

Gorman Arts Centre – Centenary Upgrade Project

Final Draft Preliminary Sketch Plan (PSP)

Presented to resident arts organisations and artists 23 February 2023

Summary of feedback collated from presentation:

- Majority support was expressed for accessibility to be a priority – including physical and economic accessibility.
- Majority agreement that increasing security of the site is critical and in line with Government priorities.
- Majority support for a suitable café located on site that services the functions of the centre and increases the visitation significantly.
- Majority support for display space in Batman St reception and Café and meeting spaces for studio residents.
- Majority organisational support for increase in workshop/rehearsal spaces.
- Majority agreement that grouping artforms in zones assists site wayfinding and enhances safety of vulnerable people.
- Concerns raised that heritage constraints may negatively impact accessibility and functionality as an arts centre. Project team will balance the interests of the residents with heritage requirements for the best possible outcome.
- Most residents are concerned with future affordability of the facilities.
- Controlling temperatures in studios and offices in blocks B + E are a priority.
- There are a number of concerns with the design of the new theatre in Block A and Multipurpose space in Block F, and a consultant will be engaged to address concerns raised where applicable.
- Acoustic treatment of Block F is a priority for useability
- Prioritising of the upgrades will be guided by ACT Government priorities of functionality, sustainability, accessibility and equity.
- Final Preliminary Sketch Plans will be shared with residents. Final Sketch Plans will be shared with residents after value management process. Timings to be confirmed.
- Noted that individual residents are a community, and they support, encourage and engage with one another's art forms. This is an important aspect of residency at Ainslie + Gorman and is fostered in the design.
- The arts centre upgrades balance the needs of now with future needs and with what's available in Canberra.
- Resident stated that they are overall 95%+ happy with the changes that are flagged for this Centenary Renovation project.

Written feedback on design presentation from residents
(comment period closed 6 March 2023)

Residents' questions received in writing:

Answers from ArtsACT:

THEATRE (BLOCK A)	
Are wings necessary?	Yes to enable it to be used for a range of artforms
If you are in the rear dressing rooms how do you access downstage without entering into the stage?	Via the wings
Design of theatre stage area including wings will not allow for travel on and off stage (incl. those in a wheelchair due to lack of space)	The wings are still being designed however, they will allow for travel on and off the stage for wheelchair users.
Will the theatre be fitted out properly with lighting, sound and projector?	Yes
Lack of enclosed bio box concerning	Enclosing the bio box is being investigated
What is the current height of the stage?	This is still being resolved – however it will be between 300 – 500mm
What is the height of stage to lighting rig?	Lowest point would be approximately 3.2m for a stage 50cm high
What is the capacity of the green room?	To be confirmed
Are back of house/stage/wings/dressing rooms accessible for performers?	Yes
Can dressing rooms be sound and light proof for stage?	Yes
Where will the Tarkett be stored?	We are investigating a heavy duty Tarkett that will not need to be removed
Who will roll the Tarkett on and off, how much will this cost including the extra day hire to let it settle and where will this Tarkett be stored?	arts ACT are investigating a heavy duty Tarkett that does not need to be removed from the stage. The operations of the Centre including is a matter for Arts Capital as facility managers.
Design of theatre will narrow its usage and purpose	Performances for the Block A theatre will need to be choreographed/written for the size of this stage. Otherwise stages of other sizes are available elsewhere in the ACT.
Can the Block A theatre have ground level stage area and flexible seating?	Flexible/retractable seating is not suited to the proposed theatre space due to set up requirements, lower comfort and ongoing maintenance.
Is there scope to consider a lift and mezzanine access to the bio box	No, unfortunately a lift is beyond the budget and the heritage constraints.

