



TOWNSVILLE PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE

A vision for the future

Supportive Information

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TOWNSVILLE COMMUNITY

*Music
Centre*



**BARRIER REEF
ORCHESTRA**



AUSTRALIAN
CONCERT 
VOCAL COMPETITION
EST. 1980

ABBREVIATIONS USED

ACVC	Australian Concerto and Vocal Competition
AFCM	Australian Festival of Chamber Music
BRO	Barrier Reef Orchestra
CBD	Central Business District (of Townsville)
CPAC	Cairns Performing Arts Centre
EOI	Expressions of Interest
PAC	Performing Arts Centre
PANQ	Professional Artists North Queensland
PDA	Priority Development Area (of Townsville)
QPAC	Queensland Performing Arts Centre
QSO	Queensland Symphony Orchestra
TCMC	Townsville Community Music Centre
TCC	Townsville City Council
TCT	Townsville Civic Theatre
TPAC	Townsville Performing Arts Centre

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executive summary

Townsville has only one theatre, the Townsville Civic Theatre (TCT) built in 1978 as Stage one of a Performing Arts Centre (TPAC). Forty years later, this is no longer sufficient for the community's needs and as a result the city misses out on numerous performances.

To promote debate and action, four leading local performing arts organisations developed and launched the TPAC proposal in 2015.

The concept was to continue the development of our TCT into a five-venue performing arts centre with the back-of-house and front-of-house facilities shared. Over 800 off-street carparks are provided and construction could be carried out without interrupting the continued operation of the TCT.

The concept adds the most needed venues to the existing 1000-seat drama theatre by improving and extending the building to providing:-

- a 270-seat theatre with multi-use option
- a 2000-seat capacity amphitheatre.
- an 800-seat medium-sized theatre in concert hall - not drama theatre - format with 600 stalls and a 200-seat balcony, intended to provide the acoustics but cater for much more than just musical concerts.
- A large separatable foyer space that can become a venue in its own right for flat floor performance or function use.

For some years a 1000-seat stand-alone Concert Hall has been proposed for Townsville. This would be a very costly facility for which there is low demand. Two reports that support this concept have been prepared (Bott 2017; AECOM 2019). Both reports are seriously flawed in overestimating demand, and fail to address high operational costs and justify the facility by incorrectly predicting large flow-on benefits to the Civic Theatre and the local economy while ignoring the fact that the community need has not been addressed.

Recently a proposal for a cultural precinct has emerged. Placing art facilities together has problems. It takes facilities such as art galleries out of the CBD where they are best located, and a precinct would also cause increased traffic and parking issues whilst yielding no benefit to the facilities concerned.

A PAC is best located on a large inner-city site with its own access and parking, separated from the envisaged Entertainment Centre or the nearby Stadium. These are the features that makes the TCT location the optimum site for our PAC. The TPAC concept is exceptionally economical with a current cost estimate of \$74.3m and would also minimise subsequent operational costs. The proposal comes from the community and is shovel-ready.

The TPAC proposal gives us the facilities Townsville needs in the most affordable form, and above all addresses the community needs. It also has the benefit of being an excellent Festival venue. It would be one of regional Australia's best Performing Arts Centres, could potentially achieve a break-even operating cost and would greatly enhance the cultural life of Townsville and the liveability of the city.

1. background

Townsville is desperately short of performing arts facilities. This need was identified as far back as the 1970s. Townsville City Council (TCC) decided that the city needed a performing arts centre (PAC) and with no suitable site available in the CBD they excised a large parcel of land out of Reid Park on the opposite side of Ross Creek to the CBD and built the Townsville Civic Theatre (TCT) as Stage 1 of the PAC which opened in 1978 (a very similar project to QPAC being established on the other side of the river in Brisbane). Forty-three years later we are still waiting for stage 2 which was then promised to commence in 5 years' time i.e., 1983.

In 2009 the TCT received an extension building funded by Queensland 150 years celebration funds, this consisted entirely of back of house improvements and did not add venues or significant Patron improvements. Not long before amalgamation with TCC in 2008 Thuringowa City established the Riverway Arts Centre which added a 300-seat capacity "Black Box" multi use space to our venues but this facility has been closed for the last two years and is understood to be destined for conversion into a library.

We are therefore almost exactly where we were in 1978.

Townsville is missing out on numerous performances and events every year. That TCT turned away 110 potential bookings in 2014 (TCC Performing Arts and Events Strategy 2015 p. 6) illustrates the extent of the problem which existed long before 2014 and has deteriorated since. It should also be noted that this 110 figure does not include the many potential users who already knew TCT was heavily booked and as a result did not bother to even try booking. Nor does it include touring events that did not proceed due to a lack of a venue in the largest town on the northern circuit.

In 2014 four leading Townsville performing arts organisations combined to commission the preparation of a concept design for a facility that would address our key venue needs. This was done in order to stimulate debate and to urge Council to action. This is the TPAC proposal which was submitted to Council in 2015 (see Appendix 1) and was revised in 2017 (TPAC 2017 Revision A).

No formal response, other than acknowledgement of receipt, was received from Council until 2017 when representatives of the TPAC partner organisations were informed that Council had received and adopted the Bott Report (Bott2017) which had recommended against the TPAC concept and that therefore Council "would give no further consideration" to the TPAC proposal. The Bott Report was a feasibility study for a Concert Hall (see 5.1 below).

2. community needs

The TPAC partner organisations – the Barrier Reef Orchestra (BRO); the Australian Concerto and Vocal Competition (ACVC); the Townsville Community Music Centre (TCMC) and the Townsville Eisteddfod are all long established performing arts organisations.

