THE REX THEATRE

STRATEGIC PLAN
2023 - 2033

REX THEATRE MUSEUM LIMITED

Supported by ANZ

FRRR Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal

SERTORI CONSULTING

OUR VISION

Our communities are strengthened and enriched by entertainment and creative experiences.

OUR PURPOSE

We exist to:

Provide unique entertainment experiences for our communities and visitors.

Attract visitors to The Rex Theatre.

Bring people and community together to celebrate, engage and learn.

Provide a space for organisations to make use of our quality spaces and facilities.

Maintain community ownership and the integrity of The Rex Theatre as a Historic landmark in Charlton.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rex Theatre is a community owned and operated Theatre in Charlton with a remarkable history and bright future. Serving the rural towns of Birchip, Boort, Donald, Wedderburn and Wycheproof.

The Rex Theatre strengthens community through shared experiences of cinema, live entertainment, meetings and celebrations. Locals place a very high value on maintaining the role of The Rex Theatre in the Region.

This is demonstrated through financial investment from local owners, dedicated volunteers and loyal audiences.

This strategy builds on strong foundations. It provides a pathway to guide the Board, informed by community. In 2023 The Board of Management secured a grant through the Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal, funded by ANZ's Seeds of Renewal Program to develop this strategy.

The grant supported five in person workshops and one online survey to capture community members interests and needs from The Rex Theatre. Eighty-six community members contributed to the development of the strategy. Twenty-six attended in-person workshops held in Charlton (16 participants not including board members), Wycheproof (2) Birchip (2) Donald (1) and Wedderburn (5). A further 60 community members shared ideas and feedback in an online survey.

The Board of Management worked closely with community to shape input into five areas of strategic priority. They include:

PRIORITY	OUTCOME
VIABLE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE	The Rex Theatre is a sustainable social enterprise, with strong leadership, governance and operations. People and place are cared for through clear policies and procedures.
VOLUNTEERS	The Rex Theatre is operated by a diverse mix of highly engaged, valued and skilled volunteers. Our volunteers value communication from The Rex Theatre and that they feel 'seen' and appreciated for their contribution.
AUDIENCE	Increase and broaden our audience & diversify income streams. Consolidate existing audiences.
MAXIMISE SPACE AND ASSETS	Diversify uses for the venue. Increase revenue by making the most of our spaces, equipment, and technology.
COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION	The Rex Theatre works in partnership across the region for the benefit of community members.

Board Members participated in a workshop to identify the vision, values and purpose of The Rex Theatre. The Board captured the essence of this beloved community asset to inform future partnerships and programming. The Board can now evaluate future opportunities based on their alignment with strategic priorities, vision, values and purpose of The Rex Theatre.

Finally, this strategy categorises activities to achieve the above outcomes into three time horizons.

- **Now** - in the coming 12 months,
- **Next** (dependent on increased human and financial resources) and
- **Later** - assigned to activities which require complex partnerships, energy and investment.

We are passionate about the work we do. We are constantly energized by the endless possibilities of the creative arts.

ABOUT THE REX THEATRE

OUR VISION

Our communities are strengthened and enriched by entertainment and creative experiences.

OUR PURPOSE

We exist to:

- Provide unique entertainment experiences for our communities and visitors.
- Attract visitors to The Rex Theatre.
- Bring people and community together to celebrate, engage and learn.
- Provide a space for organisations to make use of our quality spaces and facilities.
- Maintain community ownership and the integrity of The Rex Theatre as a Historic landmark in Charlton.

OUR VALUES

INCLUSIVE

We are a reflection of the community we engage. We recognise, respect and embrace diversity in all of its forms, in every way we work.

CONNECTION

Our work generates opportunities for connection and belonging.

We embrace the value of the creative arts in helping us better know ourselves and others.

POSSIBILITY

Our work introduces our community to new possibilities, through use of our venue or engaging in the arts.

