

## SORRENTO ATHENAEUM (H2227)

### Q&As

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#### **The Place**

The Athenaeum was constructed in the commercial centre of the Sorrento township in 1894 as a multi-purpose venue. Originally the Athenaeum was built with a flat-floored auditorium and two shops at ground level, with shopkeeper's residence at the first floor. In 1918 a bio-box was installed for silent movie projection, and alterations were made in the 1920s, 30s and 50s which saw the entrance, foyer and shopfronts rebuilt, and the flat floor to the auditorium replaced with a sloping floor. Extensive refurbishments were undertaken in 1995/96. Today the building comprises a foyer with theatre to the rear at ground level, and former residence at the first floor.

#### **The Permit Application**

On 21 December 2022, Heritage Victoria received a permit application for a proposal to adaptively reuse the Athenaeum for retail purposes. The proposal has come about due to declining cinema-visitation in recent times and rising costs to run the cinema. The adaptive re-use is proposed to ensure the ongoing use of the building.

The permit application proposes alterations to the interior including demolition of some internal walls, the projection room, and stairs to the first floor, and installation of a suspended ceiling to the foyer. Interpretation works, retention and protection of the proscenium and exterior conservation works are also proposed.

Heritage Victoria requested further information in January 2023. In response, the Applicant has revised the proposal and provided a Report on 'Reasonable or Economic Use' (prepared by Rodger Gibbins, dated March 2023). This report and other relevant documentation can be viewed at 'Currently advertised permits' ([heritage.vic.gov.au](https://heritage.vic.gov.au)).

#### **What happens now?**

The permit application is currently being assessed by Heritage Victoria. No decision will be made during the public notice period. Following the public notice period, all public submissions will be provided to the Permit Applicant for response. Heritage Victoria is required to consider responses to submissions under s101(2)(c) of the *Heritage Act 2017*.

Submitters will be notified of the permit decision once a determination has been made. A review of the Executive Director's determination by the Heritage Council can be requested but only by the permit applicant, owner or government asset manager, or a person with a real and substantial interest in the place.