Defining our venue needs is not hard, indeed the inadequacies of our venues are constantly obvious to any organisation involved in events in Townsville.

In addition to the TCT, a 1000 seat drama theatre which is an excellent facility and recently refurbished, the TPAC group identified our key venues needs as :-

- a small theatre (say 200 seat)
- a medium sized theatre (500-600 capacity);
- an outdoor theatre (2000 capacity amphitheatre) and
- at least one venue with the right acoustics for live music and voice.

The performing arts in Townsville consists of numerous individual companies, organisations and groups – there is no uniting body. There are two multi-member bodies – the TPAC group and Professional Artists North Queensland (PANQ). These two organisations have a formally adopted joint position on overall arts facility needs which includes the key venues listed above (see appendix 2). It is noted that the four key venues are seen as an essential minimum, there are other highly desirable venues that could be added – a studio; a dance theatre, a Centre for the Moving Image, a large black box space suitable for circus and other events are examples.

To the desire for the key venue needs (small, medium, outdoor + acoustics) was added the clear need for our new venues to be in the form of a PAC. This is not only much less costly in both capital and subsequent operational cost terms but gives us a multi-venue festival centre as opposed to isolated venues.

Since we already have a large suitable block of land set to one side for a PAC and we already have stage 1 built the architectural brief specified that our four needed venues be developed as improvements and extensions to the existing TCT. This continues the sound vision of Council and builds on a substantial and very successful community asset.

3. tpac outline

The TPAC brief was given to Troppo Architects and the design development process was informed by frequent discussion and review so that practical industry input was present throughout. It was also required that the concept be a no-frills design focused on functional practicability. This was not to be an iconic structure (though clearly this can also be achieved if the additional costs are accepted) and lastly the design was not to provide facilities dedicated to any one user nor based on any one user's needs. This exclusion applied in regard to all potential users including the TPAC partner organisations themselves.

In addition to the 960-seat current TCT, the TPAC concept includes the following:

- 208 seat drama theatre
- 600-800 seat concert hall
- 2,000 capacity outdoor amphitheatre
- Separatable foyer space

The main elements in the TPAC concept are outlined below – reference should be made to the relevant plan sheets in the TPAC document which can be viewed or downloaded at www.tpac.net.au

3.1 Small Drama Theatre See plan sheets 5 & 9

<i>Capacity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 208 seat auditorium
<i>Location</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the Civics' extension area presently taken up by storage and workshop.
<i>Access</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage access by two sound locks and via a wide door stage entry with a floor lift to raise large items such as a grand piano to stage level. • Patron access to the auditorium is via the same space as that for door 2 of the Civic auditorium where the nearby existing toilets have been increased in size.
<i>Stage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9m wide proscenium arch with thrust stage
<i>Auditorium Features</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retractable seating and five large furniture storage cupboards recessed into the walls
<i>Intention</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drama and music performance. This theatre is also intended to accommodate functions, meetings etc and could be used for theatre restaurant with the choice of partially or fully retracting the seating to create combinations of seating, dancing and dining options. • Could be utilised as a rehearsal space and could also be used as a marshalling area if needed for performances with extremely large casts such as dance school presentations in the Civic auditorium.
<i>Use</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very frequent use throughout the year.

3.2 Concert hall See plan sheets 6,10 & 12

<i>Capacity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 600/800 seats
<i>Location</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional construction adjoining the current TCT
<i>Access</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide rear doors to the stage and a loading bay allows large items to be installed on stage. There is a patron lift to upper floors.
<i>Stage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20m x 20m concert hall stage (no proscenium arch, wings or fly tower).
<i>Features</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drama theatre layout with all seats directly facing the stage. • Concert Hall acoustics • 600-seat raked stalls and a 200-seat balcony – this gives the venue a 600/800 capacity but retains the same medium sized hall.
<i>Intention</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TPAC design proposes to combine the requirement for a medium sized theatre (500-600 seats) with the requirement for at least one venue with the right acoustics for live music and voice making the venue acceptable for live music but quite adaptable to other uses.
<i>Use</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairly frequent use throughout the year.
<i>Notes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This model is a cost saving measure; the alternative is to build both a medium sized drama theatre and a concert hall as well.

3.3 Outdoor Theatre See plan sheets 7,11 & 12

<i>Capacity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,000
<i>Location</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjacent to TCT
<i>Access</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With its own turnstile entry separate from the PAC lobby.
<i>Stage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20m wide and 11m deep. The stage has its own loading bay and access to the full back-of-house facilities of the PAC.
<i>Features</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refreshments and toilets are located beneath the grassed, graded audience mound which has a 1 in 5 slope – not too steep to climb or sit on but enough to give all a good view of the stage. • The flat “mosh pit” area in front of the large roofed stage could optionally accommodate an audience of 500 seated on chairs, 300 informally seated on blankets or 250 dining at tables of 10. • The venue does not have to be used only for large events. • There is a sound and light booth at the rear of the mound and the stage has access to its own loading ramp • The audience in the amphitheatre faces south-east.
<i>Use</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairly frequent use throughout the year.
<i>Notes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is noted that Cairns has already built an amphitheatre of similar capacity near CPAC. • Having the two amphitheatres would greatly help to attract touring events to the north and would also prompt Mackay and Rockhampton to follow suit and create a northern circuit like that of our theatres.