Fixed seating reduces the actual performance space and will limit the space to small productions of one - 3 people.	The Block A stage will accommodate approximately 15
It is our strong preference that the balance of fixed seating in Block A and flexible seating in Block F is retained so as to ensure long-term viability for Arts Capital by ensuring options within the arts centre for hirers.	Block A will have fixed seating and Block F will accommodate flexible seating
The ramp within the theatre is an inefficient use of available area. Typically, this level change would be managed outside the auditorium through FOH circulation paths. Is there an opportunity in the current design to create these paths either the west or the east of the building whilst still celebrating the heritage fabric?	It is best practise to provide the same access for mobility impaired users and other users. ACT Government prioritises equitable access and does not support providing external as opposed to internal wheelchair access.
The ramp crossing the front edge of stage introduces several operational challenges and risks. Audience members travelling straight across the front edge of stage disrupting the artists and audience during a show. This would be highly visible and potentially highly embarrassing for both the audience member and the artists	The ramp at the front of the stage does not include a handrail and will be the height of the stage – 300-500mm and not visually intrusive. It is only intended for use for mobility impaired users to access the stage – not the auditorium. The ramp at the front of the stage may not be necessary this is to be confirmed.
The ramp results in the first row of seating being located further than what would be typical from the front edge of the stage creating a disconnect between the artists and audience.	Providing access to the stage for mobility impaired patrons, performers, directors and crew is a priority of ACT Government. The ramp at the front of the stage may not be necessary, this is to be confirmed.
The rake of the auditorium is poor, (worse than existing) and not appropriate for the type of work that will be programmed within this venue. We understand that a theatre consultant has done sightline studies however these studies do not correspond to the type of performances that will be performed in this venue. Sightlines should be optimised for theatre, contemporary performance, and dance. The existing theatre seating arrangement provides a better audience and artist experience.	Optimum sightlines are an intricate relationship between stage height, seating rake angles, capacity, egress and comfort, Means of Escape (MOE), production requirements and acoustics. Sabre theatre consultants were engaged to assess sightlines of the concept design and reported that sightlines are appropriate for a broad range program of activity including theatre and dance, that requires appropriate sightlines from all seats. However, in response to this concern, the rake of the seating is being investigated further to establish whether it can be increased without compromising access.

<p>The size of the stage is largely insufficient to be used for any dance performances. The stage of the current theatre in Block A is 8.4m x 12m (101m²), the plans for the new theatre have the stage measurements at 7m x 10m but wings need to be added due to the new changerooms on the side so the stage would end up being about 7m x 8m (56m²) at the most, nearly half of its current size.</p>	<p>The size of the stage in the design presented on 23 February is 101m². The wings require design development however, will accommodate mobility impaired access.</p> <p>Performances for the Block A theatre will need to be choreographed/written for the size of this stage. Alternatively, stages of other sizes are available elsewhere in the ACT. The current plan accommodates approximately 15 performers.</p>
<p>We understand that the tiered seating angle will be reduced which will make it impossible for audiences to see floor work – an important part of contemporary dance performances.</p>	<p>Sabre theatre consultants were engaged to assess sightlines of the concept design and reported that sightlines are appropriate for a broad range program of activity including theatre and dance, that requires appropriate sightlines from all seats. However in response to this concern, the rake of the seating is being investigated further to establish whether it can be increased without compromising access.</p>
<p>The current theatre design with fixed seating and stage limits the type of work artists can create. A flat floor room with a retractable seating bank would offer a lot more opportunities for artists to create different types of works in different seating arrangements. Accessible access could still be maintained to the rear and front of the seating system. There are a number of seating/staging systems that enable multiple seating configurations with ramps for accessible access at multiple levels.</p>	<p>Flexible/retractable seating is not suited to the proposed theatre space due to set up requirements, lower comfort and ongoing maintenance and set up.</p> <p>Block F provides a flat floor room for flexible seating for a range of uses.</p>
<p>ArtsACT is not building a multipurpose theatre, it is taking one artform out, dance, and replacing it with theatre, as dance will no longer be able to use it, considering space is essential to dance.</p>	<p>Performances for the Block A theatre will need to be choreographed/written for the size of this stage. Block F is an alternative presentation space and stages of other sizes are available elsewhere in the ACT. The current stage design accommodates up approximately 15 performers.</p>
<p>I strongly encourage improvement to the current A block theatre, rather than complete redesign/renovate. This performance space is totally unique and its history and ongoing legacy is incredibly important to dance bigger than the ACT.</p>	<p>The current theatre is not fit for purpose for multiple art forms and users. The current design for a new theatre in Block A will make best use of the largest building on the Gorman House site – enabling greater seating capacity and more equitable access.</p>