VIBRANCY

We are passionate about the work we do. We are constantly energized by the endless possibilities of the creative arts.

OUR AUDIENCE

Understanding and building our audience

The Rex Theatre serves diverse rural townships and communities across a large geographic region. Audience members and volunteers travel up to an hour to the theatre. Understanding our audience and their interests is key to maintaining loyal, engaged patrons. The Rex Theatre's film selection sub-committee play a vital role in programming for the community.

Communicating with our audience

Website and social media

The Rex Theatre's website and social media is highly effective in engaging community members. The strong appreciation for The Rex Theatre's digital presence and information sharing was amplified in workshop and survey feedback. Some older members of the community shared a preference for paper based programs and letter drops to keep them informed.

"Part of the magic of going to the movies is the spontaneous communal reactions we experience..."

~ Brenton Harris

Community Connection

"Part of the magic of going to the movies is the spontaneous communal reactions we experience. Be it shrieking at a jumpscare, laughing at a joke, cheering after a moment of triumph or bursting into tears in public because that last scene was just too sad. Each of these reactions, bond us not just to the film on screen, but to each other, as human beings. It's as if for the duration of the running time, we are one with ourselves and each other. One giant, interconnected, cinema loving (or in some cases, loathing) organism, existing in and for the moment. It's an experience familiar to us all, and a reminder of the power and importance of community in our physical and mental wellbeing."

Brenton Harris, The Australian Community Cinema Project putting the love back into movie going.
Comingsoon.net

Overwhelmingly, the primary theme emerging from community consultation for this strategy was simply, 'we must keep The Rex Theatre open.' Community members expressed gratitude for the many ways experiences at The Rex Theatre increased their sense of belonging, connection and wellbeing. In a region where many community members are physically isolated, The Rex Theatre plays a vital role in building and maintaining friendships and connections.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

This ten-year strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis. The board of directors will review progress toward achieving each outcome, using the measures of success for each area of priority included on pages 11-19.

The board will undertake a major review of the strategic plan in five years, which will include community consultation to test whether the priorities, objectives and direction set out in this plan are still current, relevant and valued.

The community are invited to contribute ideas and opinions on the Strategy and its delivery at any time, and these comments will be a valued contribution to the Board in its annual and 5 year reviews.

"We must keep The Rex Theatre open."

~ Our community

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- **Our generous, dedicated local volunteers.** Thank you for sharing your experiences and ideas.
- **Donald Learning Centre, Wycheproof Community Centre, Birchip Cropping Group** and **Wedderburn Community House** for providing venues for our workshop series.
- **Star Cinema Eaglehawk**. The Star Cinema Strategy was a highly valuable point of reference. This is reflected in some of the terminology and formatting of this strategy. Our thanks to The Star Cinema in Eaglehawk for writing such a clear, succinct strategic plan.
- **Mercury Cinema Adelaide**. Thank you for inspiring our thinking about strategic objectives and partnerships.
- **Leah Sertori from Sertori Consulting** for putting together this Strategic Plan.
- **Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal and ANZ Seeds of Renewal.** Thank you for providing the resource to complete the consultation and strategy.

REX
CHARLTON
Festival
Friday
3rd
Saturday
4th
MAR

PRIORITIES 2023-2033

1. Viable Social Enterprise & Continuity

2. Volunteers

3. Audience

4. Maximise Space and Assets

5. Community and Connection

PRIORITY **Viable Social Enterprise & Continuity**

OUTCOME The Rex Theatre is a sustainable social enterprise, with strong leadership, governance and operations. People and place are cared for through clear policies and procedures.