3.4 Separatable Foyer See plan sheets 6,10 & 12

<i>Capacity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500 seated at tables • 1,000 stand up event
<i>Location</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively joins the current theatre space to the Concert Hall.
<i>Access</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle and forklift access is via extra-large doors in the lobby outer wall.
<i>Auditorium Features</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can easily be opened up for free movement of patrons or closed off to become a venue in it's own right. • Designed to have the option of natural light and ventilation in the stepped ceiling (see cross section plan 12) as an alternative to the air conditioning. • There is an existing balcony which projects into the space on the eastern wall, this could serve as a minstrel gallery.
<i>Stage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12m wide; 8m deep triangular stage with access to the full back of house facilities. • Sound and light booth located above the Bar
<i>Intention</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foyer space • Events and functions
<i>Use</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The foyer space is seen as possibly the most heavily used element in the PAC. • It especially lends itself to conference or promotional events that might use this space in combination with either the Civic or Concert Hall auditoriums.
<i>Notes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both the Burdekin and Mackay Theatres have large foyers which can be used as flat floor venues. The TPAC design takes this proven concept a step further by creating a large foyer space that can be separated to become a venue whilst still retaining adequate lobby space servicing the other auditoriums.

3.5 Front of House See plan sheet 3

<i>Facilities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities are shared by all four internal venues • Connected by a continuous 900m² lobby inside and a 6m wide 830m² wrap around covered veranda outside. • The lobby outer wall is composed of 2 meter wide rotatable louvre panels, this allows for the louvres to be opened or closed either for vision or ventilation or for them to be rotated for free movement of people between the lobby and veranda. The intent is to have a tropical, well ventilated and informal front of house which could however be closed up for air conditioning when required. It is possible for the veranda, lobbies and foyer to become one large uninterrupted space.
<i>Bar</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long bar and food servery island facing both the lobby and the separatable foyer space. • Above the bar is a commercial kitchen and the foyer sound and light booth (see plan sheet 6 and cross-section sheet 12)
<i>Box Office</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External to the building and utilises what was previously the Civic Theatre bar. This enables the Box Office to operate entirely independently including at times when all of the PAC is closed to the public.
<i>Toilets</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing toilets near the small theatre and the Civic lobby toilets have the female increased and the male reduced in size to balance out the usage and reduce queuing. • In both the Concert Hall and Civic lobbies six unisex toilets have been added two of which would be nominated “disabled” but all are in fact identical. The intent is that both older and slower patrons could use these toilets freeing up the other facilities for most patrons.
<i>Administration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration space has been increased by converting the existing little used atrium behind the Civic lift into both ground floor and upper floor office space, the previous box office is also incorporated into administration.

3.6 Back of House See plan sheet 3 and upper floors on sheets 8,9 & 10

<i>Facilities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TPAC concept approximately doubles the back of house facilities of the existing Civic Theatre although effectively adding four venues. • Each venue would be able to be allocated as much or as little of these facilities as the individual user required.
<i>C2 conversion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The present “C2” space is converted into workshop and storage space with the mezzanine level extended to cover half the ground floor area. • A loading bay is added to this area, as are loading bays for both the Concert Hall and Amphitheatre stages. • The workshop/storage area is connected to Administration via a upper level walkway which also incorporates the small theatre sound and light booth (see plan sheet 9).
<i>Stage door and green rooms</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The single existing stage-door is retained for performer and crew entry. • The existing green room is retained but an additional large green room is added at the rear of the Civic building (this could be subdivided internally, perhaps to create small and large green room options).
<i>Piano store room</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A piano store room is located behind the foyer stage.
<i>Storage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An additional storage feature in both the foyer space and the small theatre are large furniture storage cupboards recessed into the walls. This allows for a quick change around of furniture in these two venues which are both multi use.
<i>Access</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An extra set of large doors is added to the Civic stage, this allows large items such as a grand piano to be moved onto the stage, or via this stage, onwards to the small theatre. • The small theatre stage has wide door access and a floor lift to raise large or heavy items up to stage level.

3.7 External Works See plan sheets 1 & 2

<i>Proposed extensions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheet 1 shows TPAC in relation to Ross Creek, the CBD and nearby roads and suburban area. • It also shows the TPAC lots property line. The existing building is shown with the proposed new extensions in red.
<i>Parking</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheet 2 shows the existing parking for 109 cars to the east is retained, the area to the north and the service area could provide informal staff and performer’s parking for 70 vehicles. • To the west there are 705 patron car parks and 8 coach parks. • 205 of the western car parks and the main circulation roads are bituminised, the remaining areas are stabilised grass – an environmentally friendly and less costly approach to parking where it is not heavily used. • The overall layout provides 814 off street patron car parks, additionally there is kerbside parking on Boundary Street and overflow parking space in Reid Park.
<i>Traffic access and pedestrian connectivity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the west of the Centre there is a 60m long pick up/drop off lane and to the south both coach and taxi zones. • The plan also notionally shows the waterside promenade along the Ross Creek frontage. This planned future civic feature which connects the various PDA developments and the CBD together will give TPAC good pedestrian connectivity to accommodation, dining and shopping options.

