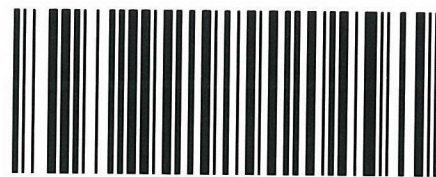


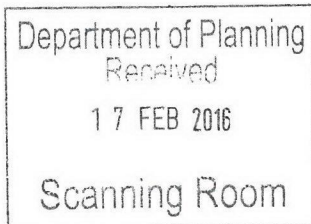
Jim & Cherylynn Molesworth

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11th February 2016

Director, Urban Renewal
NSW Department of Planning and Environment
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001



Dear sir/madam,

I am writing to make a submission on the re-development of the Castle Hill Showground precinct, in particular as it affects the Pavilion Theatre, home of the Castle Hill Players.

In summary:

1. I am a long-term resident of the Hills Shire and have a strong interest in community theatre
2. there are very special attributes of the Pavilion Theatre that I would like to see recognized and included as requirements in any alternative venue solutions
3. the Hills Shire has a history of not being well catered for in regards to community and small professional theatre groups, the saddest example being the failed, and now demolished, *Hills Centre* facility.

As background, I regularly organize social theatre groups to a number of live theatre venues in Sydney. In 2015, I organized approximately 20 group outings to attend amateur and community theatre performances. The venues in 2015 included:

- The Pavilion Theatre (7 outings)
- Sport for Jove outdoor summer season at Bella Vista Farm and Leura (3 outings)
- Eastwood Uniting Church Musical Society (3 outings)
- Dural Musical Society (2 outings)
- Pymble Players (2 outings)
- Elanora Players
- The Genesian Theatre in the CBD

I already have 10 groups organized for 2016, again mainly at the Pavilion Theatre. Since 2000, our groups have attended approximately 50 performances there.

One very special attribute of the Pavilion theatre is the excellent design of the sloped seating. It was purpose-built for small scale, intimate theatre. The sloped seating allows shorter patrons, including children and our disabled son, to enjoy the productions more. Most other venues for community theatre venues are flat-floored (like church halls) and the view of shorter patrons are frequently obscured by the rows in front of them.

Other special qualities of the Pavilion Theatre include:

- the quiet atmosphere of the current Showground precinct
- very easy access and parking
- the excellent foyer area for socializing before the show and at intermission

2.

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- the high quality sets that the dedicated players are able to come up with, due to their ability to store and recall large amounts of set components and props

and last but not least:

- the excellent camaraderie of members of the Castle Hill Players, partly attributable to them having "their own space" to meet, rehearse and socialize.

We have been waiting for the North-west Rail Link for 30 years and are very supportive of its construction. We also accept that the land adjacent to the new transport links needs to be significantly developed to offer a higher density of services and residential accommodation. But while the Hills Shire is already "awash" with sporting facilities (many under-utilised), the Shire has a history of not providing as well for cultural, theatrical and other passive recreational opportunities.

Even when the theatre requirements were recognized, they failed to be addressed effectively. The now-demolished Hills Centre was an extremely expensive, poorly designed "white elephant" that catered for no one's requirements. It was too big for community theatre and the stage area and seating were too badly designed for even a small professional production. This caused several professional production groups to completely avoid it, instead relocating to the closest alternative, being the Riverside theatre complex at Parramatta.

For sentimental reasons, and because I believe the current Pavilion Theatre building meets its current objectives so well, I would love to see the current Pavilion theatre and immediate parking area retained, with an external modernization/re-fit. But if this is not possible, as I expect, then a new purpose-built theatre facility is definitely required in the Hills Shire. I would propose the following requirements, based on our extensive experience with community theatre:

- 150-200 seat capacity theatre
- sloped seating (mandatory)
- breakout/foyer area to suit 200 patrons standing with refreshments
- kitchen, bar and box office facilities
- extensive set/stage prop storage
- easy parking for 100 cars
- small workshop facility for carpentry and painting etc
- a quiet pleasant ambience.

Budget permitting, I would also suggest a secondary rehearsal stage of the same dimensions as the primary theatre, but with minimal audience seating etc. This secondary stage would cater for very small productions, but also enable upcoming productions to rehearse and mock up their sets, while earlier productions were still running in the primary theatre. This would enable more productions per year, longer seasons or multiple community theatre groups to share the same facility.

I also wish to strongly propose that a new purpose-built community theatre venue does **not need** to be located within the re-developed Showground precinct. The population of theatre patrons I see simply do not use public transport - **they drive**. I would prefer to see a new facility located in a quieter location a short distance from the current Showground, rather than being crammed into a busy new residential/commercial precinct. I suggest that a

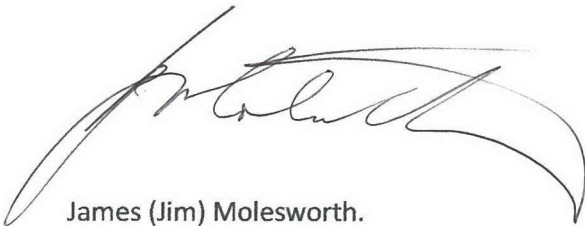
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quiet area of the Fred Caterson Reserve, which adjoins the Castle Hill Showground precinct, would be very suitable. Similarly, I envisage a new purpose-built facility could be easily located elsewhere within the Hills LGA such as in Bella Vista Farm, Glenhaven or even the Greenway Reserve at Cherrybrook (Hornsby LGA).

Thank you for considering my submission. I am happy to be contacted to clarify any aspect of it, and would also be prepared to participate in a forum, committee or working party to look at requirements for future community theatre venues in the Hills Shire resulting from the Castle Hill Showground redevelopment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Molesworth', with a large, sweeping flourish extending from the end of the signature.

James (Jim) Molesworth.