

SPARE PARTS PUPPET THEATRE — CLOSURE

660. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Culture and the Arts:

I refer to recent media reports that Spare Parts Puppet Theatre has been forced to cancel the remainder of its 2022 season due to the sudden decision by the Western Australian government to condemn the theatre building. I also note that the exoskeleton was built in 2017, with an expected life span of five to 10 years.

- (1) Was there a building and asset management plan for Spare Parts Puppet Theatre; and, if yes, will the minister please table the plan?
- (2) Why was Spare Parts Puppet Theatre given no notice of the closure, and therefore no time to plan for this situation and look at alternative rehearsal and performance spaces?
- (3) What was the department doing to monitor and manage the structural integrity of the theatre, and the risk to staff and members of the public, prior to condemning the theatre?
- (4) Will Spare Parts Puppet Theatre receive financial support to ensure that it, along with contracted artists, is not out-of-pocket because of the sudden cancellation of performances?
- (5) Is the department working on a temporary solution and performance space, and is there a plan to rebuild, redevelop or repair the condemned theatre and adjoining building for Spare Parts Puppet Theatre?

Hon KYLE MCGINN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided to me by the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Culture and the Arts, on behalf of the Minister for Culture and the Arts.

- (1)–(5) On 15 July 2022, the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries met with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre to discuss the future of the Short Street theatre that houses Spare Parts Puppet Theatre. At that meeting, Spare Parts was advised that safety of staff, performers and audiences is the primary concern and that urgent works were required to the building. Spare Parts was advised that it could not be guaranteed that these works would not disrupt its operations. DLGSC is committed to working with Spare Parts to provide opportunities to minimise impacts on its operations.

On 2 August 2022, the consultant team engaged to document the proposed works advised DLGSC that the works would not address the underlying structural integrity issues caused by the height of the watertable. Further, the consultant advised that the works could not be undertaken safely. Based on the expert's advice, DLGSC determined that the safety risk required that the auditorium be closed immediately. Spare Parts was advised of the decision on 3 August 2022. Structural integrity and compliance reports were prepared in 2015, 2017 and 2021. In addition, routine and preventive maintenance has been undertaken. These reports and inspections, and the additional structural support—the exoskeleton—installed in 2017, provided a level of assurance that the building was safe at that time. The urgent works that DLGSC had proposed to undertake were identified as being required in the 2021 structural integrity report.

Spare Parts Puppet Theatre remains a valued part of the Western Australian arts ecology. The minister recently met with the board and staff of Spare Parts to assure them that every effort would be made to assist them during this time. He has directed DLGSC to work with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre to minimise operational disruption and costs and to develop short and long-term solutions.