3.8

Construction

<i>Site</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The TPAC site, like much of the PDA includes areas of both landfill and reclamation. This was not an impediment to either the original development of the TCT nor to its subsequent extension or the construction of the Pitts building nearby and does not represent an impediment to TPAC.
<i>Flood Risk</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The TPAC site is quite low lying, at a similar level to much of the PDA. The site was not flooded during the 2019 monsoon event floods (the severe water damage to the theatre was due to roof leaks not flood). With potential sea level rises considered, minimum floor level requirements are generally being raised. In a theatre (including the existing TCT) all of the back of house is at stage level, about 90cm higher than the lobby floor level, additionally auditoriums are mainly raked seating with only the first row at floor slab level, much of a theatre is already therefore well above the site ground level. The extensions involved in TPAC would be most sensibly carried out to match the levels of the existing building. Should higher new construction levels be insisted on however this could be accommodated by ramping the connecting zones within the development to transition from the old floor levels to the new.
<i>Building works and operations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The TPAC building works would not unduly interrupt the TCT's continued operation. The construction project would take 3 to 4 years and within that time annual January and mid-year (for Supercars event) closures for maintenance could also be used for disruptive internal works in the existing building. The amphitheatre site would act as a builder's yard area while the extensions were constructed. The full extension could be open and operating when the amphitheatre was under construction.
<i>Not affecting Supercars</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The subtraction of the TPAC building area either during construction works or subsequently is not seen to seriously affect the Supercars event and may provide useful complimentary facilities to the event once completed. The TPAC car parking areas could be designed free of raised islands or tree plantings in order to maintain a large open area for Supercars use. Car Park shade is not an issue as the PAC would largely be used at night.

4. a concert hall for townsville

For more than six years there has been a strong campaign by the Australian Festival of Chamber Music (AFCM) for a Concert Hall and TCC has responded with the increasingly frequent inclusion of a Concert Hall in statements concerning future infrastructure. However, no concept has emerged, no site confirmed and no cost estimate has been announced.

A venue with the right acoustics for live music and voice has been on our key needs list from the start, such a venue is **either a concert hall or a recital hall**.

Concert vs recital hall

Both of these venues have the right acoustics but a recital hall is a smaller hall with a small stage, typically the largest ensemble performing at a recital hall would be a chamber orchestra of perhaps 12 players.

A recital hall is the correct hall for chamber music. A concert hall is the larger venue specifically designed for a symphony orchestra and choir.

In both cases there is no fly tower above the stage, no stage wings or proscenium arch – these are features of a drama theatre which has acoustics to suit amplified sound. The vast majority of theatre performances require or prefer the drama theatre format. **A concert hall is therefore a very specialised, relatively infrequently used and thus very costly facility.** They are often built as much out of civic pride as of need. This view (high cost, specialised, low use status symbol facility) is discussed in more detail in AECOM 2017 which explores the cost effectiveness of potential concert hall builds in the U.K and supports our advice that a concert hall is unlikely to be a viable venue in its own right especially in a regional city.

Townsville’s demand for a concert hall is very small in terms of potential numbers of performances, however for us to have a hall with the right acoustics for live music and voice is seen as vital. The only viable way for this issue to be resolved is by incorporating the needed hall into a multi-venue complex where it can share both front and back of house facilities, staffing and equipment that are already justified and well utilised by the other venues.

Additionally, the hall design whilst maintaining the needed acoustics must make the venue as useful as possible for other forms of performance to maximise its use. This is the aim of the “concert hall” concept within the TPAC proposal which is essentially a 600-seat hall, i.e. a medium sized venue with added capacity in a balcony, a concert hall stage and acoustics but a drama theatre seating layout. It is noted that this is however only a concept and could change, and no doubt improve, considerably with further design work. It is a unique concept intended to meet our specific needs and to minimise cost.

TCC has commissioned two reports relating to a concert hall. These reports are discussed below as they raise many issues relating to performance facilities generally and are frequently cited in support of the stand-alone concert hall concept.

5. the reports

5.1 The Bott Report (Bott 2017) *Feasibility Study for a Concert Hall in Townsville*

This report is not a study of Townsville performing arts facility needs but of the “feasibility” of one proposed venue only.

The Report may be summarised as stating that_

- a concert hall is needed and would be well utilised;
- it should be located near the CBD, convenient for visitors and near to dining options and should consist of a 800-1000 seat hall (ideally 1000), accompanied by a 250 capacity black box space, a bistro and a large foyer suitable for functions.
- It was recommended that either “The Hive” project or Central Park were the preferred locations (both have since been rejected by TCC).
- The Report rejected the TPAC proposal on the grounds of its location at the TCT site which however the report specifically noted as “not perhaps an issue for locals with cars” (p. 27).

The report justified the Concert Hall on the grounds that the AFCM needs it (p. 8) and that it would relieve the pressure on TCT which cannot meet demand and is experiencing an annual deficit of \$3.4M (p. 28) with 70% of its bookings from local users at concessional rates. It was argued that the Concert Hall would provide flow on benefit to the CBD visitor accommodation, would enhance patron experience by being near dining. It would also enable the TCT to adopt an entrepreneurial management model, thereby improving its financial performance.

The Report appears to entirely misunderstand the TCT’s high deficit and its unmet bookings demand by deducing the deficit is a product of a high proportion of early local bookings at discount rates preventing later, potentially more profitable, commercial bookings getting in. It is then assumed that the Concert Hall could take over a substantial share of the bookings freeing up the TCT to reduce its deficit by becoming “entrepreneurial”

In fact, the fact remains that TCT cannot meet demand because it is our only theatre. As a result, many performances at the TCT (and many in the unmet demand) have audience numbers less than 500, some less than 200. Building the small and medium sized theatres we need will address this problem and the TCT could then comfortably handle the demand for a 1000-seat hall. Building another 1000-seat hall will actually compound the problem, especially as most performances need or prefer the drama theatre not the concert hall format and could not be forcibly transferred to a hall they did not want to use.