Budget wise this would be more effective also I imagine for the whole picture.	
Staffing to service the hire (technical manager or ops manager, techs) will not be covered by AGAC (no budget), - A way forward will need to be reached to understand how and who supplies this staffing to ensure the spaces and investment remains compliant/safe/workable etc - A way forward will need to be sought to understand direct staffing costs (likely to be passed onto the hirer - does this make the spaces inaccessible in terms of affordable. What kind of staffing arrangement will we need to enter into for box office/FOH, Gorman Main Hall as foyer etc and who will pay the cost?	The operation of the Centre is a matter for Arts Capital. arts ACT provides funding to Arts Capital on the basis that arts facilities are affordable to artists and arts organisations.
MULTIPURPOSE SPACE (Block F)	
Sound treatment in Block F? for inclusion and accessibility and minimise noise pollution	Acoustic treatments to this space are still to be costed however, this is noted as a priority for most resident artists and organisations.
Acoustics – acoustics are needed for two key reasons – one to minimise noise pollution (which I understand will need to be demonstrated as part of the DA) but also to ensure the space is usable. Currently the space is too live – and more than a handful of people in there becomes unmanageable (particularly if there is music for rehearsals or performance). This level of noise has significant impacts on individuals with sensory processing issues and would render the space non-accessible for large groups of regular users.	This is still to be costed however is noted as a priority for most resident artists and organisations.
Electronic access – carefully mapped out patch points for access to power and data – the locations of these access points will determine the potential configurations of the space for different types of events/uses. The more access points, the easier it will be to reconfigure the space between uses – cutting down on the need to run and secure cabling and reducing the associated trip hazards that this can create	This will be addressed in Final Sketch Plan (detailed design) phase with Room Data Sheet information gathered from residents.

There is strong desire for the windows to be recovered (as a heritage win and to make the space functional for uses beyond performances) however there should be a mechanism to darken the space (such as the curtain solution previously discussed).	Concern noted. This will be a matter of balancing the cost of acoustic treatment vs reinstating windows.
Lighting – This space can afford to have a leaner lighting system than A block but will need to be carefully designed to allow for flexibility – a basic rig to accommodate performances is needed as well as track lighting for exhibitions and events.	Yes this is the agreed preference
HVAC – as a physical rehearsal space (particularly in winter) adequate heating and cooling is necessary to minimise risk of injury. Given the number of people who will sometimes be in the space, ventilation will be critical to ensure adequate oxygen and reduce the risk of carbon monoxide build up. Covid has also demonstrated the need for good ventilation from a health perspective	Noted, minimum code standards to be met and level of treatment will depend on funding available.
Are the planned performance spaces truly suitable for the organisations who are assumed will be hiring them? While this arrangement looks good on a map, I just wanted to double-check that the users of these spaces actually feel as though those spaces will be suitable for their artforms?	The performance spaces on site provide a range of options of 'black box'/'white box', fixed/flexible seating, a range of sizes and formats of stages, flat stage and raised stage and small audience through to approx. 120 audience capacity.
I simply hope that you consult closely with the stakeholders who are most likely to use these spaces, to ensure that you don't build 'white elephants' that are unsuited to the spaces' imagined users	The feedback from one-on-one and group meetings with resident organisations and artists was that the performance options were suitable for the majority of their needs.
The multipurpose space is poorly thought out and not actually usable for anything much except a gallery. Bad acoustics, no stage, no PA, no performance lighting - just an empty space with a vague name. Purposeless space might be more accurate. I can't see it being used for more than a couple of hours a week as is (like now), definitely can't pay for the floor space proportion of the centre running costs. Why not subdivide it, turn it into studios or put all the Gorman staff into there and take	The multipurpose space will be functional for a range of uses including but not limited to dance, music and theatre workshops, rehearsals and performances. The level of sound treatment that this space receives is budget dependent however is noted as a priority of most residents. Block F provides the largest floor space on site and therefore will not be subdivided into studios so as to retain a large space to be flexibly used.

