

Geelong Cultural Precinct Master Plan Vision



A report by the Geelong Performing Arts Centre Trust
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1. Introduction

In October 2006, the State Government announced a \$500,000 joint Master Plan project by the State Government and the City of Greater Geelong (CoGG) to investigate a number of possible cultural, arts and commercial projects for the city.

Minister for Major Projects, Mr John Lenders made the announcement in Geelong and stated possible infrastructure developments to be explored included:

- an upgraded performing arts centre (Geelong Performing Arts Centre)
- a convention and exhibition centre
- a new civic centre
- related development (e.g. updated arts gallery, library, hotel) and
- the future of State Government office buildings in Geelong.

The master plan will evaluate these issues and make recommendations including the staging of any building works. Both State Government and City of Greater Geelong are contributing \$250,000 each to fund the plan which will be managed by Major Projects Victoria, with a steering committee of various stakeholders.

GPAC's leadership was crucial in bringing various stakeholders together to commit to the vision of a redeveloped cultural precinct, which resulted in this announcement.

We are now actively contributing to the Master Plan project, meeting with consultants, attending workshops and providing advice, expertise and feedback on various proposals and ideas.

Over the last four years GPAC has prepared various reports and submissions to argue the case for redeveloping the cultural precinct. As we meet with various consultants, it has become evident that we require a document that gives a compelling and quick-to-understand overview of these reports.

This document provides an overview of GPAC's vision for the cultural precinct, an overview of the process that led to the master plan project and a basic introduction to GPAC. It is designed as a briefing document for the various consultants and project managers involved in developing the master plan and other key stakeholders. It is supported by other in-depth planning documents listed in the appendix.

2. GPAC's Vision of the Geelong Cultural Precinct

GPAC's vision is to ensure the greater Geelong region is renowned for its creativity, energy and engagement with the arts. A successful cultural precinct will achieve this vision and have far-reaching effects on the social, economic and cultural life of our region.

A successful cultural precinct will:

- build on the collective strength and untapped potential of the existing arts tenants (GPAC, library, gallery, heritage centre, Courthouse Youth Arts Centre)
- build on several Government policy initiatives such as the Western Wedge, Transit Cities, and the recent relocation of the Transport Accident Commission
- create opportunities for private investment to off-set the public cost
- deliver a precinct solution to replace the current cultural patchwork.

This vision combines artistic, business, social and economic imperatives. The benefits for Geelong are improved liveability, economic growth and a long overdue catch-up in cultural investment appropriate for a major regional city.

Audience and Public Good

The cultural precinct's primary audience is the broadest cross-section of the greater Geelong community. This includes people from all cultural backgrounds, socio-economic status and places of residence. The precinct will attract both existing art consumers and new audiences. It has the potential to at least double if not triple current attendance figures with a consequential increase in the financial spending of visitors.

A secondary audience is derived from people visiting our region, especially the friends and relatives of Geelong citizens. It is expected the precinct will be a popular destination to entertain visitors and proudly show off Geelong. The precinct will also be an important attraction for national and international visitors by providing a compelling reason to stop over on their way to the coastal attractions.

The precinct's public good is to provide a hub for arts and culture that engages the community as audiences and participants and nurtures artists. This hub and artistic energy contributes to the future success and liveability of our region.

A redeveloped precinct will cater for the forecast increase in our region's population as more people discover the fabulous lifestyle on offer in Geelong and move here to retire, escape the city or raise a family. A redeveloped precinct will service the community for generations to come.

Regional cities of the future will thrive by providing an open, accepting environment for cultural creative people, namely artists, entrepreneurs, scientists and health care professionals¹. A vibrant attractive cultural precinct is vital to create this environment and assist with the change in Geelong's economy from a strong manufacturing/agricultural based economy to a much more diversified base.

¹ Richard Florida, Tracking the 'Creative Class'

Policy Connections

The cultural precinct will build on numerous government initiatives and policies, including the planned relocation of the Transport Accident Commission offices and construction of the Geelong Ring Road.

