



Inquiry into annual and financial reports 2024–2025

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Mr Taimus Werner-Gibbings MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries

In relation to: Business, Arts and Creative Industries and Future of wooden Totems

Hearing: 19 November 2025

Uncorrected Proof Transcript p 63-64

Transcript provided: 28 November 2025

Answer Due: 5 December 2025

THE CHAIR: Sense of committee recommendation. The other one then is—this is the—about the 'Gathering Place', the public artwork. So the six timber totems that form part of the artwork, this is from the website page:

Were removed on the recommendation of structural engineer. The timber had extensive cracking, decay, some of the totems were no longer stable. Future of the timber totems will be decided in consultation with the artists.

Has the government and the artists made a decision about the future of the Gathering Place totems yet, including replacing them or repairing and reinstalling them?

Ms Comacchio: No decision has been made yet. The totems are in storage. So we have received reports around the totems, especially the fact that they are wooden. When we did check them it was found that they were structurally unsound. So, for now they are in storage in consultation with the artists who will make a decision about what to do with those.

THE CHAIR: Yes. Because I mean, like, the art—those totems have a significant impact on the iconic—well, and I guess, for want of a better word, visual impact on the work where it is situated. So a decision about whether or not they can be repaired or replaced would be, I think, greatly welcomed by members of the community.

Ms Comacchio: Yes.

THE CHAIR: But there is no timeline about that sort of decision making process? **Ms Comacchio:** No, not a timeline. I mean, we can take it on notice and provide information when it is available.

THE CHAIR: Yes, thank you very much. Deputy Chair.

Michael Pettersson MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

In August 2024, an independent structural engineer recommended the urgent removal of the six timber totems central to the artwork *Gathering Place* due to extensive internal decay and associated public safety risks. The lead artists, Wellspring, were advised, and the totems were immediately removed and placed in storage. A subsequent assessment by a materials conservator confirmed the totems had reached end-of-life and could not be repaired. The artwork is now being decommissioned.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation

Signature:



Date: 10-12-25

By the Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries, Michael Pettersson MLA