The TCT’s high deficit is due primarily to the poor economics of operating a stand-alone theatre, additionally, it is also suffering financially from the revenue loss due to housing many small to medium audiences. Any “loss” due to the modest discount for local events, or to local (such as school events) that have small or no admission charge, has the same financial consequences regardless of what venue the events are held in and cannot be validly included in the calculations.

Although many local events are inevitably present in the very early theatre bookings, it does not follow that the unmet demand consists of non-local events. Nor are non-local events necessarily more profitable for the theatre. The key issue here is the need for the right range of venue sizes so that each venue can operate as efficiently as possible.

The Report's inclusion of a 250-capacity black box with the concert hall is unexplained. The Riverway black box received very low usage and is now closed, the C2 space at TCT was built as a rehearsal space but seldom used and is now used as a black box space with very limited success. We simply do not need another black box, if indeed we need one at all. To combine a concert hall with a black box, both with low demand, in a stand-alone venue is a recipe for financial disaster.

The Report is very focused on location and clearly assumes that a theatre built near to the CBD would generate visitor patronage and also foster dining/theatre options with flow on economic benefit. Regarding dining, the clear preference is for dining at bistro style catering at the theatre itself rather than at restaurants, indeed the report actually recommends the inclusion of a bistro with the concert hall. This is especially necessary in Townsville as performances generally start early, (often 7.30) so that Magnetic Island patrons can catch the Ferry. Good catering at the theatre apart from satisfying patron needs is also an important source of revenue for the theatre. To locate a theatre so that it is near existing dining is ridiculous, it is much better to correctly locate the theatre then add the needed dining options within it or nearby.

A theatre near the CBD, say at the Dean Street car park site, would be accessed entirely from one busy arterial road greatly slowing all patrons' arrival and departure compared with the TCT site. This would reduce the audience numbers at every event at the venue by a far greater number than could possibly have been attracted by being "near" the CBD. This is quite apart from the traffic and parking issues created by being adjacent to the Stadium as well. In a regional city easy arterial road access and plentiful off-street parking are crucial and will remain so for decades to come. The TCT site is outstanding, its excellent arterial road access also means easy inclusion in future public transport. The Report considers the TCT site to be a disadvantage but it is actually an optimum site for a PAC. It is noted that almost all Townsville residents can drive from home to the TPAC site in less than 20 minutes and do so in the certain knowledge that they will get a free off-street car park within 2 minutes' walk of the theatre front door. (See 7. Location for further discussion)

It is lastly noted that the report offers seven illustrative examples of existing venues (P. 15-24), focusing mainly on their various management models presumably suggesting that these might apply to an "entrepreneurial TCT". The examples are mostly regional PACs (which actually supports the TPAC model rather than a stand-alone theatre) and none of them include a concert hall. One, the Sydney Recital Hall, is an unusually large recital hall and not a concert hall and is a very metropolitan facility with little relevance to Townsville.

In short, the Bott Report is a feasibility study that fails entirely to substantiate feasibility. It does not properly address demand, construction costs or, critically, operating cost.

The actual proven demand for a Concert Hall is presently that of the AFCM (say 12 days), the Barrier Reef Orchestra (6 days) and the Queensland Symphony Orchestra (QSO); one day. This totals 19 days per annum, including six bump-in days. These events all already happen, but do so under unsatisfactory acoustics in our drama theatre.

There are also many much smaller, non-amplified sound musical performances held in a year but these do not need nor would they use, a 1000 seat concert hall. There are no grounds for thinking that the events held in metropolitan concert halls would also come to Townsville if we built a concert hall here. These events are based entirely on the metropolitan population and visitor numbers and are in fact not necessarily generated by the availability of the concert hall itself. It is noteworthy that Adelaide, arguably the arts capital of Australia, does not have a concert hall.

5.2 AECOM Report (AECOM 2019)

Townsville Concert Hall Position Paper and Economic Analysis

This Report, which is accompanied by an economic analysis, essentially builds on the Bott Report and takes the need and demand for a 1000-seat concert hall near to the CBD as a given and focuses on the economic benefit such a facility would generate. Interestingly it presents five case studies (four different to those in the Bott Report) all are regional PAC's; none include concert halls (p. 10-13). This is, of course, because there are no concert halls in regional Australia. In the economic analysis document, they list eleven concert halls of Australia (p 16) but in fact half of them are recital halls which are not the same thing.

Based, it would appear, on the total annual audience numbers of various regional drama theatres the Report suggests a 40,000 annual audience is "low" demand; 80,000 "medium" demand and 110,000 high demand (p14). It assumes, without offering any substantiating evidence that the concert hall would attract the medium demand i.e., 80,000 p.a. and then further assumes that 80% would be local, 10% regional and 10% from outside of the Townsville region (and therefore generating economic benefit through accommodation, meals etc.)

In summary the Reports find that building the proposed concert hall would inject \$87M into the local economy (creating 272 jobs) during construction and \$11M (including 55 jobs) per annum in its subsequent operation (p 17).

The TCT is an exceptionally well designed 1000 seat drama theatre, heavily booked and currently not available for many would-be bookings every year. It has an annual audience of 110,000 at a location with optimal arterial road access and ample parking.

By comparison a stand-alone concert hall could not possibly attract more than 20,000 p.a. in its own right including the AFCM, if it were to reach 80,000 it would have to have drawn 60,000 from the TCT (excluding the AFCM). This is what is inferred in the Bott Report – the concert hall relieving the TCT of its load thereby enabling it to become entrepreneurial and less costly. This extraordinary manoeuvre could only be achieved if over 50% of the TCT's present bookings were prepared to shift from a drama theatre to a concert hall – this is inconceivable and would also simply transfer losses from one theatre to another. Furthermore, the reality is that any venue including the TCT has no choice but to accept bookings for available dates on a first come first served basis, it is a public facility and can neither refuse bookings nor forcibly shift bookings to another venue.