The precinct is located in the Western Wedge, for which the City of Greater Geelong and State Government have jointly developed a vision and planning framework. This vision ‘includes a “clever quarter” that extends and connects educational, cultural and business assets.’²

‘Geelong has been identified in the Melbourne 2030 strategy as a “transit city” with the potential for increase density development concentrated around public transport hubs.’³ The Geelong Station is the focus of this policy and work is underway to encourage greater use of public transport and position it as the transport hub for central Geelong. A redeveloped train station will be valuable for the precinct in attracting tourists to the area. The transport hub will also provide easy access to the precinct for residents who live in outlying suburbs.

Artistic Vision/Programming

To appeal to the full cross-section of Geelong residents, the precinct will provide a wide range of artistic forms and qualities – from community activity, popular entertainment to high quality professional art.

There will be a diverse and extensive program of events and outdoor activities to complement the current in-facility programming.

The precinct will be attractive to the artistic community (in all its diversity) to visit, work, and gather with like-minded people. A place to call home. The enhanced cultural facilities delivered by the precinct will foster strong programs and relationships. It does not rely on an over-investment of artist studio spaces, but it is important that artists work in the precinct.

Specific cultural facilities

A redevelopment of the cultural precinct provides a generational opportunity to put each of the facilities on a scale appropriate for the next 30 years.

On that basis the library needs an entirely new space in order to provide the standard of service required for a major regional city. The Gallery needs to greatly expand in size to allow it more opportunities for exhibiting and growing its collection. GPAC should extend well beyond its current footprint in order to widen its range of programs, events and opportunities for artists and to meet the needs of our region’s growing population. The Heritage Centre should expand and provide a broad, contemporary link to the public. The Courthouse Youth Arts Centre should remain within the precinct and has an important role in involving young people in a wide variety of programs and creating connections to each facility.

The precinct should be capable of housing and encouraging professional performing arts companies such as Back2Back.

Greater thought should be given to creating shared facilities where possible in order to achieve a greater sense of connection between the cultural organisations. Facilities such as box office, function rooms, foyer spaces, outdoor activity, storage, and parking for service vehicles should be shared where possible.

Johnstone Park is fundamental to the amenity of the precinct and could provide many opportunities to integrate with the cultural activities of the precinct. Such opportunities could include an artist created playground, sculpture garden, picnic facilities and performance spaces.

² Geelong “Western Wedge” City of Greater Geelong
³ Geelong “Western Wedge” City of Greater Geelong

Visual quality of the space

The precinct should be renowned for the quality and visual beauty of the civic spaces, and for the way in which a set of diverse architectures work together. The precinct should aim for some visually arresting buildings, spaces, or vistas.

The use of the open space between cultural facilities will be critical. The new precinct should not be constrained by the current arrangement and placement of buildings. Consideration must be given to using the full length of Little Malop Street between Gheringhap and Fenwick Streets and connection to Johnstone Park.

The precinct should be easily and cleverly linked to the surrounding areas and streets so that it is easy to access and use.

Commercial Opportunity

The precinct should be designed to explicitly incorporate commercial activity within it as an integral part of its overall make-up. It should have a blend of public and private sector entertainment and activity to maximise the overall range of activity on offer. It must attract private sector investment such as creative industry tenants, residential or retail business. This avoids creating an 'arts-ghetto' that potentially alienates people who perceive the arts as being 'not for them'. Commercial development is important to create a diversity of attraction.

Brand

The precinct should have a strong unifying brand, so that all people in the Geelong region, and visitors know what and where the precinct is, and are attracted to visiting it. This requires cooperation between the institutions to create a brand that is more powerful than the individual identities. To commence this branding a new name is needed to replace 'Geelong Cultural Precinct'.

A programming strategy is vital to develop and strengthen a 'whole of precinct' brand. This would involve a range of events that sit above the functions of existing facilities. Delivery of this strategy will require additional resources (staffing and programming) and a different focus to an institutional one. The range of events may not necessarily be arts based (e.g. using Federation Square to watch the Soccer finals) and will have to involve the commercial tenants in the precinct.

Governance

There is a need for an over-arching body that is responsible for the precinct as a whole; one which will complement the existing individual governance arrangements for each institution. A leadership group should be created that includes representative of the tenants, council and other skills based members.

