement and music requirements of the college curriculum. Hence the time that is available is usually during the school holidays and other periods that are normally too short for our purposes. The foyer facilities are not adequate and the hire costs are usually too high for our budgetary requirements.

We would want the following items to be included in the completion -

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- A stage large enough to accommodate a cast of up to 50 participants and a full set. We would be happy for the shape of the stage to be flexible to allow for other types of activities to occur on it.
- Wings on both sides of the stage of at least 3 metres.
- A rig which can accommodate at least three or more sets of legs, a front curtain, a back curtain, a cyclorama, bars for the attachment of other set pieces and appropriate lighting bars. The rig would need to be accessible by a catwalk or be able to drop down for rigging. There should be easily accessible lighting bars and wall fixtures above the auditorium.
- Adequate work lights for the stage, wings and behind the back bar.
- Adequate supply of power points around the stage and near the rig.
- 3-5 metres behind the back bar for storage of sets during a production
- Wide loading doors on either side of the stage. They would need to have height adjustable platforms for unloading and loading trucks.
- A large loading area at the back of the facility.
- Permanent raked seating with a capacity of 300+ audience.
- Accessible and well-placed Lighting and Bio boxes.
- An orchestra pit or flexible space at the back of the stage for musicians (this would require the stage to be even deeper so that a pit would be the better alternative) – again with plenty of power points.
- We would expect that the current foyer and coffee bar would be used for the new facility.
- Adequate disability access both for entry to the facility and seating space in the theatre.
- Air conditioning that compensates for the heat generated by a fully used lighting rig.
- Dressing room facilities adequate for a full cast of a musical, a ballet school performance, a calisthenics competition, massed band performances and any other event where large numbers of people need to make costume changes and apply makeup. This should include adequate toilet and shower facilities.
- A green room and facilities for costume laundry and space for ironing.
- Box office facilities
- Adequate parking nearby for major performances and events.
- Adequate drop-off points at the front of the centre for disabled and elderly patrons.

We are aware that this is an extensive but not exhaustive list of what we think are basic necessities to provide for our use of a theatre, but also the use by a range of other potential hirers of the facility.

Several of our committee attended one of the public meetings to discuss the completion of the BAC and it became disappointingly apparent to Phoenix that the completion of the Belconnen Arts Centre may not include a purpose-built theatre, because of a perceived need for a more flexible space. If the completion were to be designed as an auditorium

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with a flat floor and a stage area we would still need all of the inclusions mentioned above, which we believe are important if we are going to be able to use the facility for the production of musical theatre. There would need to be retractable seating which could be stored at the back of the auditorium (under a permanent gallery section of the seating) We have been campaigning for a theatre throughout the processes that led to the beginning of the building of the centre. We did this through the participation of members of our company in the preplanning discussions and the group that recommended the facilities that should be included in the centre. Pamela McManus and Graham Bauerle were involved in these processes over several years.

As a committee or as individuals, we would be happy to participate in any planning process that is undertaken in the development of this completion phase of the Belconnen Arts Centre.

Further, we hope that full weight is given to our recommendations and suggestions, as they represent the accumulated wisdom and experience of many years of participation in theatre and in the growth of the love of theatre and performance in the Belconnen area. We support fully the Belconnen Arts Centre Board in its desire to see an appropriate completion to the centre, which can bring greater community involvement to this hub of Belconnen life.

Graham Bauerle
Committee Member
For Phoenix Player Incorporated



G. Bauerle.

13/12/11