Item	Idea	What would this require?	What would be the results?	What risks need to be considered?	When?	Measure of Success
1.1	**Strategic Board of Directors focused on the future.**	Board Meetings focus on implementing the strategy, partnerships, community engagement and measuring impact.	Board members skills, time and energy are channeled into high value activities.	Hard to recruit volunteers as it is. New volunteers need induction and training.		Appoint critical meeting reviewer. Score board meetings focus on high value work/10
1.2	**Annual Operating Budget**	Develop an annual operating budget, including target revenue and expenditure. Separate operational and capital financial reporting.	Provide a clear benchmark to measure actual operational income and expenditure. Allow the board to accurately monitor the financial performance (budget VS actual) of The Rex Theatre in real time.	Diverse levels of experience and confidence reading financial reports.		Annual operations budget produced. Budget VS actual financial reports produced monthly.

1.3	**Annual Board Calendar**	Establish an annual calendar for the Board. Consider reviewing one area of strategic priority at each board meeting. Consider times of the year the board is likely to be focused on ACNC reports etc. Include a meeting for annual review of the Strategic Plan.	Great tool to manage board meetings. Support new board members with planning. Ensure sufficient time is allocated to explore different areas of focus. No room for blind spots or omission as each area of priority has time in the spotlight.	Needs to be flexible- do not restrict the board's ability to ask questions across all areas in any meeting.		Annual calendar implemented. Board meetings focused on themes in the annual calendar.
1.4	**Succession**	Identify community members with an interest in The Rex Theatre, music or theatre. Invite them to consider joining the Board. Develop expressions of interest.	Reduce dependance on small group of dedicated volunteer board members. Increase the resilience of The Rex Theatre Board. Invite fresh thinking, ideas and energy.	Risk losing great board members too soon, when they would be happy to continue making a contribution.		Register of expression of interest developed. Board skills matrix developed.
1.5	**Diversify our revenue**	Explore opportunities to diversify income through fundraising, philanthropy, bequests and grants.	Potentially access valuable one-off donations.			Increased income from non-operational activities.
1.6	**Ensure ongoing financial viability**	A long term sustainable financial plan for Operations. Someone to develop this.	The Rex Theatre sustainable for 20 years plus	Lack of diversity and community relevance.		Sustainable annual and 5 year reviews
1.7	**Diversify professional connections across the Performing Arts**	A person or committee to connect to our Region, the State and Metro Arts organisations and funding bodies	Greater diversity and connections of scope of performances and operations	Lack of ability, skills and knowledge of the broader Arts community to be able to connect.		Whether greater diversity has occurred. Connections to the Region, Bendigo and Melbourne.

PRIORITY **Volunteers**

OUTCOME The Rex Theatre is operated by a diverse mix of highly engaged, valued and skilled volunteers. Our volunteers value communication from The Rex Theatre and feel seen and appreciated for their contribution.

Item	Idea	What would this require?	What would be the results?	What risks need to be considered?	When?	Measure of Success
2.1	**Develop a volunteer plan**	Capture a description of all the different voluntary roles at The Rex Theatre. Include job roles for volunteers to achieve the outcomes in this strategic plan. Describe how volunteers will be recruited, upskilled and celebrated. Market voluntary roles to people in the region with the skills to embrace them, e.g. marketing, event management, business partnerships could all be taken on as discreet roles.	Leveraging the skills and experience of community members by giving them smaller, achievable tasks under a broader umbrella of effort. Could potentially engage volunteers from outside the region.	Without a volunteer coordinator, this idea could demand more time and energy from existing board members in managing new volunteer positions. It really needs a connector at the center.		Plan complete. Includes clear role descriptions for all volunteer positions.