The actual TCT breakdown of patrons is 89% local, 7% Townsville region and 4% from outside the region. (McConnell 2017). This is “patrons” not audience – a patron is any individual person who buys a ticket or tickets within a given year. A person buying two tickets for a performance and giving a Sydney postcode would be identified as one (outside of region) patron. A parent buying 4 tickets for a family, and doing so repeatedly throughout the year and giving a Townsville post code would also be counted as one (local) patron. The TCT’s 110,000 tickets p.a are purchased by around 14,000 “patrons” obviously many patrons are buying multiple tickets or buying tickets multiple times. As out-of-region patrons are generally less likely to buy tickets multiple times they will represent well under 4% of the annual audience.

Thus not only is the Reports assumption, for modelling purposes, of an audience of 80,000 p.a. wildly optimistic but to base the economic return on 10% of that audience from outside of the region, when in fact the TCT out of region patrons are only 4% , is completely invalid and the calculated benefits would not eventuate.

Like the Bott Report, the AECOM Report **fails to consider the very high operational cost** of the proposed concert hall and adopts an unrealistic belief in the events and audience numbers that it could attract. With no doubt the best intentions these two reports have compounded errors and provided misleading information in support of a facility that would be very costly to build and to operate whilst providing little benefit compared with the smaller and more useable venues proposed in the TPAC concept.

6. arts precinct

In the Townsville PDA plans, Central Park was notionally marked as an arts precinct. No detail was given and that site was certainly entirely impractical for such a development. Recently the arts precinct suggestion has re-emerged as a North Australian Cultural Precinct including a Concert Hall, Conservatorium, Entertainment Centre and an art gallery but little detail has been forthcoming. It is noted that there is no mention of a Performing Arts Centre, no mention of the small, medium or outdoor theatres we so badly need but only the inevitable Concert Hall. Central Park has already been rejected as a site and the Dean Street car park or the nearby Saunders Street rail yard is presumably now favoured.

Brisbane has an Arts Precinct on Southbank, but such precincts are a rarity. Most older cities have acquired scattered facilities over many decades, often resulting ultimately in some concentration of facilities i.e. in theatre districts or museum districts. Grouping the arts together sounds like sensible town planning – this area is “industrial”, that area is “residential” etc. – but such zoning is not intended to unify land use but to prevent conflicting uses within one area. There is no justification for congregating all of the arts in one location especially as the visual and the performing arts do not help each other by co-location, as the visual arts facilities are daytime casual visitation venues whereas the performing arts offer lengthy ticketed events largely at night.

The Southbank arts precinct illustrates this in that clearly while the Queensland Museum or the Queensland Art Gallery may gain some mutual benefit sharing visitors neither gain any advantage from being adjacent to QPAC nor does the PAC benefit from proximity to museums or art galleries. Worse still they are in each other’s way restricting growth – the Museum cannot expand because the Gallery is in the way which in turn is boxed in by the library etc. This has emerged now decades later as a crucial failing.

It is further important to recognise that by placing the arts and cultural facilities together, as at Southbank, in one inner city location you strip the CBD of any presence of the arts.

In the case of Townsville, it is very hard to see how a gallery, a concert hall and an entertainment centre can possibly benefit either their patrons or their own operations by being all on one site, with access restricted to one busy arterial road and in fact also adjacent to a Stadium. This is a recipe for congestion and parking problems with no compensatory gains.

The optimum location for a new regional art gallery is in the CBD and there is a large suitable site available next door to the existing, but completely inadequate, Perc Tucker Regional Art Gallery.

The only sensible place for a concert hall facility is for it to be included with the other venues we need in a Performing Arts Centre. But a PAC needs a large site both for what is itself a large building and also room for its future growth. It also needs the access and parking required by performers, patrons and staff. This is best located in the inner city but away from other event venues such as stadiums or entertainment/conference centres. These are precisely the strengths of the TPAC concept on the TCT site. It is close to the city centre but large enough to provide the needed facilities and parking whilst sufficiently separated from other event venues to avoid conflicting traffic and parking issues.

7. location

Both the Bott and AECOM reports support locating new theatre facilities close to the CBD, believing that this will result in flow-on benefit to the CBD; be convenient to visitors and create dining/theatre options. While there is some validity in these views the reality is that there is no site suitable for a PAC close enough to the CBD to achieve these goals. Additionally, it wrongly assumes that theatre facilities patronage is unaffected by location.

This is clearly illustrated in the Bott Report which specifically identifies the convenience of the TCT site for “locals with cars” but sees no contradiction in recommending that a new theatre should be located near the CBD for the convenience of “tourists and young people without cars” (Bott 2017, p 27). Given that 96% of TCT patrons are either locals or regional visitors (McConnell 2017 p 10) any theatre facility in Townsville located on a less convenient site to 96% of the potential patrons must suffer very significant loss of audience, a loss that could not be made up by increased numbers out of the remaining 4%.

