

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

Group: 2

Program: Other Agency

Question No. BE15/073

Senator Collins asked the following written question from the 27 and 28 May 2015 hearing:

1. When was the Arc cinema built? At what cost? Why has it now been closed?
2. One of the NFSA's aims is stated as "The NFSA aims to develop interest in the cultural richness and diversity of our audio-visual heritage in all its forms by sharing the collection. We offer a range of ways for people to view, listen to, study, use and enjoy material from the collection as well as from other archives and cultural institutions around the world." How can this occur without a functioning cinema screening classic international films as well as Australian films?
3. Why were the Arc's projectionists retrenched?
4. Has the operation of the Arc Cinema been put out to tender? What conditions have been put on that tender in relation to the screening of classic Australian and international films?
5. What safeguards are in place for the operation of the Arc's equipment? For example will only properly qualified projectionists be permitted to operate the equipment?
6. There is an argument that there is now a range of classic cinema available in Canberra, and that the Arc should not be in competition with those commercial operations. What does the NFSA see as the role of a full service cinema in a film archive, in the promulgation of Australia's film culture?
7. What conditions have been put on the tender to ensure that classic films are in fact shown? Which may in fact have limited commercial appeal? How will the NFSA ensure that the Arc not become just another commercial cinema in Canberra, having to generate a profit for the lessee?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

1. The Arc Cinema was built in 2006-07 by the then Australian Film Commission. The NFSA (established in 2008) does not hold the detailed records of the project.

The Arc Cinema is not closed. In 2014 management assessed the impact the Arc Cinema has as a local visitor attraction in Acton against its operating cost and deemed its operating model unviable. The cinema now operates a reduced schedule of screenings.

2. The Arc Cinema in Acton is functioning as noted above. The aim referred to in the question is being achieved through a range of existing and emerging activities: online, through the existing community engagement program in Acton, and through existing partnerships and collaborations.

3. The reduced schedule did not require the services of two ongoing projectionists employed at the APS 6 and 4 level.
4. The operation of the Arc Cinema has been put out to tender. As the tender process is still open, the details of the conditions in the tender remain commercial-in-confidence.
5. The equipment is only operated by suitably qualified individuals and serviced according to an established schedule.
6. The NFSA is not a film archive but an audio-visual archive. Its duties include the collecting, the preservation and the sharing of film, recorded sound, broadcast and associated documentation. The definition of a “full service cinema” is unclear. Therefore we cannot comment on the role of a full service cinema in a film archive.
7. As the tender process is still open this information remains commercial-in-confidence.