



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS
Ms Mary Porter AM MLA (Chair), Mr Steve Doszpot MLA (Deputy Chair), Ms Yvette Berry
MLA, Ms Giulia Jones MLA

Inquiry into referred 2013–14 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
14 November 2014

Asked by Mrs Jones:

In relation to: Collection Policy:



MRS JONES: Thank you, chair. On page 166 and the list of acquisitions, both purchases and donations, can you talk us through, particularly in the area of purchase, what area you have been focusing on and what gaps are trying to be filled in the collection? With regard to donations, is this something you encourage or is it a difficulty sometimes when you get offered works? Is there something you are particularly hoping over a period will—

Ms Burch: Have you found something in your roof?

MRS JONES: No. I just know from sitting on the art committee here that there is always a mix.

Ms Burch: It is always a challenge about what gifts you accept.

MRS JONES: Yes. I find this an interesting list. I wonder if you could enlighten us.

Ms Elvin: All of our acquisitions, whether they are purchases or donations, are made within a formal collections policy. You are quite right; it can be a real challenge for collecting institutions to resist very kind donations or offers of donations. They do say that for every museum the thing that is most often offered are wedding dresses, which is wonderful, but you do not need everybody's old wedding dress. We do have some wedding dresses, but they have been collected for particular purposes.

Within that collection policy, we identify particular priorities for collecting. For example, one of those is art historical works like the Gruner works. When we did the Gruner exhibition, everything apart from one work in that exhibition actually came in as a loan. I guess it highlighted to us that we only had one work by Gruner. We have since acquired another work at auction, and an area that we want to continue to pursue is those works of art historical importance.

I think you also see that there are a number of Indigenous works. That is another area that I certainly want us to build up. We were delighted to be able to purchase Matilda House's possum skin coat during the year. It is a very important social history object but also it actually has designs that she has inked onto the inside of the coat. She wore that coat at Parliament House when the formal apology was made. It is a very significant item.

These do, in fact, cover both art acquisitions and social history acquisitions. I guess we would always, when we are offered something, assess whether we want to acquire it against our collection policy. That is a very important protection for us because when something comes into our care we need to conserve it in various ways, and there are all sorts of costs associated with that. We want to be sure that, despite all those kind offers, we are actually getting the right things.

MRS JONES: Are you able to table or come back to us with a copy of the policy?

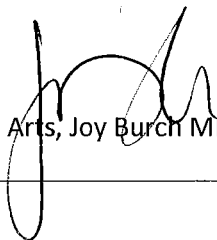
Ms Elvin: We can certainly provide a copy of the collection policy.

MINISTER BURCH: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

Please find a copy of Canberra Museum and Gallery Collections Policy at Attachment A.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs

Signature:



By the Minister for the Arts, Joy Burch MLA

Date:

24.11.14

FINAL REPORT

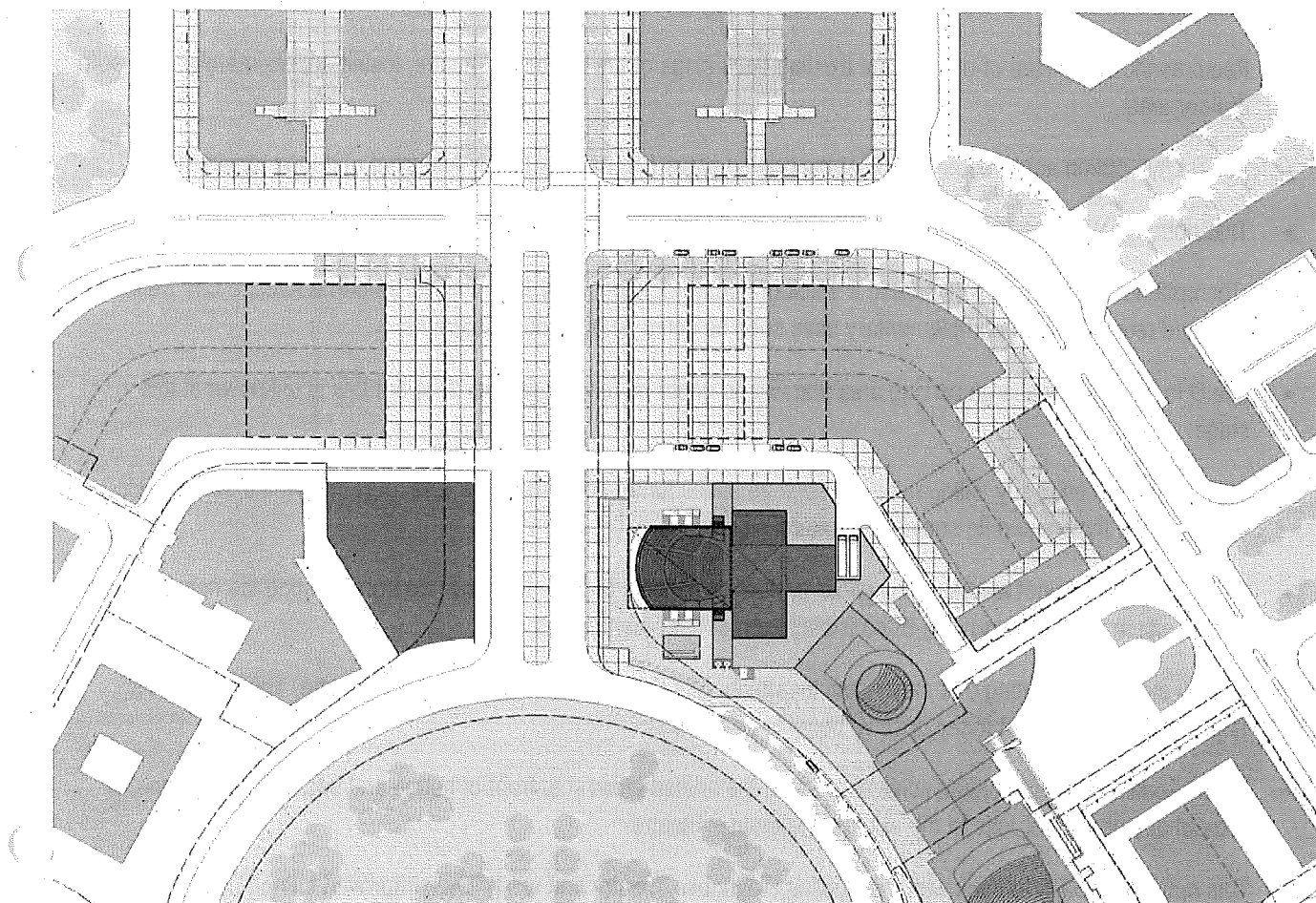
FEBRUARY 2014

SITING STUDY FOR A NEW MAJOR THEATRE FOR CANBERRA

FOR THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

IN CONJUNCTION WITH

THE CULTURAL FACILITIES CORPORATION



PREPARED BY

colin stewart architects

20/02/2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines the options for siting a new 2,000 seat theatre on both Site D and Site G, as identified in the City Hill Precinct Plan. This work follows on from an initial master plan study prepared by Colin Stewart Architects, April 2013, for the Cultural Facilities Corporation, which explored opportunities for the need to reserve sites for existing and future cultural facilities for the ACT.

The study shows that, in terms of satisfying the functional requirements for a major new theatre as determined by the Williams Ross Area Analysis, the Site G has some serious negative consequences as follows:

- Requires the demolition of most of the existing back stage of the Canberra Theatre, losing approximately 1,357sqm of floor area.
- At best this option achieves only 38% of the briefed areas (i.e. back of house and front of house requirements).
- This option may compromise longer term plans for the Canberra Theatre which are unknown at this stage.
- The option locates the new theatre in a 'back of house' location away from the Northbourne Avenue City Centre area and removed from complementary uses such as cafes, shops and restaurants.
- Site G is adjacent to a large parking area that will no doubt be developed over time but this is unknown at this stage.
- Site G does not offer any 'siting benefits' such as space for a public square or forecourt that would be of major benefit to the theatre and its social and cultural significance.
- Conversely, we are not aware of any wider or flow on benefits that are to be gained from locating the new theatre on this site in relation to existing or possible future development in this area.

This report also explores the siting of a major new theatre on Site D adjacent to the Playhouse Theatre. There are a few negative issues with this site, but many positive benefits as follows:

- In functional terms, this option achieves 72% of the briefed areas (i.e. front of house and back of house areas) without any change or loss to the existing Playhouse Theatre.
- This option sits back to back with the existing Playhouse Theatre and will provide improved shared covered loading and additional back of house areas for both theatres.
- Importantly, the Playhouse Theatre is a nationally recognised, if not world class, recently completed theatre facility and will sit alongside the proposed new larger theatre, making an even more significant dual theatre complex for the ACT.
- Site D's high visibility and central location facing the Sydney and Melbourne Buildings will set up a unique opportunity to position cultural facilities as one of the many activities that will combine to create a new sense of arrival and place making at the foot of Northbourne Avenue.

- This site offers a host of existing and new opportunities for complementary activities (shops, tourist destinations, cafes and restaurants) that may well serve to finally bridge the 'gap' between City East and City West and will contribute to the making of a new social gathering place and mixed use hub at the centre of the city.
- Importantly, this option does not significantly detract from the commercial development opportunities of the London Circuit development sites, but may in fact add to their value.
- Servicing and access for both pedestrians and vehicles are markedly better when compared to Site G.

Both options assume that the Studio Theatre could be accommodated below the main theatre in a similar fashion to the new Perth State Theatre complex. Therefore, this element of the future cultural facilities complex was not seen as a comparative advantage in either option.

For these reasons, we strongly recommend Site D as the preferred site for a new 2,000 seat theatre.

Colin Stewart
February 2014

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Colin Stewart Architects (CSA) has been engaged by the Economic Development Directorate (EDD) in conjunction with the Cultural Facilities Corporation (CFC) to:

“Assess whether a major new theatre of around 2,000 seats, together with associated facilities, including a 300 seat “black box” studio, could be accommodated on Site G (part of Block 11 Section 19, directly south of the Canberra Theatre). The assessment is to be based on the area analysis prepared by Williams Ross Architects and is to be undertaken on the assumption that Constitution Avenue is extended, at its current width, to Vernon Circle.

If elements of the existing Canberra Theatre Centre (e.g. the Courtyard Theatre; the workshop areas; the administration areas) would need to be adapted or demolished to accommodate the new facilities, an assessment is to be undertaken as to how these elements could be accommodated within the new building, in order to retain their functionality and their connectivity to the existing Canberra Theatre.”

In addition to the assessment of Site G as a potential site for a major new theatre, an assessment of Site D has been included, based on a preliminary assessment of Site G. This has enabled the Siting Study to draw a comparison between both sites.

This report studies how a major new theatre and associated facilities on either Site G or Site D could:

- Address Vernon Circle, Constitution Avenue or Northbourne Avenue;
- Connect with the existing Canberra Theatre Centre;
- Connect to, and be an impetus for, a revitalised Civic Square, with a particular emphasis on complementary business in the precinct such as restaurants, bars, cafes and retail;
- Form linkages with a potential new Australia Forum (Convention Centre);
- Have appropriate set-backs so as to ensure an appropriate setting and consistency with the provisions contained within the National Capital Plan.

As people movement is an integral component of Canberra’s public realm, in addition to the exploration of the above aims, investigation of design around people movement, pedestrian access points and the desirability of an “address” or plaza have been carefully considered in the assessment of a preferred site.

The study presents various arrangements exploring how a major new theatre may be accommodated on both sites and how the vast range of servicing, address and access issues could be integrated, and how these options could have benefits / impacts on the future development of the cultural precinct and its role in the development of the City Plan.

PART ONE – CONTEXT

Site D

The site to the rear of the Canberra Playhouse which sits on the corner of Northbourne Avenue and Vernon Circle is known as Site D. Site D has a site area of approximately 4,510sqm and it falls roughly 3.5 metres towards London Circuit to the north.

Site G

The site directly south of the Canberra Theatre on the corner of the future Vernon Circle and Constitution Avenue intersection is known as Site G. Site G has a site area of approximately 4,462sqm, not including the Canberra Theatre and Courtyard Studio buildings, and it falls roughly 5 metres from Vernon Circle to the existing car park.



