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CAIRNS

Cairns Performing Arts Centre fire safety report: Why the secrecy?

Chris Calcino, The Cairns Post

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A CLOAK and dagger report into fire safety deficiencies at the Cairns Performing Arts Centre is being kept even from the councillor who represents the CBD.

Division 5 Cairns Regional Councillor Richie Bates has resorted to filing a right to information request to Queensland Fire and Emergency Services after weeks of being stonewalled by the council.

The \$71.1 million centre is scheduled to open on December 15 but grave concerns have been raised over its aluminium composite cladding and insulation, and those in the know have closed ranks.



QFES has raised concerns about the use of potentially flammable insulation and cladding in the Cairns Performing Arts Centre. PICTURE: JUSTIN BRIERTY

“It’s hard to believe that a report of such significance could be kept from key stakeholders such as the CPAC Steering Committee and councillors,” Cr Bates said.

“We can’t even be told whether the \$70-odd million dollar facility is deemed to be fire safety compliant or non-compliant by the CEO who holds a copy of the QFES report.

“Instead, we have received the same vague statements for months about working with the QFES on any issues to meet the December 15 opening date.”

The *Cairns Post* understands the council and its building certifier are working on a temporary compromise with QFES to get the project ticked off for opening night only – which may include having a team of firefighters onsite in case of emergency.



Cairns Performing Arts Centre needs witchcraft to meet deadlines

Panel and insulation replacement, new fire detection and sprinkler systems and other measures may then be enforced in the interim month leading up to its first major production.

Mayor Bob Manning said he had not seen the physical report but did not answer whether he knew of its contents.

“It’s being involved in discussions with QFES and the certifiers, and our people, as they’re needed,” he said.

“It’s a matter for management and technical people.


“I don’t go down and hammer the nails in or screw the screws in.

“That’s done by staff.”

Cr Manning said he was confident the December 15 deadline would be met.

“We appreciate the efforts which have been made by QFES to work with us to make this happen,” he said.



 Cairns Regional Council Mayor Bob Manning and Kristyn Knox dressed as Glinda the Good Witch prepare for the Cairns Performing Arts Centre's opening string of performances of Wicked the musical by the Cairns Choral Society from January 19, 2019. PICTURE: CHRIS CALCINO

Cr Bates said he was hinging his hopes on freedom of information laws because he could not get any information from the council.

“While I sincerely hope we do make the deadline for the official launch, what could be more important than the safety of the community, and finishing the job

properly before we celebrate the facility?” he asked.

“Further, the last steering committee meeting was cancelled weeks ago and there has been no further forum to discuss the ongoing progress (or regress) of the theatre.

“At this critical juncture, it is unfathomable that we would cease meetings of the peak decision making forum and deny elected representatives access to the all the facts.”