
MEMO

To: Jessica Hood, Principal, Heritage Permits, Heritage Victoria
heritage.permits@transport.vic.gov.au

Re: Palais Theatre, 14 Lower Esplanade, St Kilda (H0947)
Permit Application P42518, proposed internal digital columns
RFI Response memo.

Date: 8 September 2026

Copy: Fiona Stevens, Permits Officer, Heritage Victoria, fiona.stevens@transport.vic.gov.au
Mark Graham, SVP Venue Mobilisation & Operations, Live Nation, mark.graham@lnavenues.com

Dear Jessica,

thank you for your RFI dated 21 July 2026. Please find following information in response.

HV RFI dot point 1

There are some concerns with the proposal, as follows:

- *The height and bulk of the digital signage, prominently placed, will dominate the stairs. The signage, regardless of content, appears excessive for the purpose and for the space.*

Response.

Noted. The project team has arranged for a full sized, operational sample of one digital column to be available on site for inspection by all and to allow improved understanding of the proposed installation and appearance in the foyer.

Please advise When HV staff would be available for a further site visit.

HV RFI dot point 2

Further detail and explanation of the working display of the proposed signage. Being cylindrical, will the displays be able to rotate around the column, despite being static? Being cylindrical, how is the display more easily read and projected than a flat screen?

Response

Cylindrical display operation and rotation Confirmed as a fixed, non-rotating installation with no mechanically rotating components. Apparent movement is achieved digitally across the curved LED surface, content may be static, animated, or appear to move around the column, rather than through any physical movement of the sign. The format's advantage is continuous multi-directional visibility (approx. 160° horizontal / 140° vertical viewing angle) suited to a circulation space, rather than any inherent legibility benefit of a curved surface over a flat one.

HV RFI dot point 3

Further explanation regarding the preferred vertical format. Can a cylindrical sign maintain a 4:5 or 9:16 format with a reduced height?

Response

Vertical format (4:5 / 9:16) at reduced height Confirmed as achievable. Portrait content can be mapped into defined zones around the modular LED surface (320 mm × 160 mm modules), allowing height reduction without abandoning the required aspect ratios. Final height to be determined against content resolution, viewing distance and legibility requirements, not aspect ratio alone.

HV RFI dot point 4

Further explanation regarding the second option, being double sided flat signs. Why is it important to offer 60 degree visibility?

Response

Rationale for 60° visibility (double-sided flat sign option) Clarified as a circulation/sightline requirement rather than a technical constraint of the LED product itself (which offers ~160° horizontal viewing). The concern addressed is the visibility gap created at the transition zone between the two faces of a double-sided flat sign, a gap the cylindrical format avoids. The objective is to ensure the display remains effective across patrons' natural approach paths, rather than requiring viewers to be positioned directly in front of a flat screen.

HV RFI dot point 5

Further explanation regarding the third option, being flat screens on flanking walls adjacent to the stairs. No discussion of this option's merits is included in the current Heritage Impact Statement.

Response

Flat screens on flanking walls (third option) Confirmed as technically viable for content display. The cylindrical option was not selected on the basis that flat screens are technically incapable, it reflects a different relationship to the architecture and circulation. Wall-mounted screens create fixed viewing planes tied to the flanking walls and would introduce digital elements directly onto or immediately associated with heritage wall surfaces. The cylindrical option instead remains a discrete, freestanding element at the stair/newel location, providing multi-directional visibility that follows the viewer through the space.

HV RFI dot point 6

Your application includes limited information addressing s101(2)(b) of the Act regarding reasonable and economic use of the heritage place. Consideration of all revenue generation options, not just a single or preferred option should be outlined. Further, no detail has been submitted that evidences the income from the proposal would be directed to or generate funds for the ongoing maintenance and conservation of the place. Details to establish a base level for understanding the need for the proposal include:

- Current and projected incomings and outgoings.*
- Projected costs and details of any maintenance program.*
- Projected costs for conservation works other than maintenance.*

Response

Reasonable use or economic use under s101(2)(b) of the Heritage Act

Reasonable use

- *What was the original use?*- "Palais Pictures", primary original use was as a large capacity motion picture theatre, but with infrastructure (i.e. stage, fly tower, dressing rooms, orchestra pit) for performing arts events.