This leadership group will:

- develop a Strategic Plan for whole of precinct cultural activity
- liaise with Major Projects Victoria, the Consultants, State Government and City of Greater Geelong to provide consistent cultural leadership and advocacy on the Cultural Precinct Masterplan and Business Case, on behalf of all cultural organizations
- consider programming opportunities for the precinct, beyond the existing individual programming of the facilities
- develop a brand position for the precinct, one that resonates with the larger Geelong brand
- if successful, provide longer term governance for the precinct.

3. An overview of the process to develop the cultural precinct Master Plan

GPAC Strategic Plan - 2003

In 2003 GPAC developed a new five-year strategic plan that aimed to expand our programs, increase opportunities for our artistic community to create work, encourage greater involvement by our community in performing arts and expand the range of arts experiences on offer. Our vision was to ensure the greater Geelong region become renowned for its creativity, energy and engagement with the arts.

The plan shifted our focus outward, demonstrating the impact of arts organisation in a regional community on its economy, society and culture. This was achieved by growing our business and generating employment, contributing to people's health and well being and by involving a diverse section of the community in GPAC activities.

GPAC's Strategic Plan was developed after a decade of major growth in Geelong in terms of population, business growth and economic and social activity. This was triggered partly by the redevelopment of the Geelong Waterfront, completion of the Geelong/Melbourne road and a 'sea-change' attraction of the Bellarine and SurfCoast Peninsulas.

In the four years since launching its new Strategic Plan, GPAC has achieved many of its goals. In 2007 we now have over 200,000 people attending a wide range of events (note comparative numbers required). New programs and events have been created, marketing services improved and we consistently record a high level of satisfaction from our customers. Our venues are well utilised and maintained with many improvements made to operating systems, in particular occupational health and safety. We are yet to achieve some of the more ambitious arts related goals such as housing a professional theatre company, increasing opportunities for professional artists and establishing an event of national profile. Our ability to increase the usage of our venues by community groups remains restricted by a lack of suitable facilities.

GPAC Master Planning

As GPAC set out to achieve the goals of this new strategic plan, it was faced with failing infrastructure typical of a 21-year-old building. In partnership with Arts Victoria, GPAC started a master planning process that addressed these infrastructure problems, responded to our strategic plan and, most importantly, provided an arts centre capable of serving the future needs of the community.

The Strategic Facility Plan developed by consultants Allom & Lovell proposed an expansion of GPAC within the existing land footprint by adding new building levels and creating active street frontages.

Geelong Cultural Precinct – Initial developments

As GPAC developed a business case to support the Allom & Lovell plan a range of options was considered, one of which was to develop the cultural precinct. At this time there were a number of exciting policy developments under consideration for Geelong. These included the development of the Western Wedge, the State Government's Transit Cities initiative, relocation of the Transport Accident Commission office from Melbourne and the funding of Geelong Ring Road. GPAC put forward the proposition to key stakeholders that investing in the cultural precinct would trigger or build on a number of these policy initiatives. This resulted in the State Government funding a \$200,000 study by consultants Sinclair Knight and Mertz (SKM) to examine options for the cultural precinct ranging from a 'do nothing approach' to 'develop the cultural precinct'. The report concluded that developing the entire precinct was the preferred option and that further detailed work on a business case be undertaken.

After the SKM report was submitted in June 2006, GPAC continued to lobby key stakeholders to support the further work required for a credible budget bid. This included examining the venues of each cultural organisation, a logical sequence to implement works, the best mix of arts and commercial tenants and how to create active connections to the park and neighbouring precincts.

Cultural Precinct – Next stage

In late 2006 the Bracks Government announced a \$500,000 joint Master Plan project by the State Government and the City of Greater Geelong to investigate a number of possible cultural, arts and commercial projects for the city. Minister for Major Projects, Mr John Lenders made the announcement stating that possible infrastructure developments to be explored included:

- an upgraded performing arts centre
- a convention and exhibition centre
- a new civic centre
- related development (e.g. updated arts gallery, library, hotel) and
- the future of State Government office buildings in Geelong.