The TPAC Boundary Street site incorporating the TCT is seen as by far the best location for Townsville’s Performing Arts Centre. The particular advantages of this site may be summarised as follows:

- The site is already owned by TCC. No land acquisition costs are involved.
- The TCT already has its own lot dedicated to the performing arts – the property line is shown on plan sheet 1 in TPAC 2017, Revision A.
- The TCT is adjacent to Reid Park which can accommodate overflow parking and presents possible scope for future arts or cultural developments.
- The TCT was built as stage 1 of our performing arts centre, the TPAC proposal realises the original vision of Council.
- Site is fully serviced with all mains services and communications connected
- It absorbs and fully utilises an existing community asset resulting in substantial capital cost savings.
- It builds on the TCT’s long established standing as a much loved facility and the heart of performing arts in townsville.
- The TCT is an excellent theatre, has been recently refurbished and will greatly enhance the PAC.
- Will eliminate the high on-going operational cost of operating the TCT as a stand alone theatre.
- The site has optimal arterial road access attracting larger audiences through patron convenience.
- The arterial road access also means excellent future public transport access
- External works, parking etc. are shared by multiple venues.
- Boundary Street has little traffic flow at night which results in minimal congestion for arriving or departing patrons for most events.
- The site is large enough to accommodate future expansion of the PAC, perhaps ultimately incorporating up to 8 venues.
- Room for 800+ off street patron car parks and 70 staff/performers car parks on site. Kerbside parking and Reid Park overflow parking also available.

- Full site independence of operation and freedom from congestion at times when the Stadium is in use.
- Isolated from both residential and industrial zones, the TPAC site has no traffic, noise or adjacent conflicting activity issues to address now or in the foreseeable future. This is important especially in relation to an amphitheatre.
- The site has Ross Creek frontage to the west and north and therefore future inclusion in the Waterside Promenade and cross-creek bridges proposed as part of the PDA. Once fully realised this will give TPAC much improved pedestrian connectivity to the CBD and be included in the Pallarenda to the Dam traffic free network.
- Near to the proposed PDA location of a new hotel development which would provide accommodation and presumably also dining options close to the PAC.

No location is perfect but the Boundary Street site offers an unrivalled list of advantages both in terms of cost savings and future operational success of a PAC. It is noted that 20 years ago Positive Solutions came to exactly the same conclusion when reviewing possible locations for their recommended small theatre (Positive Solutions 2000 p. 73). They found that adding the theatre to the Civic was the best option, having only three disadvantages:

- High Civic Theatre overheads might result in hire costs unaffordable to some local groups.
- Distance from dining options
- Location did not support CBD redevelopment.

In answer to these it must be said that any properly staffed and equipped theatre will have similar charges wherever it is located. Dining should be located at or near the theatre not the other way around. Major community infrastructure should be located where it is most cost efficient and operationally effective and not manipulated to achieve some indirect economic gain for others.

8. cost

The original TPAC proposal included costings by the Architects made in 2015, these were partially updated in Revision A in 2017 to include minor changes in the concept. We now have updated independent costing from Rider Levett Bucknall (August 2021) of \$74.36m excluding GST (See Appendix 3).

This is a very low capital cost for a five-venue performing arts centre which is clearly achieved by virtue of the savings resulting from utilising an existing fully serviced site and incorporating a substantial existing building in the form of the TCT.

While alternative locations and venues should certainly be considered we are confident that none could possibly provide the same facilities at anywhere near this capital cost.

The capital cost savings are only one consideration, operational cost is equally relevant as also, in the case of other proposals, is to incorporate the ongoing operational deficit of the TCT if it is left as a stand-alone theatre.

Bott (2017, p 28) identifies the annual operating deficit of the TCT as \$3.4m. This undoubtedly included the cost of operating the, now closed, Riverway black box. If a notional cost for Riverway of \$0.75m is deducted then the TCT true deficit would be \$2.65m p.a. As previously discussed this deficit stems from a combination of stand-alone theatre inefficiencies and many low audience bookings. Only building a small and a medium sized theatre will address the TCT's low audience problem. Only expanding the TCT into a PAC will address the stand alone cost issues (see McConnell 2017, p6-7)

The TPAC model offers the lowest possible operational cost by a combination of increased revenue opportunities, operational efficiency gains, minimisation of outlays and the attraction of higher audience numbers and more performances and event bookings than any alternative proposal.

Some examples are:

- All theatre administration is at one location only
- One box office serves all venues
- One bar and catering
- Substantial savings in equipment required as all venues can readily share equipment
- The more venues in the one centre the greater the status of the PAC as a destination which in turn increases promotional strength and yields higher audience numbers
- Increases the potential for attracting conference and festival events by providing the greatest possible range of venue combinations within the one centre
- Easy access, good parking, area perceived as safe at night all contribute to increased audience and revenue
- Multi venue operation fully utilises staff and maximises the opportunity to use trainees, interns and volunteers.

The TCT, as previously noted, was built as Stage I of a PAC. As is often the case the very high cost of the first stage of a multi-stage project was moderated by questionable economy achieved by deferring some expenditure properly belonging to Stage I to Stage II. These economies resulted in the following deficiencies:

- Backstage: no workshop and inadequate storage
- No piano store
- Inadequate Box Office
- No lifts to upper floor back stage or auditorium
- Inadequate administration offices and staff facilities
- Inadequate disabled access (mainly due to subsequent changes in standards)
- Inadequate foyer (is about 35% of the needed size).
- No catering facilities

These deficiencies remained for 30 years until the 2009 extension and the more recent refurbishment corrected the first six of these shortcomings but left the inadequate foyer and catering unaddressed.

correcting deficiencies

The TPAC design includes correcting these deficiencies, however any alternative development proposed must include the costs of this long overdue work which will still need to be carried out.

As the alternative to TPAC have been little more than thought bubbles with neither concept drawings nor a nominated site it is very hard to make cost comparisons but such comparisons must ultimately have to be made. It is informative to consider the costs of three development options.