Fig 1 – Site D Context



Fig 2 – Site G Context

The Terms of Reference

There have been a number of studies and reports proposing improvements to the Canberra Theatre and Civic Square precinct as well as indicating the intentions for the future redevelopment of the precinct. The following current reports and studies have been reviewed as preparatory material to understand the context of the precinct. The major points to each document can be summarised as:

- National Capital Plan, September 2013 and the NCA Urban Design Guidelines for part of Sections 19 & 63, City.
 - The National Capital Plan indicates that Land Uses should be identified for the Legislative Assembly and Supreme Court and other municipal and **cultural uses**.
 - The Urban Design Guidelines indicate a range of potential uses including retail, residential and commercial uses within the City Hill Precinct, however, specifically identifies the area north of the Playhouse Theatre (referred to as Site D in this report) as “theatre” use.
 - The National Capital Plan indicates that new buildings to both London Circuit and Vernon Circle should have active frontages. Buildings to Vernon Circle should have zero setbacks. Buildings to London Circuit should have setbacks of sufficient distance to establish a tree-line boulevard character (two rows of trees and wide pavements). However, the Urban Design Guidelines nominate mandatory setbacks to London Circuit of 5.5 metres and zero setbacks to Northbourne Avenue, Knowles Place and Vernon Circle.
 - Both London Circuit and Vernon Circle should be discouraged as a through route.
 - Tall landmark buildings up to RL 617 are restricted to the corners of the main avenues intersecting with London Circuit (i.e. Northbourne Avenue and Constitution Avenue).
 - Building heights up to 25 metres above the kerb level of London Circuit, Vernon Circle, Northbourne Avenue and Constitution Avenue are permissible **in all areas of City Hill Precinct**. The National Capital Plan indicates building heights with a minimum 16 metres desirable to Vernon Circle.
 - Minor building elements above 25 metres, such as a theatre fly tower, for instance, could be considered, where this enhances architectural quality of the building and appropriate urban scale.
 - Existing laneways (i.e. Knowles Place Laneway) should be retained.
- Linking the City to the Lake – Urban Design Strategy.
 - Establishes a development framework for the southern flank of Canberra’s city centre and stretches from the West Basin to Anzac Parade including Parkes Way, London Circuit, Canberra Olympic Pool, the existing convention centre and the large surface car parks on London Circuit.
 - Key elements include feasibility and siting of a new multi-purpose stadium, the Australia Forum and a new aquatic centre.
 - The plan includes ‘filling in’ the inner zone around Vernon Circle, between Vernon Circle and Knowles Place and proposes a new connection between Vernon Circle and London Circuit.
- Civic Square Precinct Future Development report prepared by Colin Stewart Architects.

- A new 2,000 seat theatre could be located on the vacant site adjacent to the Playhouse.
- A new 'cultural arc' could be created around the north eastern edge of Vernon Circle, extending from the Magistrates Court in the north to Constitution Avenue in the east and addressing City Hill.
- A major new plaza could be created, spanning the east and west corners of Northbourne Avenue and London Circuit to create a major sense of arrival in the city centre, unifying City East and City West.
- Civic Square could be revitalised through a range of actions to make it more accessible and functional and could include new active frontages, the introduction of green spaces, vehicle access and parking within the square itself and underground parking as part of a wider parking strategy that has been proposed.
- The report recommends the entire frontage to Vernon Circle from the Magistrates Court to Constitution Avenue be reserved for **cultural purposes**.
- Report prepared by Cox Humphries Moss on the ACT Government Office proposal on Section 19.
 - Proposed a major new government office building on Block 4, Block 25, and the northern most part of Block 11 above the assumed Vernon Circle and Constitution Avenue intersection on Section 19.
 - Proposes up to 98,992sqm (comprising of 66,833sqm commercial floor space and 32,159sqm parking) of floor area over 3 levels of basement and 11 floors of mixed use commercial development with an 11 storey tower on the corner of London Circuit and Constitution Avenue.
 - This proposal consolidates and subdivides existing blocks.
- Area analysis and indicative sketch plan for a 2,000 seat theatre on Block 23 Section 19 prepared by Williams Ross Architects (refer below).
- Existing measured drawings of the Canberra Theatre, Playhouse Theatre, foyer and link prepared by Eric Martin and Associates.

The Area Analysis for a 2,000 seat Theatre

The area analysis indicative sketch plan for a 2,000 seat theatre prepared by Williams Ross Architects has been used a brief for this study, indicating the ideal footprint for a theatre and the expected GFA.

This analysis indicates that a 2,000 seat theatre with loading, foyer, bars and 300 seat studio theatre will require an internal GFA of up to 16,789sqm over 5 + floors.

Based on the area analysis, there are a number of uses that need to be contained to the main level to allow for an efficient functioning theatre. These include:

- Front of house uses including food and beverage.
- Theatre stalls and stage house.
- Backstage support including production support and performance support.
- Servicing and dock.

A summary of the areas and spaces required on the Main Level are as follows (also refer Figure 6 Area Summary, Functions Required at Main Level):

1.	Front of House	1,561 sqm	1,944 sqm combined
2.	Food and Beverage	383 sqm	
5a.	Theatre Stalls	908 sqm	2,004 sqm combined
5b.	Stage House	1,096 sqm	
8a.	Backstage – Support	1,114 sqm	1,486 sqm combined
8b.	Backstage – Production Support	210 sqm	
8c.	Backstage – Performers Support	162 sqm	
9	Servicing including Dock	370 sqm	
	Sub Total	5,804 sqm	
	5% Gross as per the Area Analysis	290 sqm	
	TOTAL	6,094sqm	

In addition to these Terms of Reference, the Stage Area Comparisons as prepared by Marshall Day Entertech have been used to assist in determining the ideal footprint for a 2,000 seat theatre. This comparison examines 6 leading theatres in Australia with the aim of confirming the ideal footprint for front, side and back stages (refer Figure 3 Stage Area Comparisons by Marshall Day Entertech).

A Working Footprint

An analysis of the Williams Ross Architects proposed theatre and review of other national and international performance spaces show that theatres are made up of two essential parts;

- Areas that have a fixed configuration – required for functional and operational reasons.
- Fluid form spaces – spaces that generally wrap around the fixed configuration spaces which have defined areas, but can be flexible in their arrangements and are dictated by the architecture and siting constraints.

The Williams Ross Architects sketch plan illustrates an ideal footprint which is based on the area analysis and includes an external plaza, foyer, stage house and seating, back of house, loading dock and studio theatre Refer Figure 4 Williams Ross Architects Lyric Theatre Sketch Plan. A critical dimension, running longitudinally through the middle of the theatre, becomes a key measurement dictating critical dimensions when considering siting. Refer Figure 5 Critical Dimension Diagram.

The Williams Ross Architects sketch plan indicates a critical dimension of up to 140 metres and includes the external plaza. The critical dimension can be adjusted with a degree of tolerance to suit specific sites. The critical dimension is made up of fixed internal configuration and surrounded by fluid form spaces.

The spaces that make up the fixed internal configuration are:

- The Theatre Seating – 32 metres critical dimension.

- The Stage House, including the Stage, the Prompt Wing, the Op Wing and the Rear Stage – 60 metres critical dimension.

These elements have a fixed configuration that is required to accommodate the large travelling performances such as Ballet Australia. This configuration has also been confirmed by the Marshall Day Entertech comparison analysis.

The fluid form spaces that surround the fixed internal spaces are:

- Front of House spaces, including entry foyers, food and beverage facilities.
- Backstage spaces, including production support and performers support.

These elements have a fluid form that can be adjusted to suit the design and siting requirements, but need to accommodate a certain internal area, as indicated on the Williams Ross Area Analysis and *Figure 6 Area Summary, Functions Required at Main Level*.

Other fixed configurations at ground floor include the loading dock. The loading dock needs to provide efficient access to the backstage spaces; however, it does not make up part of the critical dimension. The Studio Theatre, again a fixed configuration, needs to connect to the foyer spaces but is not part of the critical dimension and doesn't necessarily have to be located at ground floor. Using Potsdammer Platz, or the Perth State Theatre as examples, Studio Theatres can be located beneath the main theatre.

The attached comparative diagrams illustrate "national" theatres that provide side and rear stages and include the Star City Theatre, the State Theatre of Melbourne and the Queensland Performing Arts Centre Theatre.

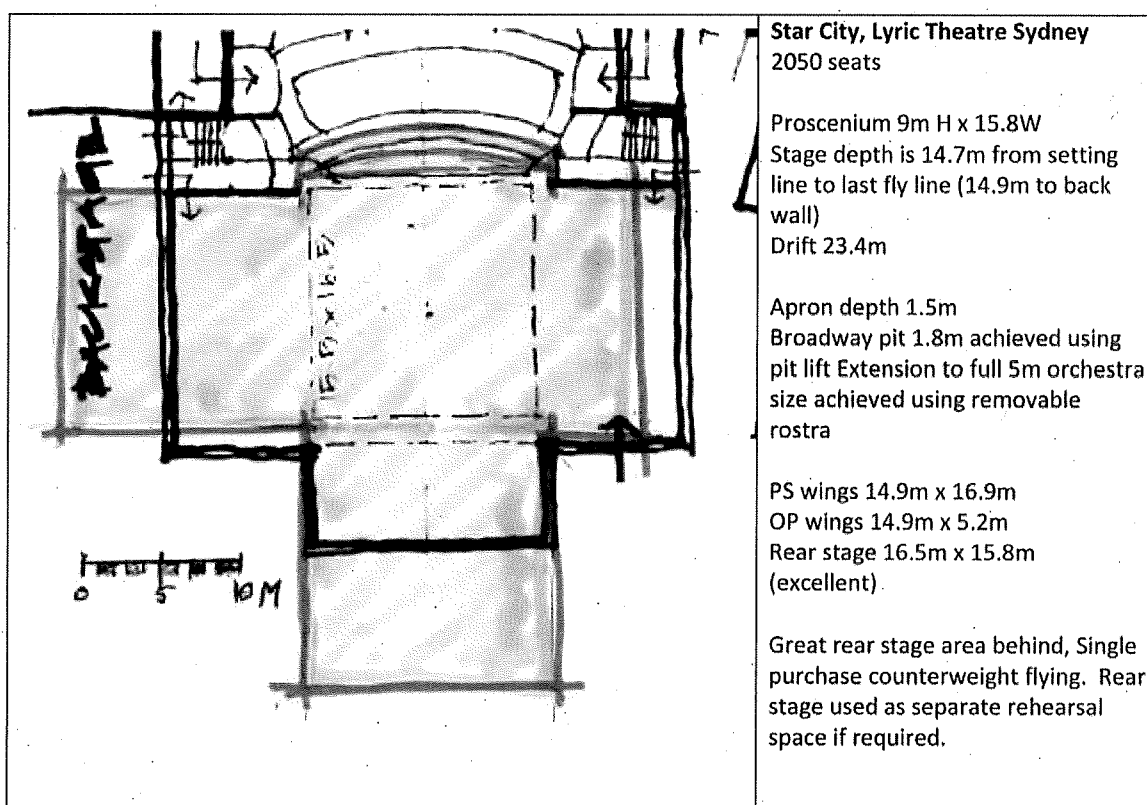
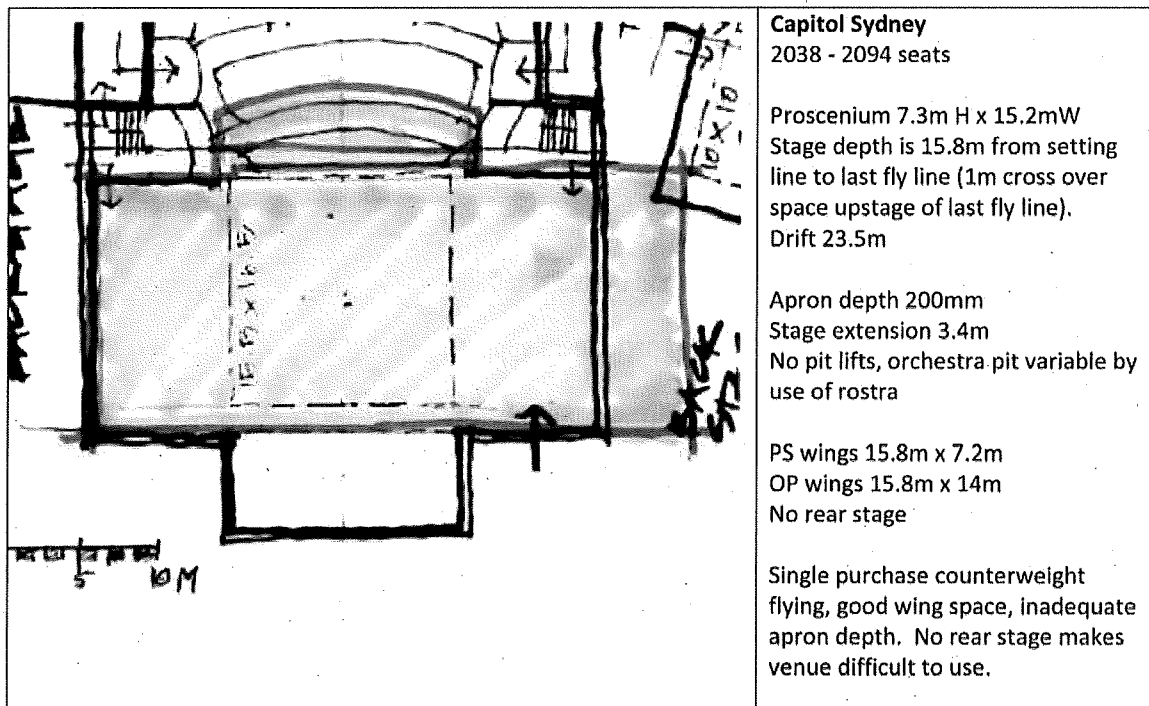