the pressure off the insufficient artist studio spaces	
HVAC – as a physical rehearsal space (particularly in winter) adequate heating and cooling is necessary to minimise risk of injury. Given the number of people who will sometimes be in the space, ventilation will be critical to ensure adequate oxygen and reduce the risk of carbon monoxide build up. Covid has also demonstrated the need for good ventilation from a health perspective.	Noted that this is a concern. Minimum standards to meet code will be met and further provision will depend on funding available,
CAFÉ (Block G)	
There is no clear loading path for the café. Please consider how vehicles can unload deliveries.	There is a clear loading path for the café from Batman Street that has been assessed as viable by the hospitality consultants.
Will the café also operate as a bar and restaurant in the evening to support theatre productions and events in the evenings?	Yes
I don't believe there is a solid business case for a bigger cafe. To pay enough casual staff to work the floorspace at award rates (inc after hours) would be prohibitive. I can't see how the floorspace can pay for itself unless it is subsidised, ie would have to be cheaper than residents rent which is unfair.	During project development, relevant hospitality specialists with extensive industry experience were consulted and assessed that the business case for a café was strong.
I suggest you get an assessment from a person with on the ground experience in the food industry. Plus try and draw up a business plan based on actual costs. Why spend big money on a new cafe when there already is a functional and appropriate size one?	Relevant hospitality specialists with local and extensive industry experience were consulted and assessed that the business case for a café was strong.
ACROSS THE SITE	
Will there be end of trip shower available to residents (not public)?	Agree this is important to encourage commuting by bicycle – the team will investigate whether it can be incorporated
Can LED lighting be used throughout the site for light sensitivity?	Yes
Can the ground surface be as even as possible for people with vision impairment?	Yes, within heritage constraints
Re meeting room, I haven't seen demand for this sort of space, the one already servicing this need (E Block Seminar Room)	Arts organisations and artists have highlighted the need for access to meeting rooms in their feedback to artsACT.

is empty most of the week with very few bookings	
Although there is little or no mention of the environment, I suggest this as a topic for consideration. I'm glad to hear that Gorman is able to get solar panels to offset rising energy costs. We also need to get off gas heating plus introduce organic waste recycling - even more relevant if we are to have a cafe again.	Sustainability is a priority of ACT Government and has been factored into the design appropriately.
STUDIOS + OFFICES (Blocks A + E)	
We are concerned that there is a move towards creating studios that are more like offices and less like creative spaces. We would like reassurance that different artists with various needs in the creation of their work can be catered for in the renovation of the buildings.	The studios will accommodate a range of arts practices.
Could artsACT and Gorman Arts Centre please give us a commitment to allowing 'messy and noisy' artists to use the facilities post-renovation?	Yes within zoning regulations and Territory Plan constraints
It looks like there will be a reduction in space for resident artists, despite the well known need for more and larger studios. AGAC office space is taking up more of these valuable studio spaces. The question is what takes priority.	There will be considerably more studio spaces available to artists post upgrades. Arts Capital will not be occupying studio spaces across the site, Arts Capital staff will be located in Blocks G + H only.
There's been apparently little consideration of the needs of residents who see customers every day - and how we let these people in to a safe waiting space. It's been a constant issue for some of us for a long time. It is not appropriate to have the public waiting out in the cold trying to contact us inside via a mobile phone etc. The solution may be to provide a waiting room in artist studio blocks with simple remote unlocking so that visiting artists & customers can attend appointments with safety and dignity	The upgrades will provide a superior outcome than is currently available. Visiting artists and customers will be able to wait safely in the staffed reception point on Batman Street or in the café.
I hope that the new Gorman Arts Centre features studios that are suited to a diversity of users, including individual residents who need small, medium, and	The studios will accommodate a range of arts practices.

