

23 November 2017

Mr Brad Cam
General Manager
Mid-Western Regional Council
PO Box 156
MUDGEE NSW 2850

Dear Mr Cam,

DA0081/2018 – Mudgee Regent Theatre, 5-7 Church Street, Mudgee - Part Demolition, New Hotel, Alterations & Additions, Function Space & Carpark

The National Trust of Australia (NSW) {"the Trust"} lodges a strong objection to this Development Application which involves the demolition of the auditorium of the Mudgee Regent Theatre and its replacement with a hotel development.

In September, 1993 the Trust listed the "Mudgee Regent Theatre" on the National Trust Register following an extensive inspection of the theatre and consultation with the then owners Mr William and Mrs Elizabeth Suttor.

The Listing Report's Statement of Significance noted –

The Mudgee Regent is an excellent, rare, intact example of an Art Deco Moderne country cinema which has remained in the same family ownership and operated for its original purpose for nearly sixty years. The theatre is a landmark in Mudgee and has been the focal point of the town's popular culture for generations. Modernisation of the theatre to meet popular tastes and demand has not compromised the building's heritage fabric and provides a graphic layering of progressive modifications reflecting changing technology in the cinema industry.

The theatre also contains numerous items of industrial archaeological value, still in use, e.g. the c.1938 slide projector and lighting panel. The nursery is a most important and early example of child-care facilities and the paintings are a very rare, intact group of murals depicting the popular children's art of the 1940s.

While not built and decorated on the scale of the city picture palaces, the Mudgee Regent is a very fine and rare surviving representative example of the more typical cinemas which dominated early twentieth century culture throughout New South Wales.

The Trust has recently become aware that this cinema was designed by George Newton Kenworthy, the noted cinema architect who designed many cinemas in the Interwar Period including the Cremorne Orpheum Theatre.

The Trust's Listing Report and the Movie Theatre Register for NSW prepared for the NSW Heritage Office in 1996 had both indicated that the architect was Douglas Smith, information provided by the owners of the Mudgee Regent Theatre. However, tender documents and Mudgee Guardian Newspaper reports from 1936 clearly confirm that the architect was George Newton Kenworthy.

Of his two surviving cinemas in NSW, the Cremorne Orpheum has been considerably altered whereas the Mudgee Regent Theatre is relatively intact and would be, in the Trust's view, of State Heritage Significance.



Most importantly, many other key regional towns and cities have been able to retain their historic cinemas as landmark buildings for their communities and as tourism icons. They include: -

Montreal Theatre, Tumut (1929)
Roxy Theatre, Leeton (1930)
Saraton Theatre, Grafton (1926)
Roxy Theatre, Nowra (1935)
Regent Theatre, Albury (1927)
Roxy Theatre, Bingara (1936)
St James Theatre, Dungog (1914)
Regal Cinema, Birmingham Gardens (1932)
Regent Cinema, Murwillumbah (1947)
Civic Theatre, Newcastle (1929)
Royal Theatre, Quirindi (1930)
Civic Theatre, Scone (1938)
King's Theatre, Thirroul (1925)
Gala Cinema, Warrawong (1948)
Ray-Mond Theatre, Bowraville (1940)
Empire Theatre, Bowral (1915)
Savoy, Cooma (1958)
Chrystal Theatre, Portland (1927)
Plaza, Laurieton (1959)
Star Court Theatre, Lismore (1921)
Jetty Memorial Theatre, Coffs Harbour (1928)
Kinema, Narooma (1926)
Majestic, Sawtell (1957)
Roxy, Gulgong (late 1930s)

The Trust understands that the State Heritage Register listed Scone Civic Theatre, which has been closed for many years, is now being restored for use as a convention centre.

The State Heritage Register listed 1891 Newcastle Victoria Theatre, the oldest theatre building still standing in New South Wales which closed in the late 1960s, has been purchased and will be restored by Mr Greg Khoury of Century Venues, a man reported to have "a thing for old theatres."

Century Venues purchased Newtown's Enmore Theatre in 1984 after it had closed as a cinema. After major restoration works it is now in its 33rd year of operation as one of Sydney's key theatre and entertainment venues featuring world renowned acts such as 'The Rolling Stones', "Coldplay", "Kylie Minogue" and "The Russian National Theatre Ballet – The Nutcracker".

It would be extraordinary if Mudgee which depends so much on tourism were to lose such a significant historic theatre when so many other towns in NSW have kept their theatres.

The common heritage thread which applies to all the theatres listed above is that they continue to be a much loved community entertainment facility and a vital drawcard for tourism. That unbroken 82 year history would be broken with the demolition proposed for the theatre.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Quint
Director - Advocacy