Figure 3 Stage Area Comparisons by Marshall Day Entertech

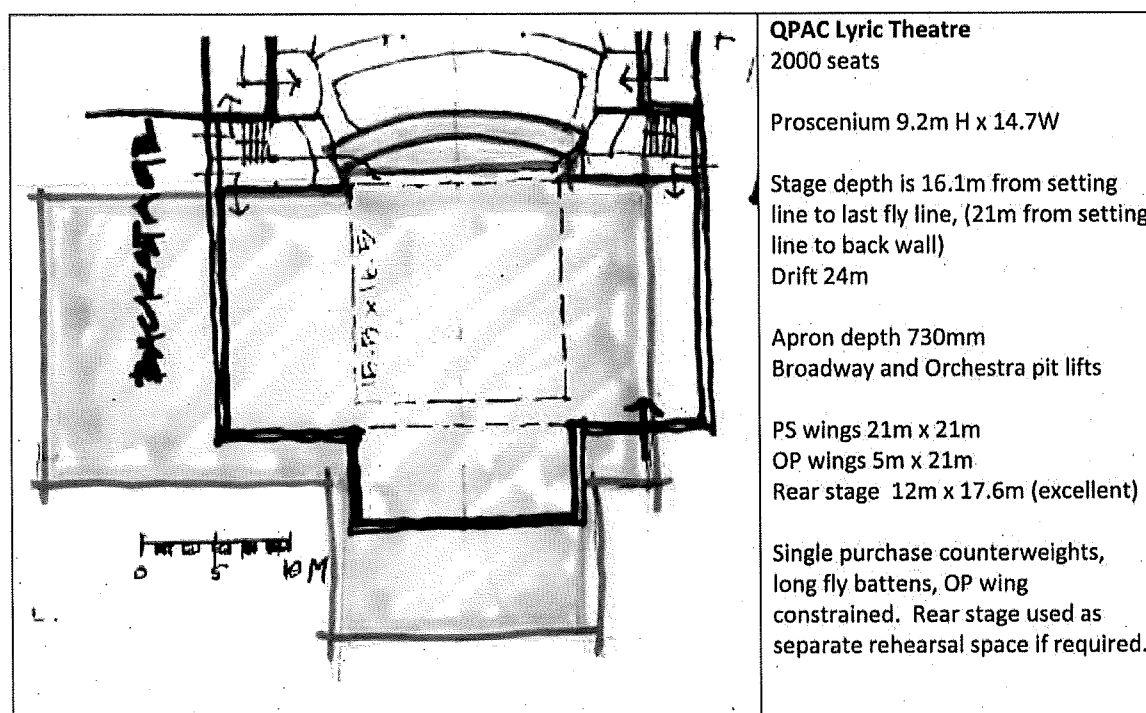
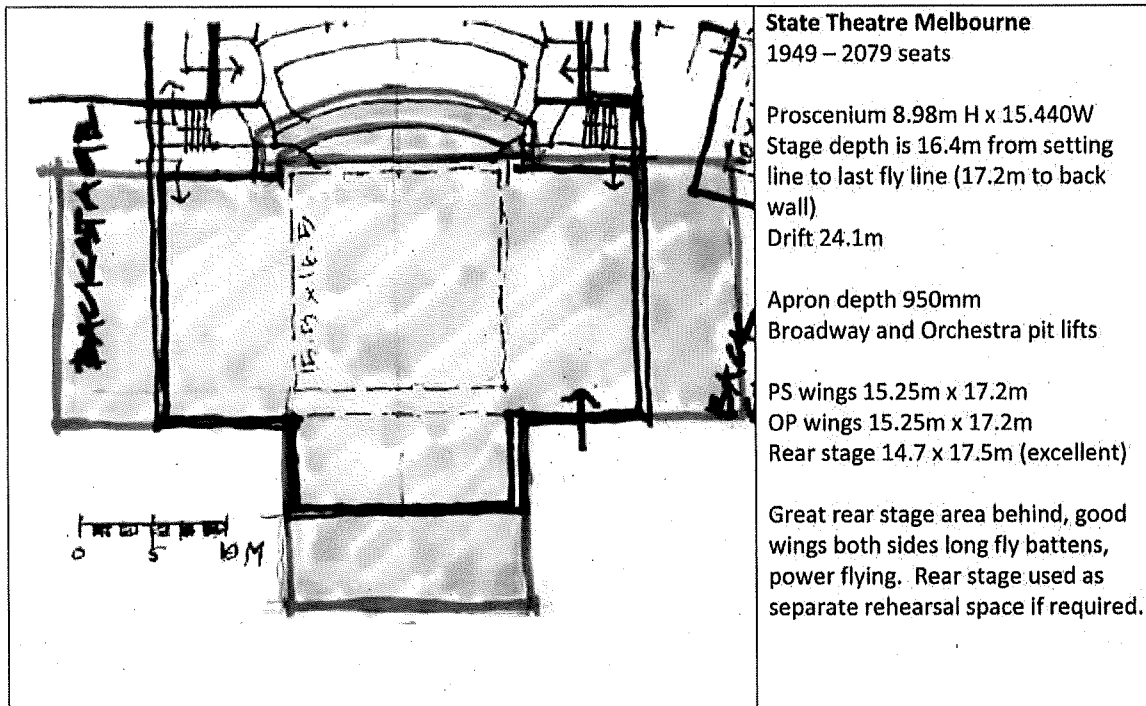
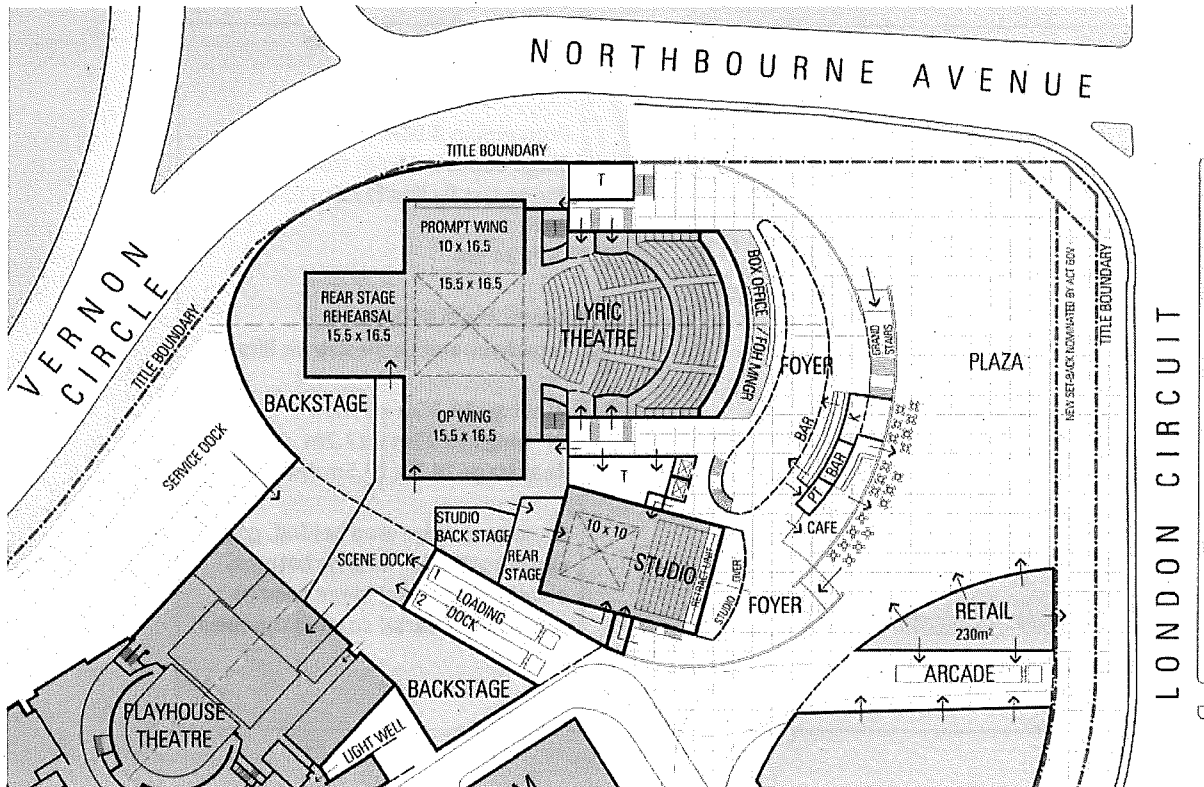
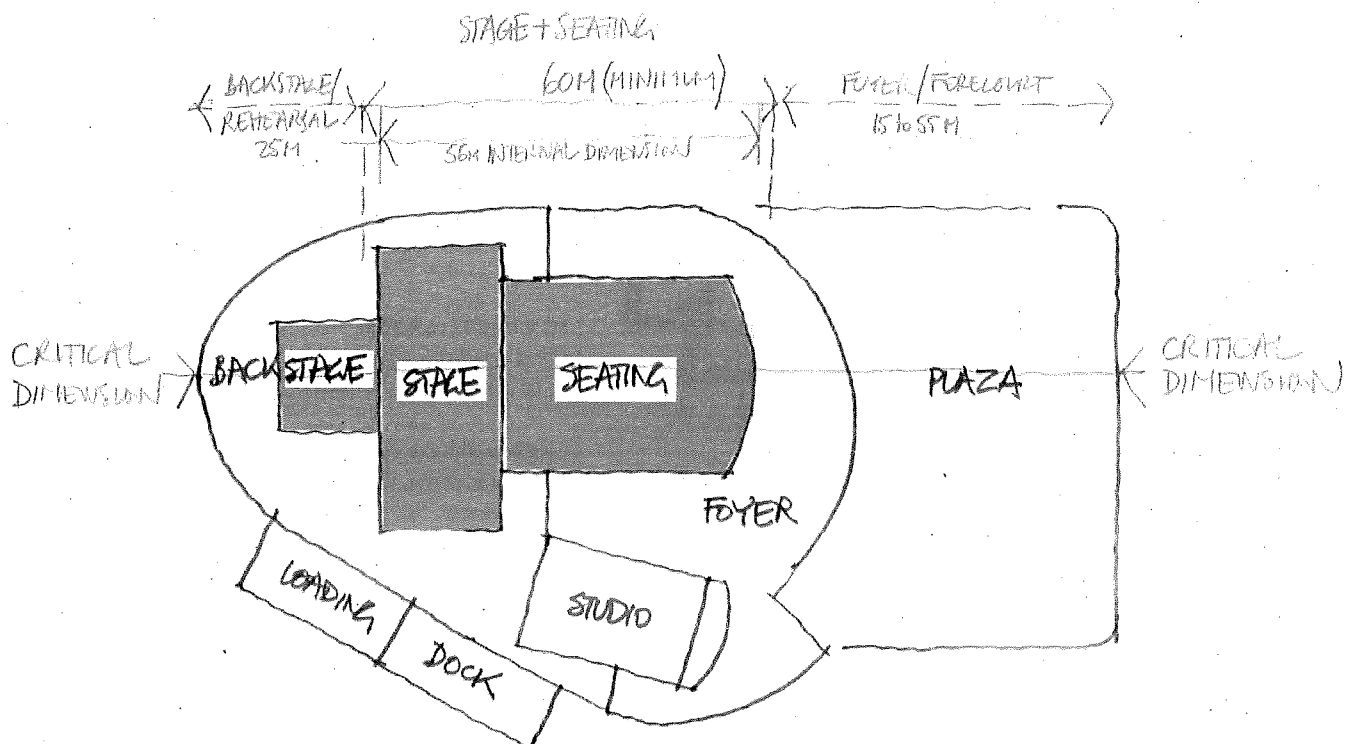


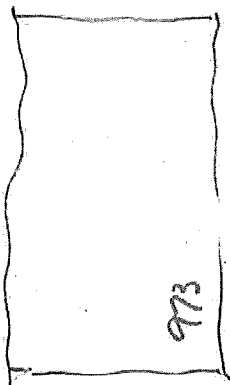
Figure 3 Stage Area Comparisons by Marshall Day Entertech



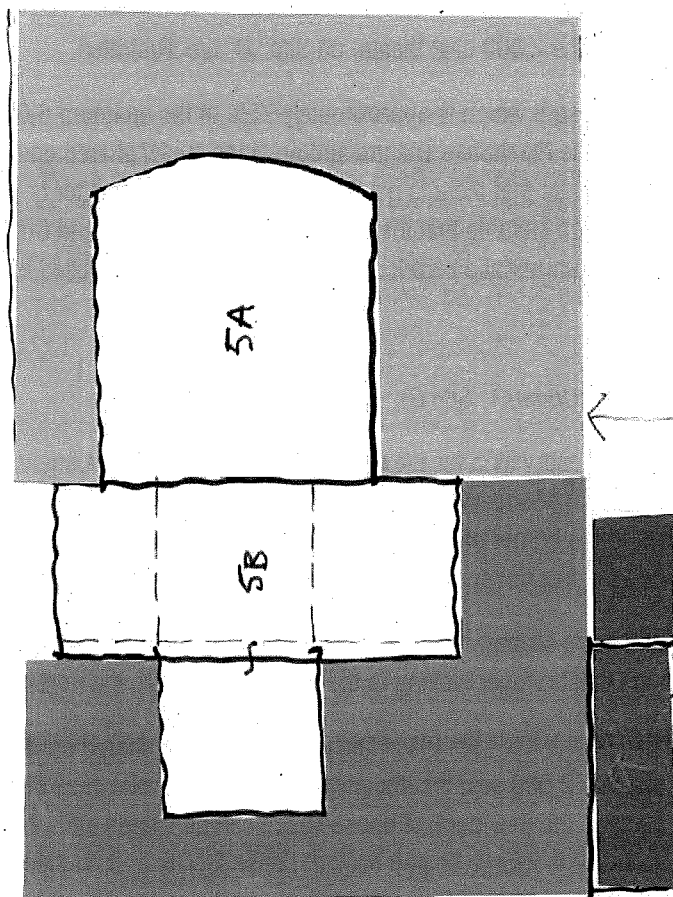
Refer Figure 4 Williams Ross Architects Lyric Theatre Sketch Plan (NTS)



