



NSW Department of Planning

Attn: Rodger Roppolo

Cumberland Gang Show

6 Baden Powell Place,

Winston Hills NSW 2153

28th April 2025

Submission by Cumberland Gang Show

State Significant Development Application no. SSD-74133241

– Parramatta Riverside Theatres Redevelopment

Referenced is made to the exhibition of the application by Parramatta City Council for the State Significant Development Application no. SSD-74133241 for Parramatta Riverside Theatres Redevelopment and the opportunity to provide comments by 28th April 2025. This submission is made on behalf of Cumberland Gang Show, being a not-for-profit performing arts section of Scouts NSW.

Cumberland Gang Show is a part of Scouts NSW and has performed its annual musical and variety production at Parramatta Riverside Theatre since the theatre opened in 1988. We have six (6) planned performances in July this year in which we will have over 150 Scouts and Guides aged between 8 – 25 years perform on the stage as one of the last shows to perform at Riverside Theatre prior to the redevelopment. When performing at the Theatre, we utilise 100% of all backstage and under stage areas for our cast, and we need around 120 crew to work back of house and run the Show. We also utilise all technical areas with the latest theatre technologies available to produce our highly successful shows.

With 37 years of experience performing at Riverside Theatre, we are well placed to provide comments on the redevelopment plans. We also appreciated the consultation with theatre management throughout the planning process. We are very supportive of the overall plans for the redevelopment of Riverside Theatre and welcome the opportunity to provide detailed comments with the SSD application.

While our performances are based in the existing Riverside theatre (as the Drama theatre) with some 760 seats within the auditorium which is being kept intact with new seating; we are pleased to see the development include plans for a 1,500-seat lyric theatre, together with a 324-studio theatre and a 100-seat cinema rehearsal space.

As a long-standing community-based performing arts user of the Theatre, we are particularly concerned about some aspects of the new development, particularly around safety and well-being of our youth members and the experience of our families and supporters that visit the theatre to attend our performances.

We would like to make the following recommendations for consideration when deliberating and determining the new theatre SSD application.

1. Safety and security at the Stage Door access

The theatre access for users and performers is via the Stage Door located midway along Market Street. From our experience this entrance area needs to be a space large enough to accommodate large numbers of youth members (150) plus back-of-house workers (120) being able to enter at the same time. The stage door access should also include an awning for weather protection for youth members and parents waiting to access the theatre. We also know that considering this aspect will also assist other community users of the Theatre who have casts comprising of many young people (e.g. dance and cultural groups)

Comments:

The safety of venue users, especially children that are performing on stage, should be an important consideration when accessing and exiting the theatres via the Stage Door. The Stage Door is to be located on Market Street and opens directly onto the footpath with no safety and security measures to protect performers from exiting the stage door, especially at night.

Scouts Australia have a child protection requirement that stipulates that children cannot exit the Stage Door unless accompanied by their parent or guardian. Parents waiting outside the Stage Door on Market Street on the footpath are not enticed by the design to wait in this area, that is unprotected and offers no security.

It is recommended that an awning is provided over the footpath at the Stage Door, as some protection from the weather for the waiting parents and that this area is adequately lit and provided with security cameras for the safety of all users.

2. Venue car parking for hirers

The planning assessment report, EIS prepared by Ethos Urban dated 20 March 2025, that accompanies the SSD application in respect to venue car parking states:

- *“Onsite parking is not proposed as part of the redeveloped Riverside Theatres.”* (Reference: EIS page 95, Section 6.4.1 – Operation)
- *“Removal of the existing at-grade car parking on the site (utilised by staff only)”*
- *“The proposed development does not propose any on-site visitor car parking which promotes the use of public transport, walking and cycling as the primary modes of transport to the site.”* (Page 96)

In addition, the Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) report, by ARUP dated 27 February '25, supporting the SSD application states:

- *“On-site parking is limited to staff only at present, with no parking provided on-site for event attendees.”* (Reference: TIA report, ARUP – page 21, Section 3.4)

Comments:

The statements provided in both the EIS and TIA report are *incorrect* in stating that the existing at-grade car park is utilised by staff only. As a major and annual user of Riverside Theatre there are usually six (6) car spaces provided for use by hirers. Similarly, there are car parking spaces provided for the users/hirers of the existing Lennox and Raffety rooms within the current complex.

The removal of the at-grade car park area for theatre users is not properly addressed within the reports supporting the application. The existing parking spaces for theatre users are used for ease of access, and the removal of these parking spaces would be a major inconvenience and be less attractive for community groups.