- *Is the registered place or object still being used in this way?*

The renamed venue "Palais Theatre" is used for performing arts productions. There is no up to date projection equipment for motion pictures retained in the theatre.

- *If not, why not?*

Motion picture theatre use devolved in the post war period and is generally attributed to a cluster of technological and social developments including commencement of Australian television broadcasting in September 1956, private television ownership, increased car ownership amongst others.

- *What is the current use?*

Live Performance Venue

- *Is this use still valid?*

Use as a Live Performance Venue is reasonable for this place of assembly with theatre infrastructure (c.f. Capitol Theatre, Melbourne which lacks performing arts event facilities)

- *If not, why not?*
- N/A

- *What physical changes are required to accommodate the proposed new use?*

- No physical changes to existing fabric.
- The proposed works are an additive interdiction of new equipment which can be installed with no physical impacts and readily removed in the future when redundant.

- *Are the changes necessary to meet code and compliance requirements?*

- Not strictly, however the digital displays would improve capacity for wayfinding, and evacuation information and directions in an emergency.

- *If the permit application was refused, could the registered place or object still be reasonably used?*

- *If not, why not?*

If refused the place could still be used. But would seek an alternate approach for improvement of informational signage display for operations, advertising of future events, public safety and improved revenue opportunities.

Economic use

- *Is the current use financially viable*

If not, why not?

- *To establish a base level for understanding the need for development:*

- *What are the current and projected incomings and outgoings?*
- *What are the projected costs for conservation works other than maintenance?*

The applicant, Mark Graham of LNA, has advised that overall information about Palais Theatre revenue numbers is sensitive and commercial in confidence. Mark has indicated he is available to generally discuss the above matters with HV as part of this application.

- *Why are the proposed works necessary to facilitate the economic use of the registered place or object?*

&

- *How will the proposed works maintain or improve the economic use of the registered place or object?*

The internal screens would provide a further revenue stream to support place's economic use.

The applicant has advised that the project costs and revenue are:

- **Internal Screen Revenue Projections**

- Internal Budget \$ 7 years = \$900,0000
- Opportunity if screens are utilised 100% of the time over 7 years = \$1.9mil

- *How will the development generate income to fund ongoing and future conservation and maintenance? (e.g.: sinking fund, maintenance program etc.)*

The 30 year lease requires the tenant to pay rent as well as carry out repairs and maintenance and capital enhancements each year. LNA has also carried out additional works to improve the venue's operations and better appeal to promoters and artists. To date, in the previous nine years the value of each is:

Capital Enhancements

- 2017 to 2025 inclusive = \$13.5mil

Repairs and Maintenance (R&M)

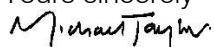
- 2017 to 2025 inclusive = \$975,000 (excludes internal/salaried staff labour on R&M)

The development of a further source of income will support capacity for the venue to carry out the next seven years capital enhancements and R&M.

I hope this assists with HV's assessment of the application. I hope HV will accept the invitation for a site visit to view a sample installation of the preferred option and undertake further discussion with the applicant Mark Graham, Live Nation.

Please contact me if you have any queries or require any further information.

Yours sincerely



Michael Taylor AIA

Director MTA&H

Heritage Adviser, Architect ARBV reg. no. 14847

..... MICHAEL TAYLOR
..... ARCHITECTURE
..... & HERITAGE

t +61 3 9670 2632

m 0409 633 831

e michael@michaeltaylorarchitects.com.au

w michaeltaylorarchitects.com.au

Level 6, 443 Little Collins Street Melbourne Victoria 3000 Australia