This study, managed by Major Projects Victoria (MPV), is now underway with a final report due in late 2007 leading to a budget bid for 2008-09.

This MPV project presented GPAC with the opportunity to revisit the original Allom & Lovell report to examine its current relevance. The report has important features but was constrained within the current footprint and therefore could not satisfactorily address all issues. In a workshop conducted to review the report, participants were able to explore solutions in the context of a bigger, coordinated project of the cultural precinct.

In early 2007 GPAC developed a new strategic plan focusing on the next three years as we wait for the outcome of the current Masterplan project. This new strategic plan builds on the growth achieved in prior years and aims to further develop the range of programs available, increase our financial resources and maintain a high standard of staff and venues.

Chronology

2003

GPAC Strategic Plan 2003-08

GPAC, 21 years old, is dealing with failing infrastructure typical of a building of its age. Trust and Management commence the development of a five year strategic plan which is finalised in June 2003.

2003

GPAC Strategic Facility Plan

In partnership with Arts Victoria, GPAC commission Allom & Lovell to develop a Strategic Facility Plan that explores what is needed for GPAC to respond to its expanded vision and rectify serious building issues. The report is published in August 2003.

2005

GPAC Master Plan Business Case

GPAC develops a business case to support the Allom & Lovell report, arguing that the redevelopment of the entire precinct is the preferred option. This report is finalised in March 2005.

2003-05

GPAC drives the vision of a revitalised cultural precinct with Government, business, community stakeholders. GPAC commences the State Government's Gateway review process for the redevelopments proposed by Allom & Lovell.

2005-06

Geelong Cultural Precinct Feasibility Study

The State Government commissions Sinclair Knight Mertz (SKM) to examine the redevelopment of GPAC in context with the Geelong Cultural Precinct. SKM submit their report, Geelong Cultural Precinct Feasibility Study, in June 2006 recommending a masterplan study for the preferred option of developing the precinct.

2006-07

Geelong Cultural Precinct Masterplan

In October 2006, the announcement of a joint project by the State Government and City of Greater Geelong is made for a masterplan study. Major Projects Victoria is appointed as project manager. Work commences early 2007 with the appointment of a Steering Committee and engagement of consultants.

2007

GPAC Strategic Plan 2007-10

GPAC develops a new strategic plan in context with the masterplanning process. This new plan consolidates growth achieved over previous years and focuses on expanding programs, improving marketing, maintaining the facility and improving its functionality.

4. An overview of GPAC

Introduction

Geelong Performing Arts Centre was built on the enthusiasm and commitment of the greater Geelong community and their need for a high-quality arts facility. In 2006 we celebrated our 25th birthday with a week-long range of events to recognise the community's enormous contribution, and to reflect on how far we had travelled since our opening in 1981.

Our Vision

Our vision is to ensure the greater Geelong region is renowned for its creativity, energy and engagement of the arts.

We believe that our stage enriches your world.

Our values are passion, customer service, teamwork and safety.

Our goals are to:

1. provide excellent staff and venues
2. expand our activities and audiences
3. develop art and community
4. increase financial resources and
5. contribute to our region's creativity and future.

Our strategic plan is driven by the ongoing commitment and enthusiasm of our staff and Trust members and achieved in partnership with all our stakeholders.

Artistic Program

GPAC's program of performances and events over a year includes:

- musicals and opera
- drama
- music
- ballet, dance and calisthenics concerts
- comedy and light entertainment
- film
- graduations, seminars, launches, exhibitions, workshops (non arts activity).

This program is delivered by a wide range of hirers staging their own events and by GPAC presenting programs taking financial and artistic risk.

Artistic Principles

GPAC offers the broadest experience of performing arts. It is a place for:

- the community to perform, learn theatre craft, experience the thrill of being on stage and nurture their creativity
- audiences to enjoy a 'Capital City' experience of theatre, watch their child dance in a school concert or their peers perform in a local company production of a musical.

We aim to provide programs for all age groups ranging from pre-school children, through to teenagers, adults and seniors.

We aim to present a broad range of art-forms, appealing to tastes ranging from art-house cinema, traditional musicals to contemporary Australian drama.

