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Title:

Statement: Arts complex for Mount Gambier

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STATEMENT

from the Premier

Date..... December 23, 1976

Embargo..... 2.00 p.m.....

State Administration Centre,
Victoria Square, Adelaide,
South Australia 5001
228 4811

ARTS COMPLEX FOR MOUNT GAMBIER

The State Government and the Mount Gambier City Council have adopted, in principle, a large scale development project to provide Mount Gambier with a Regional Arts Complex, new Civic Centre and regional arts and craft facilities.

In a joint statement today, the Premier, Mr. Dunstan, and the Mayor of Mount Gambier, Mr. A.L. Sealey, said the agreement in principle was a very significant decision for the people of the South East.

Mr. Dunstan said a trust would be established very shortly to start work on the project.

The total scheme was recommended to the Government and the Council by Hassell and Partners, Architects and Planners of Adelaide, in a recent major study commissioned by the Mount Gambier City Council with funds provided by the State Government.

The report recommends a series of new facilities which will completely alter the atmosphere of the business district of Mount Gambier. The report recommended that all the new facilities should be placed close together within the City Centre.

The main recommendations are :-

1. A new 350-400 seat theatre to be built on Watson Terrace. The new building would have a two-tiered auditorium with fixed rake floors and full stage equipment offering long term capabilities. This theatre would be used by professional companies and local groups for drama, opera, ballet, musical recitals and musical theatre.
2. The Kings Theatre on Commercial Street to be renovated to provide a venue for symphony concerts and other musical presentations. The theatre would be extensively refurbished and would seat approximately 600 people and would again be available for use by touring professional companies and local music groups.

3. New corporation offices and council facilities to be grouped on Watson Terrace with the new theatre. The provision of new council offices will then allow the existing council building to be extensively modified.
4. The City Hall to be retained and renovated to provide a flat-floored hall for meetings, conferences and civic and social functions. This hall, in conjunction with the new development at Watson Terrace will provide Mount Gambier with a very important convention facility.
5. The first floor area of the council building above the Institute Library to be converted into a regional art gallery.
6. A Regional Arts and Craft Centre to be established in the Blue Lake oat mill, subject to successful negotiations to acquire that building. The Centre will include workshops, a gallery and sales area, and a coffee shop. A longer term project recommended in the report is the development of a major museum facility in the north west wing of the oat mill.
7. Another recommendation of the report is that a new public library be grouped with the theatre and corporation offices in Watson Terrace, which will allow the space at the moment used by the public library and the Institute Library to be used for other purposes.

Mr. Dunstan said the report gave Mount Gambier an exciting outline of its future artistic and cultural development.

"The report by Hassell and Partners is a very detailed examination of local activities, local needs and local aspirations.

"It has looked at these areas and has made recommendations which provide for variety and flexible facilities for Mount Gambier and the South East through the most effective use of the resources of the city.

"The concentration of performing arts, visual arts and craft facilities in the City Centre will ensure that these facilities are widely available and are a living part of the South East region of this State.

"The State Government believes that this project, which will be the first of its type in South Australia, will be a pace-setter for Australia. The enthusiasm and commitment of the people of Mount Gambier for this type of development will ensure that its success will become widely known throughout the country.

"The legislation which the Government put through Parliament recently will allow for the establishment of a Trust to implement this project. The six member Trust must have at least three local residents as members, and the councils will have their representatives.

"The Trust, which will have semi-Government status, will be able to borrow money at semi-Government rates to finance the Regional Arts and Craft Centres and the State Government will service the loan. In this way the State Government will finance the scheme in the most effective manner.

"Unfortunately, we cannot look forward to any assistance from the Federal Government for capital funds for this project, as the present Federal Government's policy is that there will be no capital funds made available for States arts projects.

"The State Government is very disappointed at this attitude, and I will be pressing the Prime Minister for a reversal of this policy in the case of Mount Gambier", Mr. Dunstan said.



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