Each option gives us the absolute minimum venues we so critically need i.e. a small theatre, a medium sized theatre, an outdoor theatre and at least one venue with the right acoustics for live music and voice.

The table below shows comparative capital and operational cost estimates for each option. Of necessity the figures, other than the capital cost of TPAC which is professionally costed (see Appendix III), are at best only ball park estimates which are intended to give an indicative overview of three of (many) possible permutations.

		\$ Approximate Capital Cost (excluding GST)	\$ Approximate Operational Deficit per annum
Option A	Build TPAC concept as proposed	\$75M	\$0.5M p.a.
Option B	Implement the TPAC proposed improvements within the existing TCT including the small theatre plus add the needed foyer extension and catering.	\$11M	\$1.9M
	Elsewhere build a PAC consisting of the Bott Report recommended 1000 seat Concert Hall, large foyer and bistro but with a medium sized theatre and the addition of an amphitheatre.	\$100M	\$2.5m
	Option B Total:	\$111M	\$4.4m p.a.
Option C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements to TCT including a small theatre 	\$11m	\$1.9m
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elsewhere build "Bott" facility 1000 seat concert hall; 250 capacity Black Box space; Large Foyer; Bistro 	\$80m	3.2M
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build stand-alone medium sized space 	\$35m	\$1.0M
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build stand-alone amphitheatre 	\$15m	\$0.8M
	Option C Total:	\$141M	\$6.9M p.a.

9. demand

The TPAC concept has been proposed on the basis of self-evident need. Townsville has a population approaching 200,000 and a very active performing arts community. We quite simply need the basic facilities, both in order to hold many present events in appropriate venues and also to support the staging of many more events. This is not a chicken and egg situation, without the venues there are many touring and local events that cannot be staged. This is especially evident in the lack of an amphitheatre – Townsville has one of the best possible climates for the staging of year round outdoor performances but this can only happen if we have a properly constructed, equipped and serviced facility (see McConnell 2017 p.11).

Although need might be obvious, it is necessary that demand be quantified and the level of potential usage of the proposed venues defined. This is a matter for thorough independent research which was notably absent in the Bott (2017) and AECOM (2019) reports.

Positive Solutions (200, p. 8) identified the demand for a small (200-300 seat) theatre as 230 performances p.a. While this figure seems high for twenty years ago, it would not be surprising to see this level of usage of the small 208 seat theatre in TPAC.

McConnell (2017 p.5) estimates existing demand for a Concert Hall at 18 performances p.a. but for a Recital Hall as 67 p.a. With bump-in days added these figures would become 24 days and 87 days respectively.

While the demand for the smaller Recital Hall venue is undoubtedly much greater than for the much larger concert hall the issue is that while smaller ensembles can, if necessary, perform in the larger venue, a symphony orchestra or a large choir cannot perform in the smaller venue. This is the basis of the TPAC concert hall's unusual design concept – it effectively creates a recital hall with a concert hall stage.

In terms of demand the present extent of TCT performances with under 250 and under 500 audience numbers should be determined from box office data as this will define the reduction in TCT bookings achievable if the small and medium sized theatres were built.

Also needed is a thorough analysis of the feasibility of shifting bookings from the TCT to other venues. TCC (2015 p. 17) states that:

“a concert hall styled theatre will allow an estimated 60% of the present Civic Theatre bookings to be relocated into that facility”

No explanation is offered of how this remarkable feat would be achieved.

In the case of the TPAC concept the key feature is seen as the wide range of venues and, within that, the flexibility of the venues, this will optimise demand both for performances, events and commercial use.

10. conclusion

The TPAC partners' top priority is to see our critical need for a small, medium and outdoor theatre addressed regardless of the form or location these facilities might have. Our need for a venue with the right acoustics for live music and voice is also very important but this is for performance quality and does not apply to many performances.

To incorporate our needed facilities into a PAC would achieve far more than capital and operational cost economies. The potential is there in the TPAC concept to create a five-venue facility that would be one of the best PACs in regional Australia – our current appalling lack of venues gives us this one opportunity to leap frog other cities and create one truly exceptional facility.

The economies of operation achievable in TPAC are considerable and it is not unreasonable to hope that it would operate on, or close to, a breakeven basis. This would save the community millions of dollars per annum.

A five auditorium PAC would provide the best theatre festival venue in regional Queensland, this has the potential to both foster the development of local festivals and to attract events from all over the country. It is festivals that will give the regional population access to many new events and also attract increased regional and out of region patronage of events with the resultant flow on economic gains to the city.

The audience is already there, it is the facilities that we lack. Positive Solutions (200, p.12) identified very strong Townsville attendance of both theatre performances and art exhibitions. McConnell (2017, p. 10) estimated that up to 25% of Townsville's adult population attended the TCT at least once a year.

A five auditorium PAC is also able to easily support a large highly qualified permanent staff with considerable cost savings then achieved by utilising adequately supervised volunteers, interns and trainees. A PAC of this size can be an effective education and training provider and could greatly compliment a Conservatorium of Music should one eventuate in Townsville.

Perhaps the greatest benefit to both the city and regional community and also the source of the greatest economic flow on benefits to the city lie in the contribution the PAC would make to the liveability of the city. It would enormously increase both the number and quality of events available. It would support and invigorate a very active and talented performing arts community and it would put Townsville well and truly on the State and National cultural map. This is an opportunity that should not be missed for both community, cultural and economic reasons.

The TPAC proposal is for the community, from the community and is shovel ready.