We provide education programs to expand opportunities for young people and communities to participate in arts and cultural activity.

We are strongly committed to improving the health and well-being of our community through participation in the arts.

Our Venues

Situated at 50 Little Malop Street, Geelong, the centre includes:

- Ford Theatre – 817 seat proscenium arch theatre with fly tower and orchestra pit
- Blakiston Theatre – 320 seat studio style theatre with flat floor, raked seating and fixed grid
- Shell Foyer – a large open space that serves both theatres and houses box office, bar, restaurant and cafe
- Alcoa studios – two studio spaces and three offices
- Alcoa Courtyard – outdoor area
- Rehearsal room – studio space located backstage
- The Gallery – large meeting/function room
- Support services - administration offices, dressing rooms, stage door, wardrobe and scene loading dock.

GPAC also manages Costa Hall, a 1,500 seat concert hall located at the Deakin University Waterfront Campus.

Audience

Our target audience is as diverse as our programs and they come from all geographical areas in the region.

In 2006-07 GPAC recorded close to 223,000 visits to our venues, including Costa Hall.

Analysis of our database indicates that 60% of households in Geelong transact with GPAC.

12,950 students attended GPAC presented education programs and 60% of schools in the region were involved with GPAC.

Governance

GPAC is a Statutory Authority established by the Geelong Performing Arts Centre Act 1980. It is one of Victoria's state-owned cultural facilities along with Australian Centre of Moving Image, Museum of Victoria, National Gallery of Victoria, State Library and the Arts Centre.

It is governed by a Trust of eleven community, business and local government leaders, appointed by the Minister for the Arts and is overseen by Arts Victoria.

5. GPAC Redevelopment

Introduction

In August 2003, Allom & Lovell architects presented their report outlining redevelopment options for GPAC. The plan was commissioned by Arts Victoria to assess viable operational and physical alternatives for the future of the Centre over a five to ten year timeframe.

GPAC used the report as a starting point to lobby for the development of the entire cultural precinct which resulted in the current commitment to a Master Plan study. The Allom & Lovell report was developed without considering the cultural precinct as this was not a feasible option at the time. Therefore GPAC has revisited the Allom & Lovell recommendations in light of a precinct redevelopment.

Cultural Precinct Master Plan

In late 2006, The State Government announced a \$500,000 joint Master Plan project by the State Government and the City of Greater Geelong to investigate a number of possible cultural, arts and commercial projects for the city.

Major Projects Victoria (MPV) is the State Government department in charge of the study and as part of their initial investigation, has asked GPAC for a view on the proposed redevelopment of GPAC outlined in the Allom & Lovell Strategic Facilities Plan.

A workshop was held on Monday 23 April, 2007 attended by GPAC Trust members, management and Major Projects Victoria (MPV) staff, in order to respond to this question. This report is a summary of the workshop.

Background to Allom & Lovell report

The Allom & Lovell report was commissioned by Arts Victoria to assist with asset management and funding priorities.

Significant areas of non-compliance exist around building regulations, disability access issues and the building fabric and fixtures which at 25 years is past its useful life. These factors were the starting point for the study from which a vision was created to service the future artistic and cultural needs of the greater Geelong community.

After the report was submitted, GPAC focused on seeking political support to fund the redevelopment. This included writing a business case that provided a number of options including redeveloping the entire cultural precinct. This option attracted the interest of State Government who funded consultants SKM to carry out a feasibility study regarding the redevelopment of the cultural precinct. The SKM report supported the option and recommended a master plan for the redevelopment of the cultural precinct be undertaken. This recommendation, combined with a number of Council objectives (namely their accommodation and convention centre projects) led to the current financial commitment and Master Plan project, managed by MPV to define the parameters of the cultural precinct.

GPAC accepted the main strands of the report but went on to engage Government in a larger vision of the precinct development. The Allom & Lovell report has important features but was constrained within the current footprint, therefore could not satisfactorily address all issues.

As the current MPV study is underway it is good timing for GPAC to review the vision of the Allom & Lovell report.