Refer Figure 5 Critical Dimension Diagram (NTS)



STUDIO THEATRE
(FOOTPRINT REQUIRED FOR STAGE/STALLS 973m²)



INDICATES FIXED
SHAPE

INDICATES
FLUID FORM

AREA SUMMARY FUNCTIONS REQUIRED AT MAIN LEVEL

1. FRONT OF HOUSE	1561	} 1944
2. FOOD + BEVERAGE	383	
3 ADMIN	—	
4 FUNCTIONS	—	
5A THEATRE (STALLS)	908	
B STAGE HOUSE	1096	
6 STUDIO THEATRE	—	
7 RECITAL ROOM	—	
8A BACKSTAGE - SUPPORT	1114	} 1486
B PRODUCTION SUPPORT	210	
C PERFORMERS SUPPORT	162	
9 SERVICING INCL. DOCK	370	
5% GROSSING	5804	
	290	
TOTAL	6094	

SOURCE: WILLIAMS ROSES

1500



Figure 6 Area Summary, Functions Required at Main Level

PART TWO – SITE D SITING AND ASSESSMENT



Evaluation of Site D

A number of options for siting the 2,000 seat theatre on Site “D” are illustrated.

The available site area is 4,510sqm which is approximately 75% of the optimum 6,094sqm internal area required. This site retains the entire operation of the Playhouse Theatre and provides a new shared covered loading dock serving both theatres. The various siting options illustrate that there is no abortive work or need to alter or change the existing Playhouse theatre. In addition to this, this site option ensures that the existing Canberra Theatre and Courtyard Theatre buildings are not affected, resulting in no re-accommodation work to make up lost or compromised existing floor area and uses.

Design Options

Option 1 (Refer Figure 7 Siting Option 1, Site D)

Option 1 assumes a 15 metre reservation for the extension of Knowles Place Laneway to intersect with Northbourne Avenue as the determining north boundary. As per the Civic Square Precinct Future Development report (April 2013), this proposal assumes a plaza to the corner of Northbourne Avenue and London Circuit to form an improved address for the theatre. This plaza serves as a spill out space for the 2,000 theatre goers before and after a show.

The fixed configuration of theatre seating, stage house, prompt, op and rear wing is arranged parallel to the Knowles Place Laneway extension with the theatre foyer looking to the west as well as to the north and south.

A new loading dock located on the Knowles Place laneway serves as a shared covered loading dock between the existing Playhouse Theatre and the new 2,000 seat theatre and provides a generous back of house facilities that access all back stage areas to the new theatre. The new back of house space can be shared and integrated with the existing backstage space of the Playhouse to result in a large shared back of house facility to both theatres.

Front of house activities extend from the Northbourne Avenue boundary through to the Vernon Circle boundary, connecting to the existing link to form the ‘arc’ of cultural facilities.

This option assumes that a plaza could be located on the corner of Northbourne Avenue and London Circuit, opposite the Sydney Building. The National Capital Plan reserves this site for a tower with a maximum RL of 617.00, and the plaza concept could be achieved by setting this tower 20 metres back from Vernon Circle (Northbourne Avenue).

This appears to be the preferred layout for Site D.

Option 2 (Refer Figure 8, Siting Option 2, Site D)

Option 2 assumes a 15 metre reservation for the extension of Knowles Place Laneway to intersect with Northbourne Avenue as the determining north boundary. As per Option 1, a plaza could be located on the corner of Northbourne Avenue and London Circuit. However, the National Capital Plan indicates that a tower should be developed on this corner.

The fixed configuration of theatre seating, stage house, prompt, op and rear wing is arranged parallel to Northbourne Avenue with the theatre looking to the north as proposed on the Williams Ross Theatre sketch plan.

A new loading dock located on the Knowles Place laneway serves as a shared covered loading dock between the existing Playhouse Theatre and the new 2,000 seat theatre. The new back of house space can be shared and integrated with the existing backstage space of the Playhouse to result in a large shared back of house facility to both theatres.

This arrangement does not allow all the fixed configuration spaces to fit on the site, with the rear / rehearsal stage overhanging Vernon Circle. This also causes the back of house facilities to be split into two separate spaces.

In addition to this, the theatre seating is hard up against the Knowles Place laneway reserve which splits the front of house uses into two separate spaces. If these spaces were to be linked around the front of the theatre, the front of house would encroach the Knowles Place laneway.

This arrangement also prevents the front of house activities to extend along the Vernon Circle boundary, connecting to the existing link to form the 'arc' of cultural facilities as identified in the Civic Square Precinct Future Development report and indicated in the City to the Lake plan.

Option 3 (Refer Figure 9, Siting Option 3, Site D)

Option 3 assumes a 15 metre reservation for the extension of Knowles Place Laneway to intersect with Northbourne Avenue as the determining north boundary. As per Option 1, a plaza could be located on the corner of Northbourne Avenue and London Circuit. However, the National Capital Plan indicates that a tower should be developed on this corner.

The fixed configuration of theatre seating, stage house, prompt, op and rear wing is arranged parallel to the Playhouse Theatre with the theatre looking to the north-west.

A new loading dock located on the Knowles Place laneway serves as a shared covered loading dock between the existing Playhouse Theatre and the new 2,000 seat theatre. The new back of house space can be shared and integrated with the existing backstage space of the Playhouse to result in a large shared back of house facility to both theatres.

This arrangement does not allow all the fixed configuration spaces to fit on the site, with the rear / rehearsal stage overlapping the existing Playhouse Theatre. This also causes the back of house facilities to be split into two separate spaces.

Analysis of the preferred option on Site D – Option 1 (Refer Figure 10 Efficiency Calculation Site D)

The resultant preferred layout of the theatre on Site D provides 72% of the briefed areas. This option would deliver a suitable outcome purely in relation to functioning areas.

The preferred siting for the new 2,000 seat theatre on Site D has a number of positive features as follows:

- Achieves a high percentage of the optimum functional areas.
- Results in only positive impacts to the existing Playhouse Theatre such as the construction of a new covered loading dock.
- Preeminent location which does not intrude into the commercial development opportunities on the London Circuit frontage.
- Central City location with address to Northbourne Avenue and Vernon Circle and potential address to London Circuit.
- Opportunity for constructing the Knowles Place laneway as indicated on the National Capital Plan.
- Potential for extending the foyer to link to the Playhouse foyer and through to the link building as part of the 'arc' of cultural facilities.
- Multiple opportunities for access to associated retail, restaurant and entertainment facilities in various locations including within the new theatre, within the north building and within the nearby Sydney and Melbourne buildings.

The presence and visibility of the new theatre will be greatly enhanced by opening up the view and vistas from Northbourne Avenue and London Circuit to the new theatre as illustrated in the Civic Square Precinct Future Development, prepared by Colin Stewart Architects (April 2013).

Impacts on Existing Operations

Siting a new theatre on Site D will require a change to the vehicle entry to the existing Canberra Theatre setdown and disabled access adjacent Vernon Circle. This may be achieved in the short term (i.e. prior to the replacement of the link building) with a temporary drive entry from Vernon Circle or a new alternative vehicular entry into Civic Square from London Circuit. In the longer term the redevelopment of the link area will facilitate new improved opportunities for setdown and disabled access from Vernon Circle and from Civic Square as illustrated in the Civic Square Precinct Future Development (April 2013).

Broader Site D Advantages

A new 2,000 seat theatre being located on Site D has the potential to serve as a catalyst for a number of important projects including:

- Refurbishing and reactivating the courtyards of the Sydney and Melbourne buildings.
- The extension of the Knowles Place laneway in City East.
- Facilitating the various transport and public realm improvements envisaged in the City Hill Precinct.

- Commencing the first stage of the new 'arc' of cultural facilities in the city centre.
- Repositioning the cultural activities to a more central high profile part of the city resulting in higher exposure and potentially higher usage and familiarity with the cultural facilities.
- Symbolising and kick starting the transformative planning policies currently being pursued by the ACT Government i.e. Light Rail, Linking the City to the Lake, linking City East to City West and making an accessible City Hill Park.

Findings on Site D Evaluation

Site D presents a very exciting and practical opportunity for the siting of a new 2,000 seat theatre in a premier central location at the very heart of the city centre.

The landmark presence of the new theatre directly opposite the Sydney and Melbourne buildings will play a huge role in adding value to this "empty" area of the city without compromising commercial development opportunities on the London Circuit sites.

Importantly the new theatre can be designed and constructed almost immediately without any need for other major infrastructure work. In addition, all existing cultural facilities managed by the CFC will not be disrupted by this proposal. In other words, it will work within existing traffic arrangements, with existing parking arrangements and existing servicing arrangements.

The Site D option would benefit from the inclusion of a plaza to the corner of Northbourne Avenue and London Circuit to act as an address point to this landmark development and as a vital spill out space for the 2,000 theatre goers before and after a show. It is imperative that public open spaces in key parts of the city are retained and indeed embellished to ensure suitable address to future landmark developments such as this new theatre are created.

Of course, future plans for light rail, changes to the role of Vernon Circle, new commercial development on London Circuit, Linking the City to the Lake plans and other initiatives by government will in turn benefit from the presence of a new "national" theatre in such a prime location.

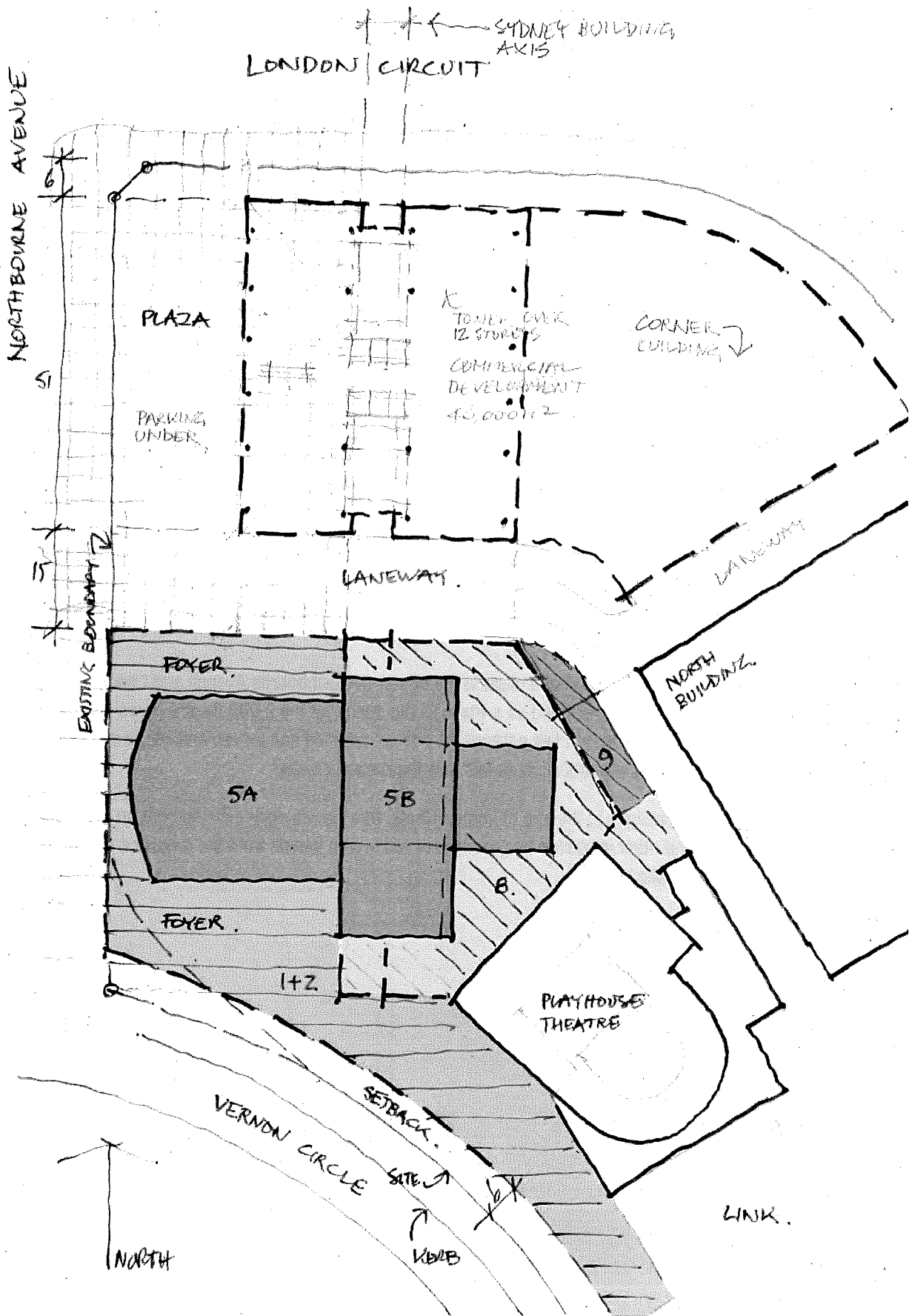


Figure 7 Siting Option 1, Site D (nts)

