

**Government's management of the Powerhouse Museum and other museums
and cultural projects in New South Wales
2 September 2020**

**Post-hearing responses: answer to question on notice from Cr Linda Scott,
Local Government NSW**

Question:

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Councillor Scott, you indicated that a number of regional councils are very much under pressure. Have any councils told you that they are at the brink of potentially mothballing or shutting some of their regional museums? Are there some that should be front of mind?

Ms SCOTT: I do not have permission to name them, but yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Would you mind taking that on notice? Then you can consult.

Ms SCOTT: Yes.

Answer:

Despite the extraordinary pressures on council budgets, councils are doing all they can to keep their arts and cultural facilities open, a task made more difficult by the federal government decision to exclude local government from the JobKeeper package. Local Government NSW (LGNSW) is not aware of any council-run regional museums that have closed permanently as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, which is testament to the importance that councils and their communities place on arts and culture facilities.

However, LGNSW is aware that many council-run arts facilities are operating at significantly reduced capacity. This includes reduced hours, reduced visitors and sometimes reduced numbers of casual staff. Some public examples include:

- Coffs Harbour Regional Museum's hours have been limited to Tues to Thurs 10am – 1pm, and permits only 30 visitors. Previously, it was open Tues to Saturdays 10am – 4pm.
- Newcastle Museum is only open from 9.30am to 1.30pm each day and now requires bookings to visit (each visitor limited to a 1 hour visit). The interactive exhibits and Mininova and Supernova exhibitions remain closed.
- Shellharbour City Museum is only allowing visits by appointment and only for up to 5 people at one time.
- In Junee, cultural facilities such as the Athenium Theatre and Broadway Museum (including the Junee Visitor Information Centre) remain closed to the public until further notice.
- The Civic Theatre in Wagga Wagga has significantly altered its seating capacity and visitors are advised that “physical distancing will be applied to our seating plan. So if you are booking online, you will notice that ... seats held or removed to enable physical distancing will appear as not available.” Also, taking August 2020 as an example, four productions were cancelled, and two were postponed to 2021.