



Speech by

STUART COPELAND

MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

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FESTIVAL HALL

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (9.57 p.m.): I would like to raise the issue of the future of Festival Hall following recent reports that the building is to be sold off to the highest bidder and most likely demolished for development due to its prime CBD location. I spoke out on this issue last week because of the value of Festival Hall as a Brisbane icon and, most importantly, the wider implications this demolition will have on Brisbane's live music scene. The loss of this long-time venue would be devastating for live music in Brisbane, which has already faced an uphill battle to survive after experiencing major problems with new developments in the Valley.

The live music scene has also taken a beating with pubs concentrating on pokies rather than live bands. Brisbane's CBD now looks set to lose its only large-scale venue for local and international acts to play here. It will effectively be cut off from the concert circuit. I totally support music industry moves for the state government to now step in, take responsibility and look at buying the venue because of its history and value to the local music scene. This does not seem likely, though. This government's priorities mean it has spent and will spend millions of taxpayers' dollars to save sporting venues from extinction but will not give the same commitment to saving a Brisbane icon like Festival Hall.

The Environment Minister has promised a report on why the heritage listing was rejected, but the issue deserves more than to be paid just lip-service. I will be following his handling of this issue very carefully, as will all of those who have a stake in ensuring Brisbane's live music scene is not demolished along with Festival Hall. The fact that Brisbane band Powderfinger—without doubt the biggest band in Australia at the moment—chose to play three sold-out concerts at Festival Hall last month instead of anywhere else should really say something to people. This is a band that formed in Brisbane, made its name in Brisbane and has chosen to retain Brisbane as its home base in spite of its national success. If this venue is demolished, bands such as these will be left with no real alternative venue in Brisbane, considering that the Boondall Entertainment Centre is really too large for most domestic acts to contemplate performing in. The Brisbane music scene has produced some major talent in recent years—bands such as Powderfinger, Savage Garden, Regurgitator and Resin Dogs, as well as up and coming talent such as George, who are starting to really make a huge impact in music circles. Without a strong live music scene, many of these bands probably would not exist as they do today.

I will follow this issue closely and continue pushing for the state government to step in and save Festival Hall. If it fails to do so, then the Brisbane City Council has a duty to step in and make it a development condition that the site be retained as a live music venue for all future generations to enjoy. How many members and fans around the state remember their first outing to any music concert being at Festival Hall? It is an absolute icon of the music scene in Queensland and without it live music in Queensland will have a very precarious future indeed.