large sized studios to best serve their individual arts practices	
What will be the process for allocating studio space to residents after the renovation is complete?	Arts Capital will manage the allocation of studio spaces to residents
Does arts capital/ArtsACT understand the existing facilities for existing studio artists that will be lost, given the current renovation plans? In the proposed plans, most of the central part of E Block will be allocated to be the offices for dance organisations. Many of the studios in this area have been fitted with sinks and fume extraction vents, which are vital tools for the creation of 'messy' art, in the terminology. What will become of Andrew Sikorski's photography studio? Has artsACT earmarked an alternative studio that is suitable for his work?	Suitable studio space will be provided to accommodate a range of art forms including photography. All efforts are being made to utilise existing services where possible. Organisation offices are currently located in close proximity to rehearsal spaces to enhance safety of vulnerable people. The operation of the Centre, including location of studios and offices is a matter for Arts Capital.
We would like to advocate for Andrew Sikorski's photography studio to be as active as possible during the renovations and for his equipment to be as little disturbed as possible so he can support us to continue with our social media/communications with our 'client base'.	Conversations around staging of construction and timing of relocation will take place in the coming months. The objective will be minimising disruption to residents at a reasonable total cost to the project.
It would be a shame to see Andrew lose a home for his work at Gorman Arts Centre, as the whole arts community across the Territory would suffer. If artsACT turns Andrew's photography studio into general office space for dance organisations, will they be funding the fit-out of another Gorman studio into a photography studio for him to resume his work? Or will he be a 'lost' studio resident, without a home in the renovated centre?	Suitable studio space will be provided to accommodate a range of art forms including photography. All efforts are being made to utilise existing services where possible. The operation of the Centre, including the allocation and location of studios and offices is a matter for Arts Capital.
MAIN HALL (Block H)	
This space needs more development and is the centrepiece of the centre. It is very bare and spartan now, not very glamorous. The light and sound facilities are low quality and the ventilation system impossibly noisy for a meeting. It has the potential to earn good income plus give us something to be proud	Noted, however this is not a priority for this project as it was upgraded in 2015.

of. It makes sense to attach it to the cafe kitchen with the servers access.	
DANCE WORKSHOP SPACES (Blocks C + E)	
Will blinds or curtains be integrated to provide privacy and control light?	Block C will be a light space and Block E workshop space will be a dark space with windows blocked out.
Will rigging infrastructure be provided in the form of rigging points, pipe grid etc. for scenery, lighting, audio, and video equipment to be rigged for creative developments and performances.	This will be addressed in Final Sketch Plan (design development) phase.
Will power and data be distributed to enable performance lighting, sound, and video equipment to be powered and controlled from multiple positions	This will be addressed in Final Sketch Plan phase with Room Data Sheet information gathered from residents.
Changerooms/toilets: These need to be accessible to young people only, as they need to change into dance wear and in between class (different dance wear for ballet and contemporary for example). It is a Child Safety requirement that these changeroom/toilets would not be accessible to adults as it is the case for schools. The design plans we were presented with do not allow for this	As shown in the designs presented on 23 March the dedicated female & male toilet and shower facilities in Block E in the Dance zone are only accessible to dance participants. These facilities are located within the secure area only accessible to people with Working with Vulnerable People certification.
Our current foyer in Block A allows for resident artists to meet and work, it also serves as a third rehearsal space for several of our projects as it has a sprung floor, volunteers working area during costume production with our costume designer and has gathering/holding space before and after classes and rehearsals for all users of the space, all year round.	The café and Main Hall are available for use as meeting and working spaces. If a third rehearsal space is required Block F is available for booking.
We require a gathering space/foyer	The Main Hall serves as a gathering space/foyer space
A Kitchen is required for everyone to use and meet for Dance participants	The concept design includes a kitchen area in the Dance Office spaces.
We need to access costume storage on a regular basis for all the projects we do with our young people and for some of our independent artists from time to time	As there is limited space at the Centre and a great call on space to meet the needs of the sector, storage onsite is not considered a priority as there are options for offsite storage.
We have not been consulted on the amount of space we require for our offices,	The operation of the Centre, including the allocation and location of studios and

gathering space/foyer, meeting place, changerooms/toilets, costume storage and kitchen. The plans we have been shown definitely don't cater to our needs.	offices is a matter for Arts Capital. The number of spaces allocated to each artform have been allocated equitably. These upgrades to re-purposed buildings with immoveable footprints have strict parameters on available space.
Meeting place: We need a meeting place for meetings with teachers, independent artists, production staff, parents and young dancers	The foyer space in Blocks E and D and meeting room in Block G serve as meeting places.