The philosophy of GPAC's redevelopment

The vision for a redeveloped GPAC is to create a new model for a performing arts centre that combines arts, business and the community. We aim to demonstrate how the arts can drive economic and social renewal in a regional community. In addition we focused on how to attract private investment to help fund the public cost of redeveloping GPAC and the precinct.

An example of this philosophy translated into design is the inclusion of commercial office spaces for creative industry businesses (e.g. architects, designers, media, IT). These office spaces return a rental income to GPAC and create a hub for like-minded people, activity and business, that is not entirely arts based.

It is important for GPAC to be a hub for performing arts for the greater Geelong region (not just Geelong) so that everyone has the opportunity to take a class, see a show, get involved with a project and generally soak up the energy and ambience of a creative environment.

The vision for a redeveloped GPAC and its precinct is for a thriving, busy centre that operates independently from the activity of the anchor tenants (GPAC, Gallery and Library). Currently the precinct is busy, active and full of life when there is a show or exhibition on. However at other times it is dull and lifeless. To create this redevelopment it is important that the precinct is not entirely populated by publicly funded arts organisations. Rather there needs to be a mix of tenants that includes creative industry business, residents and other commercial operators.

Any redevelopment of GPAC should also address the following questions:

- Is it possible to reduce running costs/overhead without compromising safety standards?
- Is it possible to reduce costs for our hirers?
- How can environmental issues be accommodated into the building design?
- How do we service and remain relevant to the community for the next 25 or 30 years?

Allom & Lovell Design Option

The Allom & Lovell report was confined by the existing footprint of GPAC, resulting in less than ideal design options. The workshop participants were able to examine options in the context of a bigger, coordinated project of the cultural precinct. The original constraint was no longer relevant, allowing more freedom for GPAC to think creatively about our redevelopment.

This section provides a brief summary of each design option proposed by Allom & Lovell as a bullet point, and the GPAC response to it. It is not possible to provide a detailed description and rationale behind each element, therefore it is important that this report is read in conjunction with the Allom & Lovell plan.

■ The Theatres

The current configuration of GPAC's theatres (Blakiston 320 seats; Ford 800 seats) has been suitable for the last 20 years and is adequate for current needs. Looking forward to the next 20 years it is clear that a new configuration of theatres is needed, one that includes:

- a proscenium arch theatre with seating capacity of 1,000-1,400 seats
- a smaller drama theatre with seating of 400-500 seats
- a small studio space with seating around 100-150.

Additional venues important to the mix available in the region include Costa Hall, a concert auditorium of 1,500 seats and The Arena, a stadium able to cater for rock concerts of up to 2,000 people (seating and standing). In any planning it is vital that these venues remain available in the long term.

In addition there is occasional need for a large 2,000+ auditorium in order to attract the larger commercial productions to the area. Geelong does not have a venue of this size.

As Allom & Lovell were confined by GPAC's footprint their study did not examine the ideal seating size of the GPAC venues. Further work is required to support GPAC's view on the ideal configuration of the spaces that encompasses artistic, operational, financial and technical issues.

■ Ford Theatre - general refurbishment and upgrade with no increase of seating capacity

GPAC supports the refurbishment of this space into a premier quality venue for the region, however the refurbishment requires an increase in the seating capacity. The ideal number is around 1,000-1,400 seats, as anything bigger would potentially increase operating costs and destroy the intimacy of the venue. This intimacy is important for the large number of community groups who may get lost on a larger stage.

■ Ford Theatre Foyer – Re-introduce lower and upper foyer into Ryrie St frontage and create new café, bar and public toilets

GPAC supports this option. Having a separate foyer for each of the theatres is important in providing additional spaces for use and flexibility for using the theatre. For example a hirer may have a cocktail reception in the theatre foyer and then move into the auditorium. This is currently not possible in the existing foyer space as it services two theatres, café and box office.

GPAC has reservations about creating two distinct entrances to the building (i.e. Little Malop St and Ryrie St) which may not be in context of the precinct development, particularly if the main focus of activity is in Little Malop St.