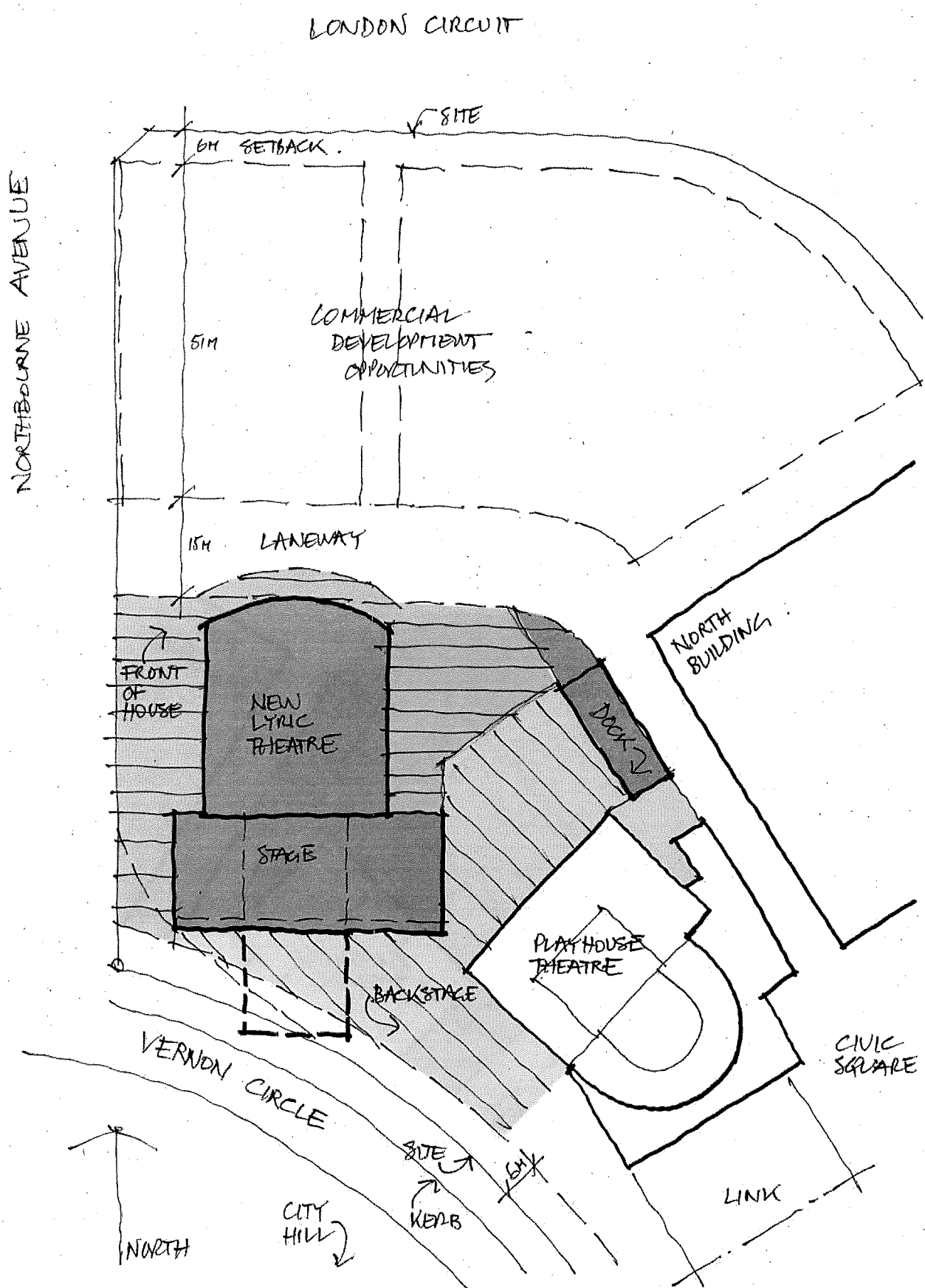


Figure 8 Siting Option 2, Site D (nts)

LONDON CIRCUIT

NORTH SITE "D"
OPTION 3

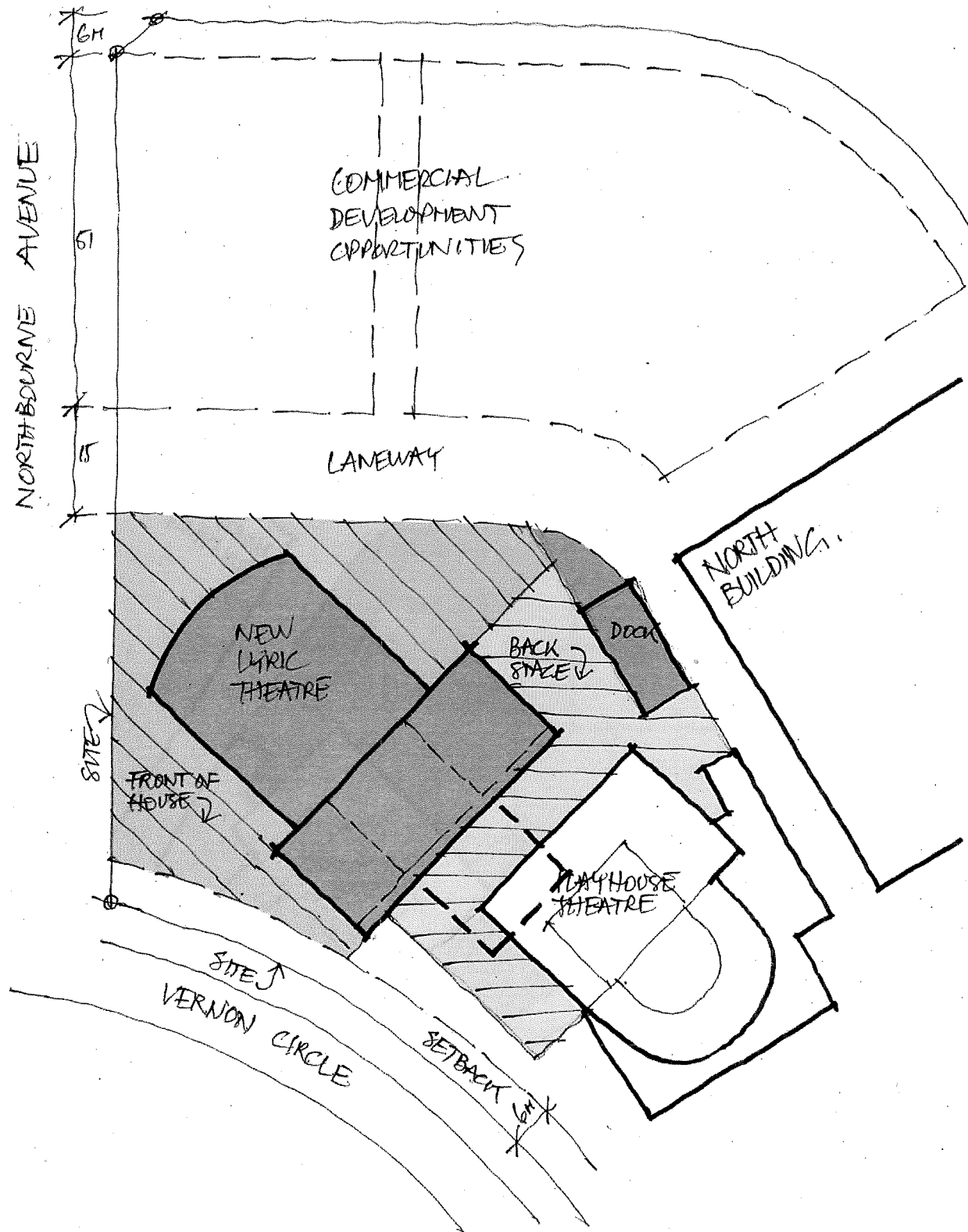


Figure 9 Siting Option 3, Site D (nts)

LONDON CIRCUIT

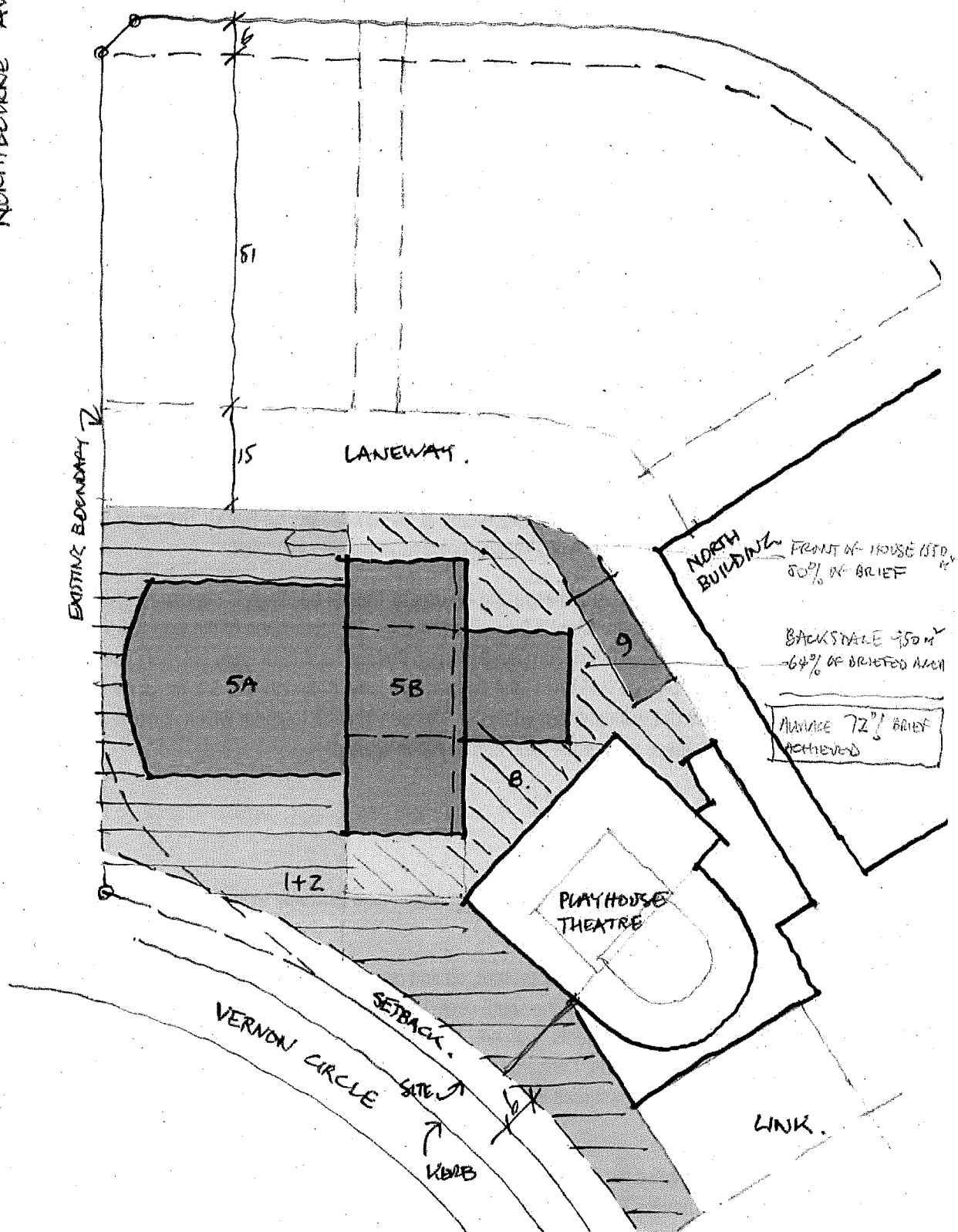


Figure 10 Efficiency Calculation Site D

PART THREE – SITE G SITING AND ASSESSMENT



Site G

Evaluation of Site G

A number of options are illustrated depicting various arrangements of the new theatre on Site G. The impacts of the new theatre on the existing Canberra Theatre and Courtyard Theatre operations are also identified.

The site area available, not including the Canberra Theatre and Courtyard Theatre buildings is approximately 4462sqm compared with the required optimum 6094sqm internal floor area provided. The demolition of the Courtyard Theatre would enlarge the available site area to around 5,461sqm, compared to the 6,094sqm optimum area, but this is also achieved with a loss of 1,357sqm of existing back of house facilities to the Canberra Theatre. Although Site G is larger than Site D, Site G is not an efficient site shape because of the indent formed by the Canberra Theatre footprint which narrows the width of the site and compromises the available space around the fixed configuration spaces.