2.2	**Recruit a volunteer coordinator**	Securing funds, (or a generous person) to coordinate all the Rex Theatre's volunteers. Develop and review role descriptions for volunteers. Set and manage the roster. Review policy and procedures for volunteers.	Serve as a conduit between the board and volunteers and keep volunteers engaged and feeling valuable. Free up Board Members to focus on growing the audience and attracting investment for events. Consider student placement, from HR courses at University or TAFE as one potential channel for recruitment.	The volunteer coordinator would need exceptional people skills. The Rex Theatre faces a high risk to its reputation and volunteer support if the coordinator's communication and engagement skills were not adequate for the role.		Volunteer coordinator in place by the end of 2023.
2.3	**Celebrate the work of volunteers**	Invite The Rex Theatre's volunteers in for an annual community celebration. Ask locals who are not yet volunteers to come and serve our volunteers for a day- hopefully recruiting some new volunteers in the process. Formally thank volunteers-publish their names, include photographs of volunteers on the walls in the gallery space, or in the front window (being mindful of volunteers privacy and wishes.)	Foster connections between volunteers. Make volunteering desirable. Celebrate the benefits of volunteering to new audiences.	Hosting a community event requires time and energy from a volunteer committee!		Annual volunteer day
2.4	**Make volunteering desirable for young people**	Highlight the skills and experience gained through volunteering at The Rex Theatre. Show the connection between finding paid employment and having entry level skills. Offer a certificate for young people who volunteer including a summary of tasks they carried out.	Support young people transition to paid employment. Increase the skills and confidence of young people. Provide channels for social interaction and positive feedback loops. Importantly- provide this outside of the sporting arena for young people who do not enjoy team sport.	Needs the support of a volunteer coordinator to plan and manage.		Certificate developed highlighting skills obtained by volunteers by the end of 2024.
2.5	**Offer volunteers incentives**	Offer volunteers x number of tickets, popcorn, and drinks per year for their work.	Attract new volunteers. Give existing volunteers greater recognition and reward.			Incentives in place.

PRIORITY **Audience**

OUTCOME Increase and broaden our audience & diversify income streams.

Item	Idea	What would this require?	What would be the results?	What risks need to be considered?	When?	Measure of Success
3.1	**Attract more live performances from and for a wider demographic**	A committee or working party would need to coordinate events and programming and cooperate with The Rex Theatre Board. The Rex Theatre Board would need to delegate live programming and events to the committee with trust, respect and empowerment. Grants, sponsorship, funds. Promotion and marketing, social media, local media, mail out (paper and email), front window! Gig guides and resources. Communication and passion. Fresh approach, open mindedness, not being spooked by the past.	Economic and cultural benefits. Creating relationships and connections to The Rex Theatre, community, one another. Stretch the potential of the venue. Wellbeing. Tourism, awareness, promotion of Charlton. New experience/exposures. Supporting the arts community.	Lack of funding and support. Apathy. Lack of attendance at gigs. Fear. Limited availability of artists.		2 new live performances per year.
3.2	**Turn movies into events by incorporating dress ups and sing along themes**	Work with the pubs on a theme and include on menu and drinks list. Offer to community groups as a fundraiser. Dress up examples: Sound of Music, Harry Potter, Sex and the City, Grease, Mamma Mia, Elvis. Advertising, Letter drops Community newsletter and community boards. Social media. Sub-committee to organize and execute. Enticements (buy 4 tickets and get one free). Planning and add to calendar of events. Ask local businesses and clubs to promote. Keep it affordable.	Something different to a movie. A fun time out and community spirit. Economic and cultural benefits.	Poor marketing. Consider what else is happening in Buloke at the time.		1 movie as an event per year.

