

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 622

asked on Thursday, 25 March 2010

MR ELMES ASKED THE MINISTER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY (MS JONES)—

QUESTION:

As the Minister with principal responsibility for historical cultural heritage, what was the decision making process whereby the culturally significant and historical Regent Cinema was approved for destruction?

ANSWER:

The whole of the Regent Theatre was included in the Queensland Heritage Register in 1992. Following an objection by the owner, the listing was referred to an independent assessor. The assessor advised the Queensland Heritage Council that the remnants of the original auditorium were no longer of cultural heritage significance. As the member would be aware, the Queensland Heritage Council is an independent body, and makes decisions independently of Government.

In 1994, on this advice, the Queensland Heritage Council removed from the Queensland Heritage Register the highly altered auditorium containing the new cinemas. The listing over the intact parts of the original Regent Theatre Queen Street entrance foyer and grand staircase remained.

In December 2007, a nomination to include the remnants of the original auditorium in the Queensland Heritage Register was proposed by a member of the public. This nomination was considered by the Queensland Heritage Council which reconfirmed that the installation of four cinemas in the 1980s had substantially altered the original auditorium and that the remnants did not meet the stringent criteria for entry in the Queensland Heritage Register.

In May 2009, Brisbane City Council approved a redevelopment proposal for the Regent Theatre, the Wintergarden and Hilton Hotel, that required the 1980s cinemas to be demolished. I'm advised the Queensland Heritage Council argued the redevelopment did not threaten the heritage listed portions of the Regent.

The development application was referred to the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) as a concurrence agency to consider its impact on the heritage listed foyers. As the listed foyers were to be retained and incorporated into the new development, DERM recommended that the application be approved with conditions. In addition, the then Minister for Planning exercised powers under the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*, to also require the development to include cinemas.

I'm advised a revised proposal by the developer, which included three multifunction auditoria that will screen box office movies and be available for various cinema related events, was considered to satisfy this direction.

A new nomination for heritage listing of the Regent Showcase Cinema and the adjoining bar area was again received on 15 May 2009 from community members. The nomination was considered by the Queensland Heritage Council in November 2009. Both the nominators, the developer and Councillor David Hinchliffe of Brisbane City Council, made presentations to the Heritage Council. Once again, the Heritage Council decided that the portions of the cinema nominated did not meet the criteria for inclusion in the Queensland Heritage Register.

On 26 November 2009, in response to an application from the developer, the Queensland Heritage Council issued a certificate of immunity preventing further nomination of the cinemas. The certificate of immunity is valid for five years from the date of decision.

The listed foyers of the original Regent Cinema will continue to be protected by the requirements of the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992*.