Design Options

Option 1 (Refer Figure 11, Siting Option 1 Site G)

Option 1 assumes the retention of the 15 metre reserve for the Knowles Place Laneway to intersect with Constitution Avenue as the determining west boundary.

The fixed configuration of theatre seating, stage house, prompt, op and rear wing is arranged perpendicular to the existing Canberra Theatre building with the theatre looking to the south east. This option assumes the removal of the Courtyard Theatre and Canberra Theatre backstage components, with only the original Canberra Theatre footprint remaining and therefore providing no sufficient back stage to the Canberra Theatre. This option does not provide space for relocating the Courtyard Theatre at the main level and it is assumed that a Courtyard Theatre and Studio Theatre would both need to be relocated underground.

Back of house facilities are shared between the Canberra Theatre and the new theatre, as are the loading dock facilities. The loading dock is accessed from the Knowles Place laneway.

Front of house activities extend from the Constitution Avenue boundary through to the Vernon Circle boundary, connecting to the existing link to form part of the 'arc' of cultural facilities.

This option does not accommodate a public plaza for spill out of theatre goers before and after a show and does not have enough area to provide 'other' uses over and above the areas as nominated in the Williams Ross area analysis.

Also, in this part of the city, complementary uses such as shops, restaurants and cafes are currently non-existent.

However, the perpendicular arrangement of the new theatre with the existing Canberra Theatre provides a rational layout and optimises the usability of space between the two theatres as back of house uses.

This appears to be the preferred layout for Site G.

Option 2 (Refer Figure 12, Siting Option 2 Site G)

Option 2 assumes the retention of the 15 metre reserve for the Knowles Place Laneway to intersect with Constitution Avenue as the determining west boundary.

The fixed configuration of theatre seating, stage house, prompt, op and rear wing is arranged perpendicular to the Knowles Place laneway extension with the theatre looking south towards Constitution Avenue. This option assumes the removal of the Courtyard Theatre and Canberra Theatre backstage components, with only the original Canberra Theatre footprint remaining and therefore providing no sufficient back stage to the Canberra Theatre. This arrangement pushes the new theatre back stage very close to the existing Canberra Theatre building. This option also does not provide space for relocating the Courtyard Theatre at the main level and it is assumed that a Courtyard Theatre and Studio Theatre would both need to be relocated underground.

As per Option 1, back of house facilities are shared between the Canberra Theatre and the new theatre, as are the loading dock facilities. The loading dock is accessed on the extended Knowles Place laneway.

Front of house activities extend from the Constitution Avenue boundary through to the Vernon Circle boundary, connecting to the existing link to form part of the 'arc' of cultural facilities.

Due to arrangement and relationship of the new theatre to the existing Canberra Theatre, back of house spaces are severely compromised resulting in inefficient triangular spaces that would need to be shared with the Canberra Theatre. In addition to this, the loading dock almost touches the back stage and therefore prevents free circulation around the back stages. Even circulation between the new theatre and the existing Canberra Theatre is difficult due to the proximity of the two buildings.

Again, this option does not accommodate a public plaza for spill out of theatre goers before and after a show and does not have enough area to provide 'other' uses over and above the areas as nominated in the Williams Ross area analysis.

Option 3 (Refer Figure 13, Siting Option 3 Site G)

Option 3 assumes the retention of the 15 metre reserve for the Knowles Place Laneway to intersect with Constitution Avenue as the determining west boundary.

The fixed configuration of theatre seating, stage house, prompt, op and rear wing is arranged perpendicular to the Knowles Place laneway extension with the theatre looking west towards Vernon Circle. This option retains the Courtyard Theatre and Canberra Theatre backstage. This arrangement does not fit the fixed configuration spaces on the site and provides no back stage.

As per the Marshall Day Entertech stage comparison, because this option does not fit a backstage in the required arrangement, it is not an acceptable option.

Analysis of the preferred option on Site G – Option 1 (Refer Figure 14 Efficiency Calculation Site G)

The resultant preferred layout of the theatre on Site G provides only 38% of the briefed areas taking into account the significant loss of Canberra Theatre backstage areas and the Courtyard Theatre. This option would deliver a substandard outcome purely in relation to functioning areas.

In addition to this less than unsatisfactory outcome when compared to the Site D option, there are a number of other issues with the Site G option including:

- Will severely reduce the existing back of house space to the existing Canberra Theatre (i.e. a loss of 1,357sqm GFA). Back of house space would therefore potentially be shared between the Canberra Theatre and the new theatre, reducing efficient use of the space. In addition, the Courtyard Theatre and associated spaces will need to be relocated.
- The site does not appear to accommodate other uses or activities such as restaurants / shops. There are currently no adjacent compatible uses near Site G.
- No space for a public plaza now or in the future to accommodate a spill out of 2,000 theatre goers.
- Potentially results in an uncertain future and restricted opportunities (such as expansion or remodelling) for the existing Canberra Theatre.
- Limited opportunities for address and setdown.
- In the current context, siting the new theatre on Site G could be seen as pushing cultural and arts activities to the periphery i.e. a major new theatre located in a “back of house” less central location.
- No direct connection or engagement with the City Centre or Northbourne Avenue. In its current context, the site is separated from most of the night time city activity.

Findings of Site G Evaluation

To summarise, the Site G options for siting the new 2,000 seat theatre provides a less than satisfactory outcome for the following reasons:

- a) The functional needs (as defined in the area analysis and illustrated in the Marshall Day Entertech comparison) will not be satisfactorily achieved.
- b) Poses major compromises on the existing Canberra Theatre.
- c) Back of house location is not sufficient for a major new theatre of national significance.

Based on a comparison between the options available on both sites, it is recommended that further investigation / consideration of a 2,000 theatre on Site D be considered. The following further investigation explores the preferred option for a new theatre on Site D.

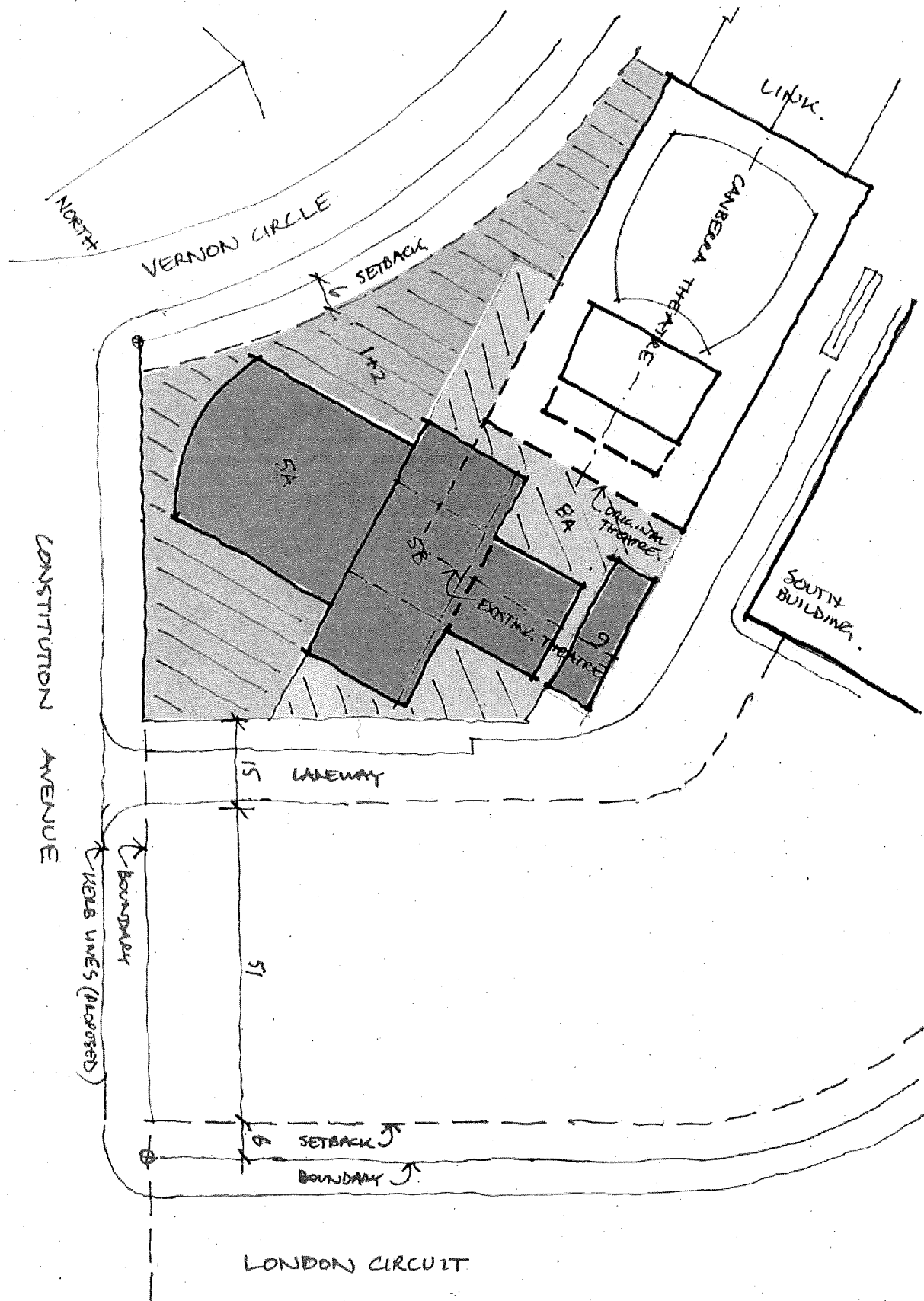


Figure 11 Siting Option 1, Site G (nts)

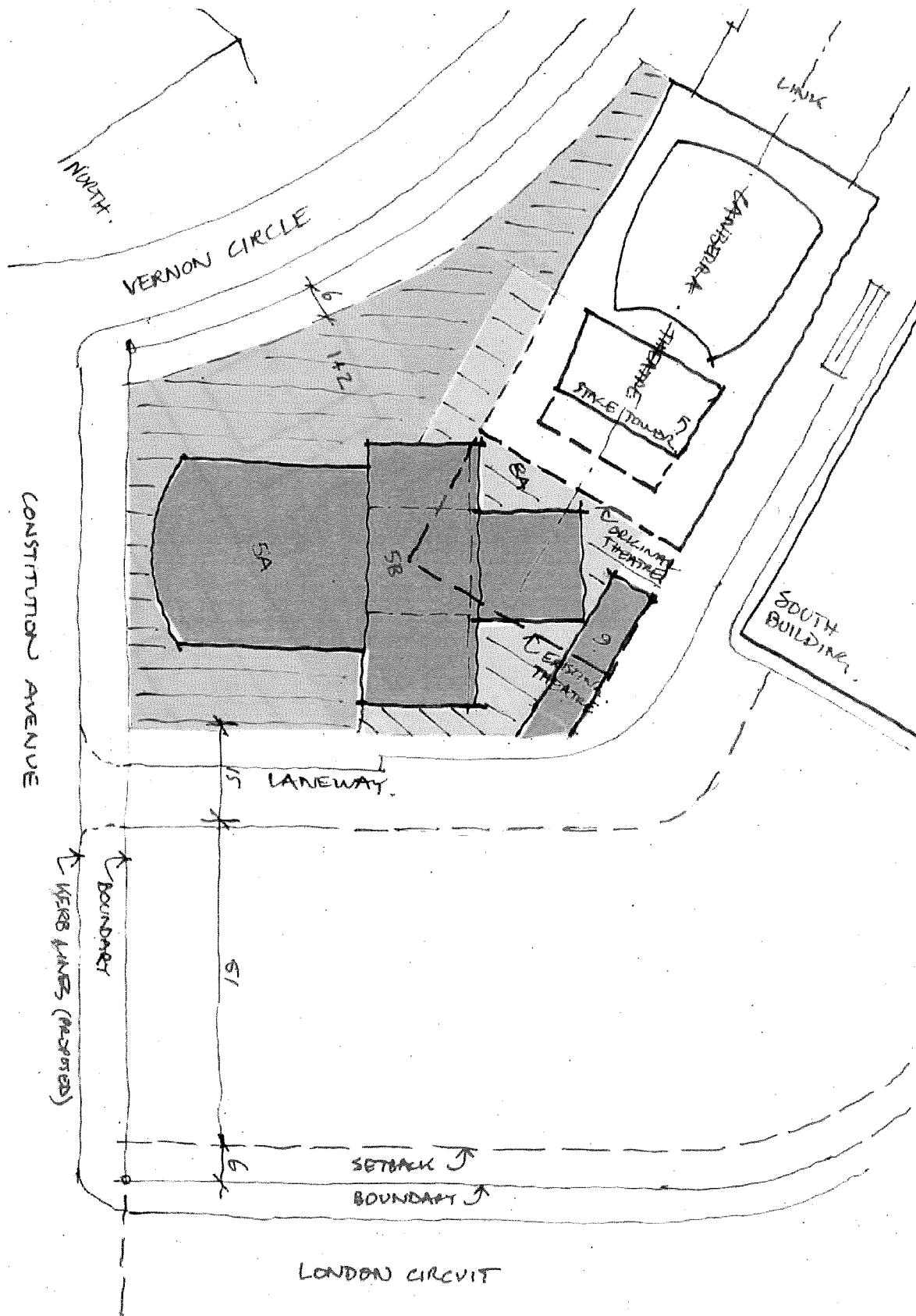


Figure 12 Siting Option 2; Site G (nts)