3.3	**Daytime community showings for members who don't like to go out at night.**	Transport, we'd need volunteer drivers. Suitable films that appeal to the target audience. Clear advertising. Volunteers available. Suitable volume levels.	Safe environment. During the daytime. Companionship. May follow with visits to local businesses for a meal and or shopping. Could appeal to kindergarten groups as well as older members of the community.	The audience may have increased mobility issues and risk falling. Access to toilets and coming back into a dark theatre after visiting the bathroom. Cost of advertising.		One day time movie for PAG audiences per quarter.
3.4	**Something to eat, somewhere to talk.**	Partnering with local businesses to offer a movie meal deal. Combinations mentioned included: Tuesday meal and movie. Saturday meal and movie. Sunday movie followed by coffee or wine and nibbles/cake.	Allow audience members time and space to discuss the film. Generate value for other local businesses. Increase community connection.	Time and energy in creating and maintaining partnerships with businesses. Marketing and advertising spend. Businesses might pull out of the numbers were low?		Partnerships in place with local eateries on an annual basis. Promote movie&meal offers to audience.
3.5	**Engage with local owners.**	Present local owners with special offers and events and encourage them to bring local guests, to increase local engagement in Charlton.	Increase the number of people attending a movie or event from Charlton.	Potentially alienate members from other towns.		Local owners receive offer at least once a year.
3.6	**Family Audiences**	Introduce a family ticket. Provide an incentive for families to attend a movie together.	Reach a new audience. Demonstrate commitment to keeping The Rex Theatre affordable for locals. Explore timing of family ticket prices, (during school holidays, only for Saturday session times etc.)	Consider the impact for other groups in community- PAGs etc. Would they look for a group rate?		Family ticket introduced.
3.7	**Buloke Shire Aged Care Advocacy**	Could working with Buloke Shire Aged Care Advocacy? EWHS PAG (Planned Activity Groups) Senior Citizens clubs to have regular entertainment similar to Morning Melodies.	Safe environment. During the daytime. Companionship.			

PRIORITY **Maximise Space and Assets**

OUTCOME Diversify uses for the venue. Increase revenue by making the most of our spaces, equipment, and technology.

Item	Idea	What would this require?	What would be the results?	What risks need to be considered?	When?	Measure of Success
4.1	**Promote The Rex Theatre as a community function venue.**	Understanding the audiences that would hire the space. Promoting the unique features of the space, including the tech. Could be used as a console gaming party venue etc.	Increased use of the space. Increased revenue.	Wear and tear, risk of more serious damage.		$3,000 revenue target from community functions PA
4.2	**Promote the multipurpose room as a meeting venue.**	Develop a flyer, articulating all the benefits of the multipurpose space for meetings, especially video-based meetings. Promote to training providers outside the region as a means of accessing an audience in Charlton. Promote to organisations with centralized management and training, i.e. Ambulance Victoria. Set the price of hiring the venue at a rate that makes it accessible for users and profitable for The Rex Theatre.	Attract people to The Rex Theatre. Diversify the use of the venue. Amplify the role of The Rex Theatre as a critical hub for community.	Managing demand for the space? Booking system?		$2,000 Revenue target from hire of multipurpose room PA.
4.3	**Maximise the Historic value of The Rex Theatre**	Continue maintenance and upgrades to the building itself. Preserve the unique historic character and features of The Rex Theatre. Promote The Rex Theatre's History to interested groups. Leverage the historic value of The Rex Theatre in attracting visitors and funding.	Preserve the historic character of The Rex Theatre for future audiences.			Maintenance and capital works plans in place.

PRIORITY **Community and Connection**

OUTCOME The Rex Theatre works in partnership across the region for the benefit of community members.

Item	Idea	What would this require?	What would be the results?	What risks need to be considered?	When?	Measure of Success
5.1	**Involve the community in curating events.**	Annual community celebration. Bring new audiences into The Rex Theatre.	Shared ownership in event management.	Time and energy is curating the event.		Pilot event completed in 2024/5
5.2	**Attract long term strategic partners of The Rex Theatre**	Identify and prioritise engagement with organisations that could become ongoing financial partners of The Rex Theatre. Demonstrate alignment in vision, values and purpose. Show how The Rex Theatre helps achieve their objectives.	Long term partnership agreements. Secure some ongoing funding for operations.			One long term partnership in place by June 2024.
5.3	**Engage, celebrate and promote community owners of The Rex Theatre**	Profile local owners. Share their stories- why did they choose to invest in a Theatre for the community?	Encourage community investment in other aspects of The Rex Theatre.			Local ownership is more visible.

The Rex Theatre

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