■ **Ford Theatre Back of House – Increase storage space, general upgrades and purchase of new technologies**

GPAC supports this option. The Ford Theatre must remain the premier/flagship venue of its type for the region. This is particularly important in light of the 1,400 seat theatre being built by a local school with a planned opening in 2009. As a new venue, it has the potential to match the technical infrastructure of the Ford Theatre, but may not be fitted out to this level (due to budget constraints and operating needs). Therefore it is important the Ford Theatre is equipped with leading-edge technology in order for the region to have access to the best possible standard of venues.

Rather than regarding this venue as a competitor, GPAC sees the potential to schedule across both venues for community and professional users whose shows currently cannot be accommodated (e.g. Geelong Eistedford and commercial touring music acts). Having a well-equipped theatre will assist in developing staff skills and maintaining a high level of motivation.

■ **Blakiston theatre – Retain fixed tier seating, replace existing seating and number of seats**

GPAC does not support this option. Ideally the seating would remain tiered but be retractable and/or flexible. This will allow for different use of the space for performances such as cabaret. The challenge is to make the theatre financially viable for hires by increasing seating capacity but maintaining the artistic attractiveness of a small studio space. The aim is to create a 400-500 seat space without losing the studio style configuration, however further work is needed to best determine how to deliver this option.

The increase in seating capacity for the Blakiston Theatre needs to be complemented by a smaller studio theatre of around 150 seats.

■ **Blakiston Theatre Foyer – create separate foyer from main foyer area with new catering (bar) and toilet facilities**

GPAC supports this option

■ **Blakiston Theatre Back of House – Provide new/direct loading access, new lighting bridge system, provide hoisting systems**

GPAC supports these options, in particular the re-orienting of the lighting bridge system. Most of this work will depend on the final seating configuration, but regardless of this, it is agreed that loading access to the back stage area needs to be improved and be independent of the Ford Theatre. The design solution provided by Allom & Lovell is not technically possible as it depends on using Police Ln (Council owned property) and uses Ryrie St for access by trucks, which is controversial. The solution provided needs re-thinking.

■ **New Studio Theatre – Provide new auditorium and stage space for multi-purpose use with a suggested capacity of 150**

GPAC supports this option. Ideally this venue is slightly 'fringe', with its own identity and separate entrance so it can be used without opening the whole building. It will be operated with a minimum of GPAC staff in a very flexible manner. For example one staff member could sell tickets, usher, start the show and sell programs. Similar to a school venue, the technical infrastructure should be built into the venue so that hirers can use basic functions without GPAC staff support. This is important to minimise the operating cost for users as typically the type of work in this venue will be low cost with small box office returns. This minimal staff arrangement has to be balanced with GPAC's legal requirements for safety, insurance and overall risk management.

■ **Alcoa Studio 1 – Remove Band of Hope façade and expose original Church façade; develop into a stand alone recital hall**

GPAC supports this option and in the context of the precinct recommends further examination of how it can be best used to service a wide range of needs.

■ **Alcoa Studio 1 – provide small foyer space, disabled access and toilets for recital hall**

GPAC supports this option but expresses some concern that the current footprint doesn't have the space to achieve this.

■ **Alcoa Studios 2 & 3 – Complete upgrade and conversion creating a highly visible architectural feature; includes new foyer and disabled access**

GPAC supports the upgrading of existing studio spaces but this solution only replaces the existing number of spaces (i.e. two studios in addition to the music hall). This is not a satisfactory outcome considering the substantial investment required. More than two studio spaces is required, however an exact number has not been determined.

■ **Foyers – Each theatre to have its own foyer; construction of a new four-level structure including a ‘void’ that represents the existing foyer space in a vertical rather than horizontal manner**

GPAC supports the concept of each of the three theatres (two existing plus one new) having its own service foyer feeding of a main common foyer. This large open space is needed to provide a shared community experience, a casual performance area, function space and a sense of place.

Proposals to share a foyer space with another organisation (preferably arts e.g. Geelong Gallery) are supported, but our preference is for GPAC to have its own foyer, therefore any shared space needs to be far superior.

Proposals to share a foyer space with a non-arts organisation is not supported as this would detract from the overall sense of identity for GPAC and reduce usage for arts type activities.

The replacement of our existing common foyer with the Void as described in the Allom & Lovell is not supported as it greatly reduces the available floor space.