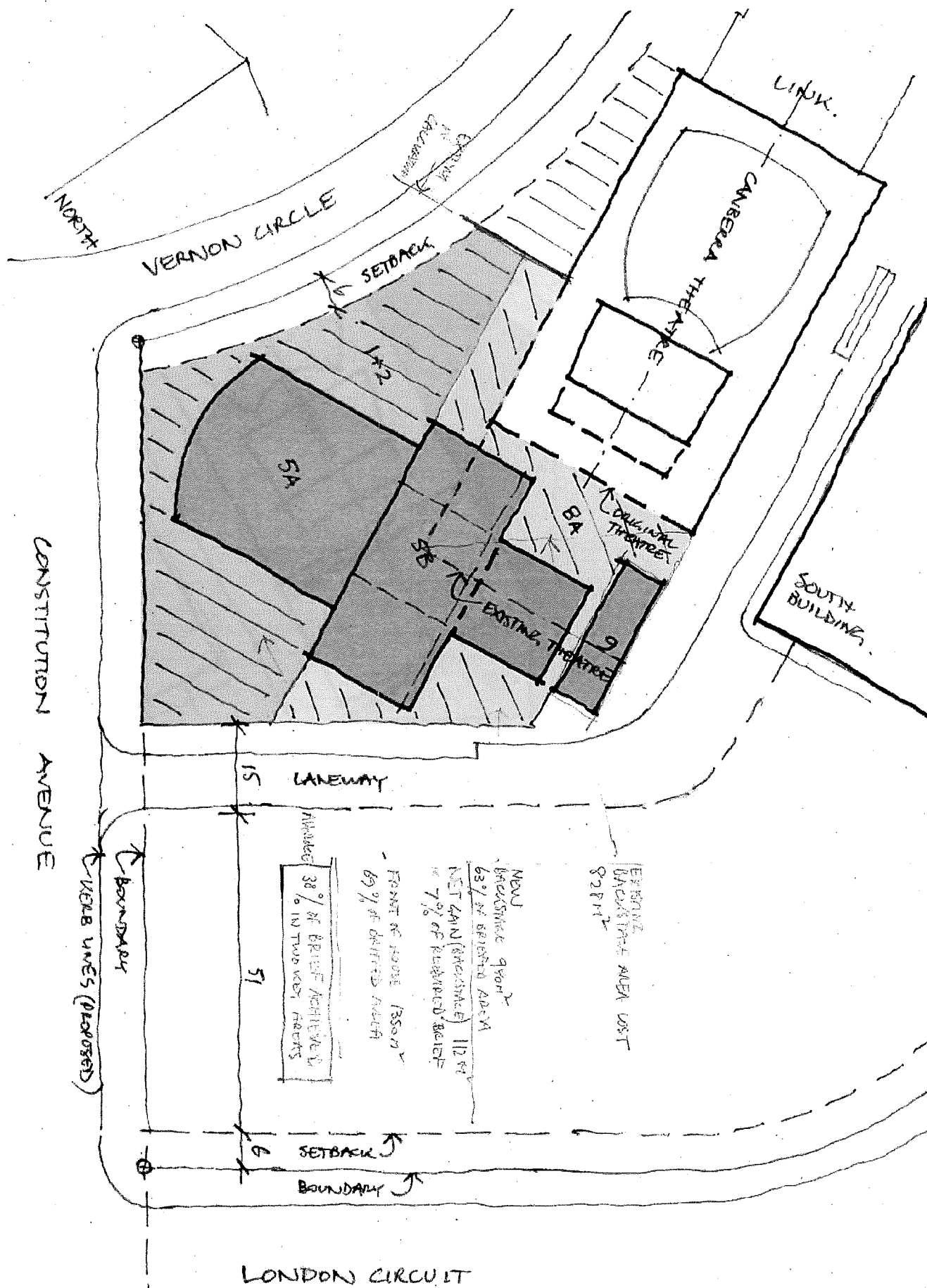


Figure 14 Efficiency Calculation Site G (nts)

PART FOUR – FURTHER ASSESSMENT OF THE PREFERRED OPTION SITE D

People and Traffic Movement

In its existing configuration, the main address to the Canberra Theatre and the Playhouse is Civic Square via the central link building. This entrance is pedestrian only and as such, doesn't accommodate setdown for cars and taxis.

A narrow driveway entered from London Circuit provides set down at the City Hill side of the link building. This rear driveway also provides service access to the Canberra Theatre, the Playhouse and the link building as well as providing a limited number of disabled parks.

New plans for the City Hill precinct will dramatically change the current arrangements for servicing, setdown and address to the new and existing theatres. New arrangements for traffic and pedestrian movement will provide greater choice and address / entrance from London Circuit, Knowles Place laneway and Vernon Circle. It is critical for the viability of the Canberra Theatre Centre that surface car parking is replaced with large basements that are generally entered from London Circuit (*Refer Figure 17, Proposed Traffic Network Diagram*) as suggested in the Civic Square Precinct Future Development report, April 2013.

It is expected that, under the preferred option, deliveries and servicing can generally be from the Knowles Place laneway which is shown extending through to Northbourne Avenue. The Knowles Place laneway could also have connections onto London Circuit to allow for an uninterrupted flow of traffic during the theatre equipment delivery process.

As suggested in the National Capital Plan and the City to the Lake plans, the preferred option provides the potential for multiple entrances and set downs to Vernon Circle and into the 'arc' of cultural facilities, which could serve as a linking foyer and gallery to all theatre facilities. There are also multiple opportunities for entrances from the Knowles Place laneway and onto London Circuit (*Refer Figure 15, Pedestrian Network Diagram*).

It is envisaged that the expanded theatre complex will accommodate up to 4,500 seats in 5 separate theatres and a further 500 people in informal function and meeting spaces throughout the precinct, taking a total to around 5,000 people attending functions within the new arc of cultural facilities.

An open ended and flexible shared traffic and pedestrian movement pattern will be necessary to allow for the proposed multiple entries to allow for an efficient movement of large people visiting and moving to and from this important cultural destination (*Refer Figure 16, Existing Traffic Network Diagram and Figure 17, Proposed Traffic Network Diagram*).

The preferred option to Site D has been derived to provide both ease of movement for pedestrians and vehicles through a sequence of high quality outdoor and indoor spaces. It is envisaged that patrons will emerge from basement car parks underneath sites fronting London Circuit directly into theatre foyers via lifts and stairs with a high level of amenity and comfort.

The "Arc" of Cultural Facilities

Refer also "Civic Square Precinct Future Development" report by Colin Stewart Architects, April 2013.

The proposal for an "arc" of cultural facilities addressing Vernon Circle was introduced in the April report. Both the National Capital Plan and the City to the Lake plan appear to accommodate such an arrangement. The "arc" or common foyer connecting existing and future cultural facilities and theatres in particular has been further refined in this report and could include such key features as follows:

- An extensive set down and lay by area on Vernon Circle to give direct level access and entry to all theatres.
- A central main entrance to the existing link building which had previously been proposed as a possible ACT Reception Hall positioned centrally on the Ainslie Avenue axis in the Civic Square Future Development report.
- A large continuous double height foyer with direct level access from Vernon Circle.
- Limited access to parking stations which will be generally entered from London Circuit.
- Servicing should generally be at Civic Square level (on floor below Vernon Circle).
- The opportunity to relocate Box Office, Front of House offices, bar, kitchen, toilets and other functional / servicing facilities and arrange them throughout the arc where they can be conveniently accessed to serve the new 'multi-theatre' complex.

A remodelled link building could provide public entrances from both Vernon Circle and Civic Square (*Refer Figure 18, Cultural Arc Concept*).