Features of on-site parking for users/hirers include:

- Security for theatre users/hirers who handle money collected via selling merchandise
- Access for users/hirers who bring in food and catering equipment for large cast and crew, such as Cumberland Gang Show for every performance
- Access for technical crew who are required to bring in items such as sets, costumes and hand props
- Available parking for Show management/technical staff who may be required to run errands or arrive late to the show performance time.

It is not possible for the above Show personnel to utilise public transport or other transport options when running a Show. Furthermore, the availability of on-site car spaces for users/hirers makes the Theatre a more attractive space for potential users to hire.

In addition, the existing on site car parking area has designated accessible parking spaces that are booked and used by theatre patrons. This matter is not addressed in the accompanying reports and the loss of accessible parking for patrons has not been considered in any reports.

3. Accessible parking

Accessible parking for patrons seeking access to the theatre redevelopment has not been considered in any reports with any specific identification on location or numbers of access car spaces. It is highly recommended to provide accessible car spaces near the theatre and this should be a design consideration and a consideration of the SSD application. The only reference that can be found in all the reports on accessible parking is highlighted below.

- *“Accessibility including drop off zones for the elderly and disabled.”* (Reference: TIA – page 6)
- *“As part of the Green Travel Plan, including within the Transport Impact Assessment, future theatre users will be encouraged to use recently improved and forthcoming public transport options in the Parramatta area, supporting sustainable and accessible travel.”*
- *“This section outlines a framework Green Travel Plan (GTP) for Riverside Theatre to encourage and enable the use of sustainable modes of travel and reduce vehicle trips. A final GTP will need to be developed based on this framework in consultation with TfNSW and Riverside Theatre operational staff prior to occupation.”* (Reference: TIA - page 36)

Comments:

No accessible drop-off zones for the theatre have been identified in the TIA report, nor have they been identified in the framework for the Green Travel Plan or on any plans.

It is unreasonable to expect patrons that rely upon accessible access to be forced to utilise public transport to Riverside Theatre as mentioned in the TIA report.

It is too late to leave this issue unresolved and only be addressed prior to occupation of the building. The public and theatre community should be consulted with the preparation of the Green Travel Plan, which should be exhibited for comment with the commencement of construction.

The location and number of accessible parking spaces within proximity to Riverside theatre should be an important matter for consideration in the preparation of the Traffic Management Plan for the operations of the theatres.

4. Pedestrian access from public car parking areas

While the TIA and Green Travel Plans are properly recommending public transport for access to Riverside Theatre. Not all patrons and users of the theatres will be able to travel via public transport. It is recognised that there are several public car parking areas within a 10 -15-minute walk of Riverside Theatre. However, what is not addressed is the safety and ease of pedestrian access from these parking areas to the theatre, especially for people with access issues.

Comments:

With the commencement of construction for Riverside Theatre, a Pedestrian Access Management Plan (PAMP) needs to be developed which properly addresses safety concerns and pedestrian friendly access from all parking areas to the theatre. This PAMP should be exhibited for community review prior to opening of the theatre.

5. Operational articulated truck access management plan

In respect to truck access and in particular articulated truck access to the loading dock for the theatre the following references are found in the TIA along with truck turning paths.

- *“The loading dock will be a managed facility with delivery and servicing vehicles required to book arrival times, and operational staff required to facilitate access to the dock for all vehicles.”* (Reference: TIA - Page 33)
- *“Articulated Vehicles (AVs) will be required to reverse into the loading dock from Market Street with traffic management provided by dock operational staff to ensure pedestrian safety.”*
- *“The redevelopment will provide one managed loading dock within the site, with servicing and deliveries expected to be scheduled outside of network peak times.”* (Reference: TIA report, ARUP – page 45, Conclusion)



Comments:

While the operational requirements for the loading dock should be booked and managed, as a user of the theatre it is not always possible for deliveries to be scheduled outside of network peak times. Access to the loading dock should be arranged via theatre staff with a booking system and not restricted to outside of network peak times.

Large articulated vehicles are often used for delivery of stage scenery and theatre equipment (e.g. audio-visual equipment) and the arrangement for reversing into the loading dock is accepted practice. With articulated vehicles reversing into the loading dock, this reversing movement would block traffic along Market Street. A traffic management plan together with traffic controllers should be a requirement to ensure safety for both pedestrians and road users at the intersection of Market and Marsden Streets.

Conclusion

The redevelopment of Riverside Theatre is supported as a place for both professional and community-based performing arts entertainment, and on behalf of Cumberland Gang Show we look forward to being able to utilise Riverside Theatre in the future.

We thank the Department of Planning for the opportunity to provide comments on the Riverside Theatre redevelopment plans and seek that the above-mentioned matters are considered in the determination of the SSD application.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Lee".

Peter Lee

Chair – Cumberland Gang Show Management Committee