■ **Green Room and Dressing Rooms – Removal of car park for additional storage and dressing rooms. Conversion of rehearsal room to second Green Room**

GPAC supports this option on the assumption there will be a parking solution/proposal for the entire precinct that can address the effect of removing the car park currently used for staff. There is an outstanding issue for service vehicles and any GPAC pool car requiring car access to the site.

■ **Box Office – Provide a new box office with street frontage onto Aitchinson Place**

GPAC supports the idea of a single, self-contained box office with street frontage that can operate independently of the centre during the day, but still has internal frontage during performance times. However Aitchinson Place is not necessarily the best location as it is in laneway rather than on the main street. A proposal for a different location of the box office is required, and consideration given to providing service for the precinct.

■ **Box Office administration – Provide new administration area supporting box office**

GPAC supports this option.

■ **Catering – Relocate all kitchen facilities from within GPAC onto Little Malop and Ryrie Streets; new bars for theatres**

GPAC supports this option. The essential idea is for catering to run independently of GPAC operations. It is anticipated that GPAC would continue to own the facility and lease to an operator in order to generate an important revenue stream.

■ **Administration Offices – Provide centralised offices for all staff including relocating technical staff to a new section built across the scene dock**

GPAC supports this option.

■ **Stage Door – relocated to Lt Malop St**

GPAC supports this option.

■ **Building fabric – all electrical, mechanical, plumbing services (etc) fixed including new and upgraded toilets; compliance with building regulations and occupational health and safety legislation**

GPAC supports this option. This is a key element of the redevelopment and the original driver for the development of a master plan. It remains a critical issue regardless of any planning outcome.

■ **Sponsor Lounge suitable for sponsor functions and GPAC Green Room Club**

GPAC supports this option and in the context of the precinct recommends further examination of how it can be best used to service a wide range of needs.

■ **New Space - community space for meetings/conferences**

GPAC supports this option and in the context of the precinct recommends further examination of how it can be best used to service a wide range of needs.

■ **New Space - Sound House for music rehearsal, recording (etc) for education community**

GPAC supports the option to provide a purpose built space to be used by the education community but needs to develop the specifics of this idea further. In the context of the precinct, we need to evaluate how it can be best used to service a wide range of needs.

■ **New Space – Creative Industry Offices suitable for individual tenancies**

GPAC supports this option and in the context of the precinct recommends further examination of how it can be best used to service a wide range of needs.

■ **New Space – Visual Arts Gallery for community use**

GPAC supports this option and in the context of the precinct recommends further examination of how it can be best used to service a wide range of needs and complement the proposed expansion of the Geelong Gallery. There is great value for a performing arts centre to have a gallery space as it provides a different arts experience for theatre audiences.

■ **New Space – Board room for GPAC staff and Trust meetings**

GPAC supports this option and in the context of the precinct recommends further examination of how it can be best used to service a wide range of needs.

■ **New Space – Production temporary ('hot') offices for use by local companies, project workers and touring companies**

GPAC supports this option and in the context of the precinct recommends further examination of how it can be best used to service a wide range of needs.

■ **Courtyard – retain an outdoor courtyard space**

GPAC supports this option and in the context of the precinct recommends further examination of how it can be best used to service a wide range of needs.

■ **Police Lane – opportunity to extend Ford Theatre wing space and provide dedicated loading bay access**

The option as it stands is not feasible, however the concept of improved loading bay access and increased wing space for the Ford Theatre is supported. Any loading bay issues should be evaluated in context of the precinct.

6. Index of redevelopment reports

The following reports are available for interested parties to access in order to further their understanding of the GPAC's vision and planning process for the Geelong Cultural Precinct.

GPAC Strategic Plan 2003-08 – GPAC Trust

GPAC Strategic Facility Plan – Allom & Lovell

GPAC Master Plan Business Case – The Nous Group

Geelong Cultural Precinct Feasibility Study – Sinclair Knight and Mertz

Understanding the Geelong Cultural Precinct Opportunity – GPAC Trust

GPAC Redevelopment Options report for Minister of the Arts – GPAC Trust

GPAC Strategic Plan 2007-10 – GPAC Trust