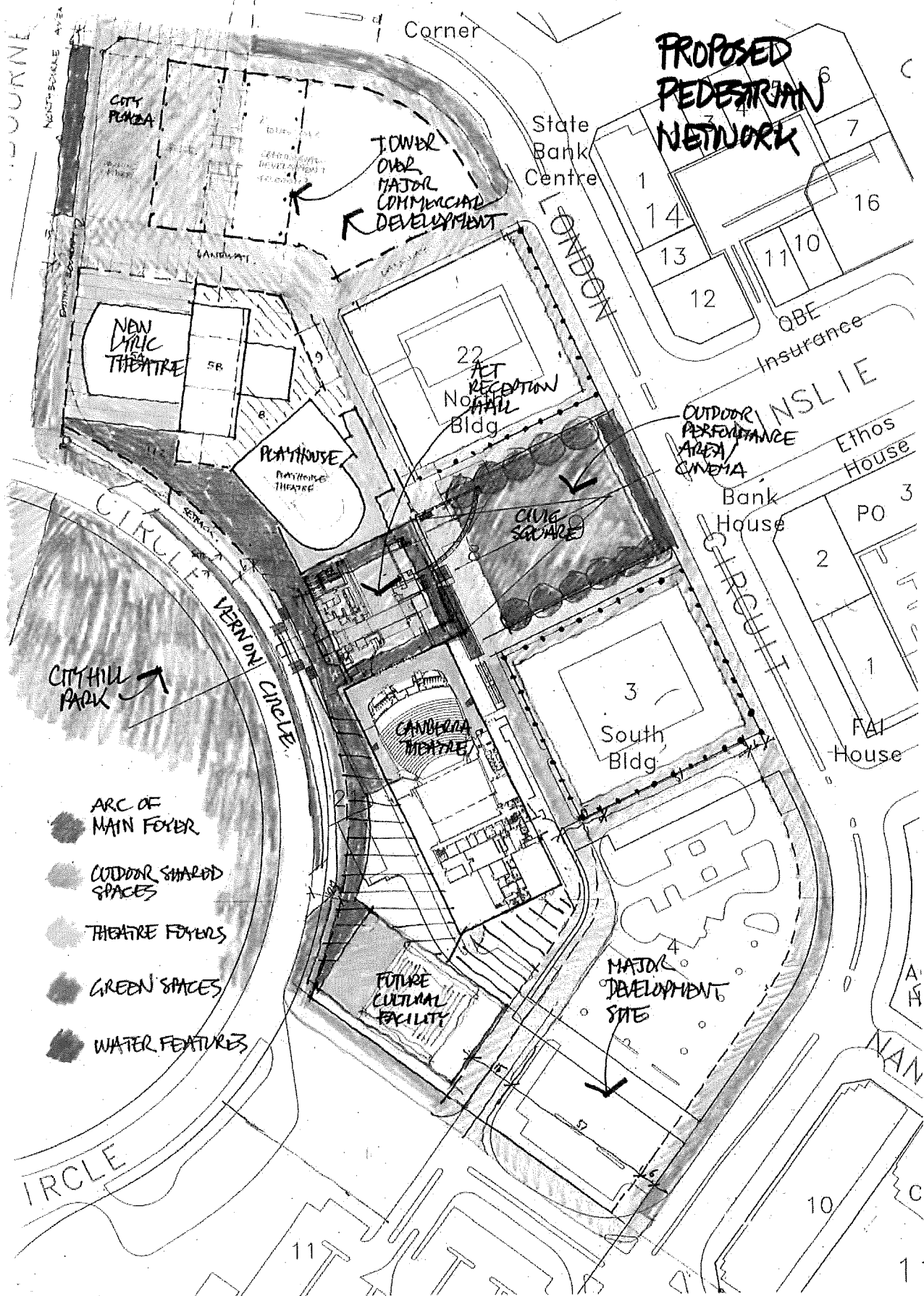


Figure 15, Pedestrian Network Diagram

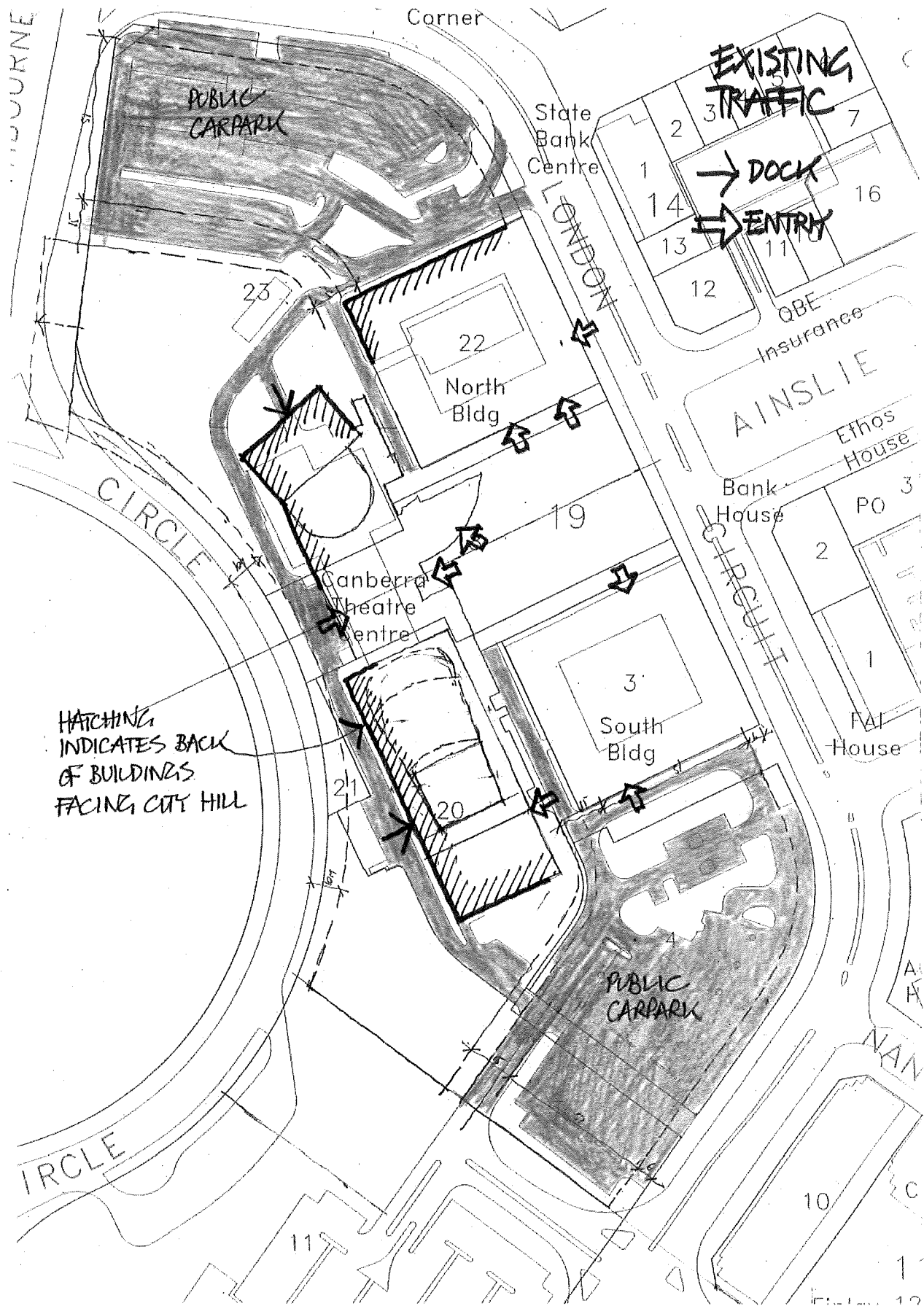


Figure 16, Existing Traffic Network Diagram

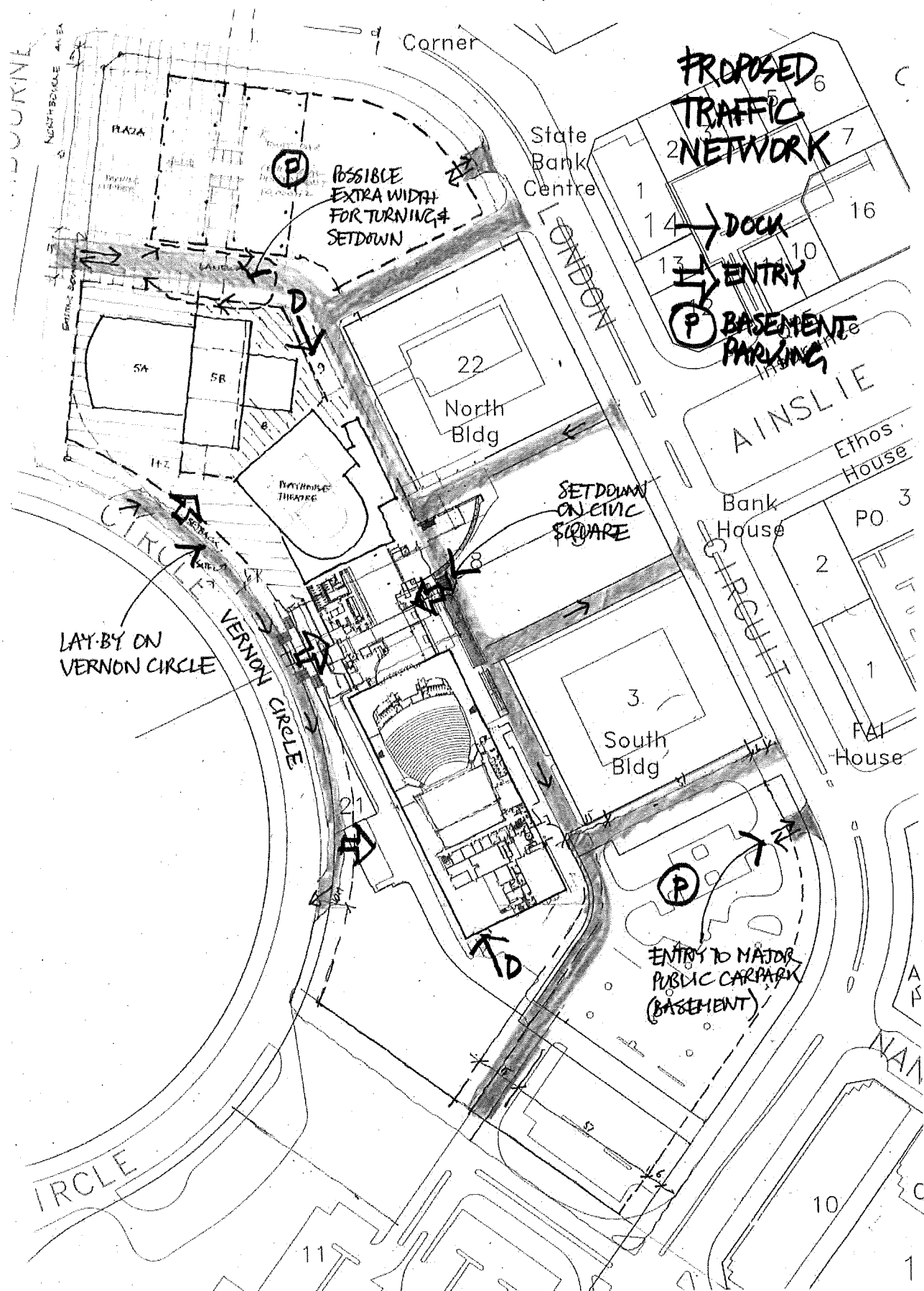
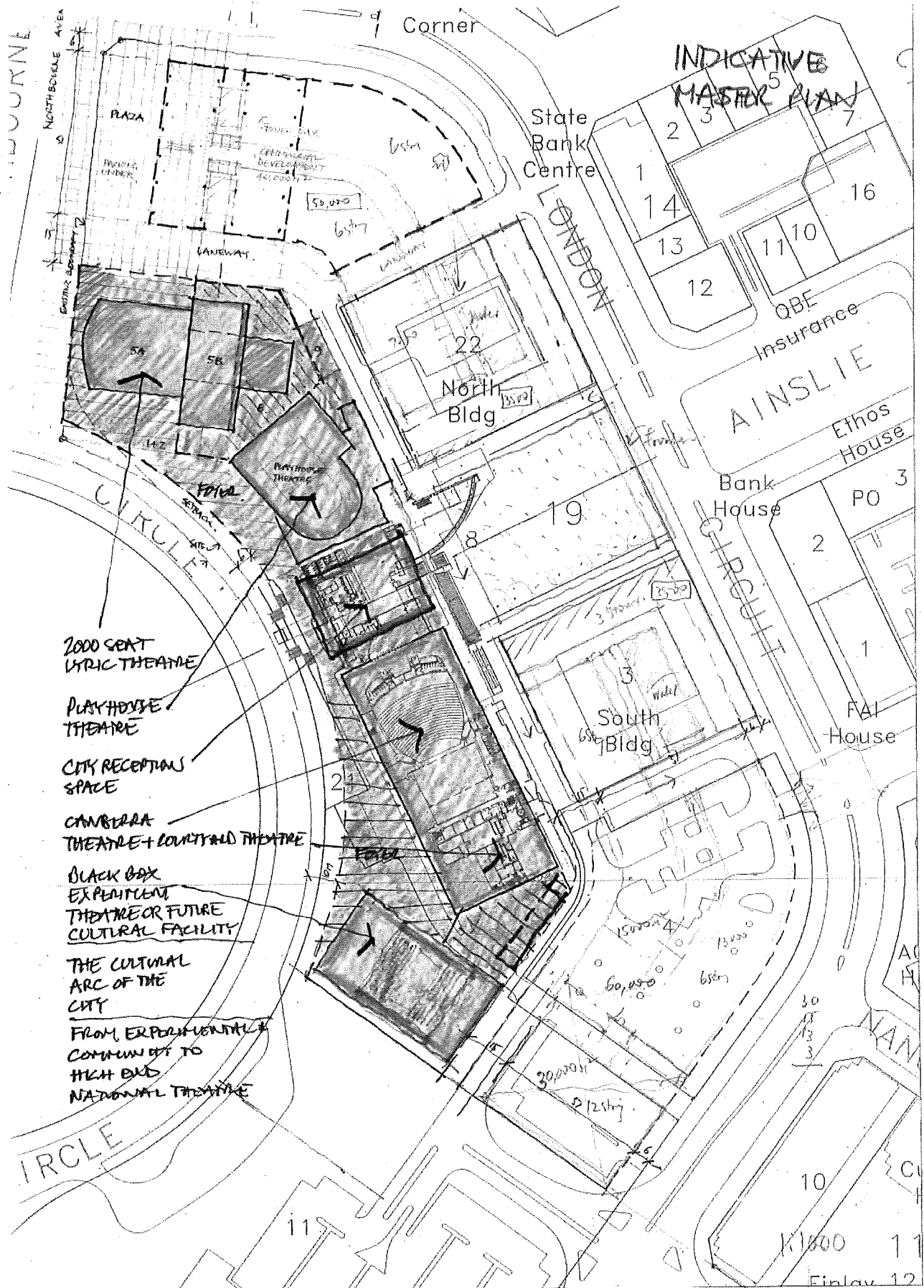


Figure 17, Proposed Traffic Network Diagram



A Precedence Analysis

High visibility sites including major new city plaza and forecourts are a feature of a number of world class iconic theatres and opera houses. The following points demonstrate the importance of set and setting for a major new theatre of local and national significance:

- A number of famous theatres including the Paris Opera, Dublin Grand Canal Theatre, the Sydney Opera House and the Times Square theatres are associated with impressive public squares and public spaces to create popular meeting places and outdoor venues for gatherings and create an appropriate landmark setting for these highly valued public buildings.
- In Canberra we have a tradition of locating premier public buildings, particularly those that have a national role to play, in highly prominent and visible locations deserving of their respective roles and status.
- The recently completed Dublin Grand Canal Theatre (a 2,000 seat theatre) designed by David Libeskind includes a grand plaza and forecourt comparable in size to the entire theatre itself in order to create a major outdoor public square as a grand setting for the theatre complex.
- The Paris Opera occupies a prominent site at the end of a major city vista and the urban setting provides a large square including road space and pedestrian plazas.
- Times Square at the junction of Seventh Avenue and Broadway includes road space and pedestrian plazas as the symbolic setting for numerous major theatres that combine to make up the Midtown Manhattan Theatre District on Broadway and is one of the best known destinations in New York.
- The Sydney Opera House enjoys a huge high profile location in the very centre of Sydney on the Sydney harbour. The forecourt and square is combined with major restaurants and entertainment venues to create one of the best known and most popular outdoor meeting places and outdoor performance venues in the world.

There is the opportunity in Canberra to create a very notable and central plaza and forecourt for a new 2,000 seat theatre at the foot of Northbourne Avenue and at the very heart of the symbolic centre and historic beginnings of the city centre, embracing the Sydney and Melbourne buildings. This forecourt and public square is the most highly visible and accessible point in the city and therefore presents a unique opportunity to create an appropriate landmark site for the new theatre complex.

The facades of the new theatre could be conceived as information screens combining foyer space on multiple levels with information on cultural shows and events. The plaza and theatre forecourt could have underground car parking as well as a main level station for a future light rail system on Northbourne Avenue.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Ms Mary Porter AM MLA (Chair), Mr Steve Dospot MLA (Deputy Chair), Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Ms Giulia Jones MLA

Inquiry into referred 2013–14 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
14 November 2014

Asked by MR SMYTH

In relation to: Expansion of the Canberra Theatre – Study by Colin Stewart:

MR SMYTH: Just finally, can a copy of the review be given the committee?

Ms Burch: If it can. I will have to have a look and see if there is anything in there that is commercial-in-confidence, but we will certainly provide what we can.

MINISTER BURCH: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

Please find a copy of the report of the theatre siting study undertaken by Colin Stewart Architects at Attachment A.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs

Signature:

Date:

By the Minister for the Arts, Joy Burch MLA

