



# Media release

For immediate release

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## Rendezvous with the Grand Dame of Subiaco

The Perth community is invited to explore the lesser known aspects of a Subiaco icon in an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the Regal Theatre on Sunday 14 September.

Regal Theatre Foundation Chairman Richard Diggins, former chairman of the Theatre Baker Trust John Thornton and Regal Theatre board members will lead a guided tour of the building and explain restoration plans as part of the City of Subiaco's free See Subi on Sunday walking series.

City of Subiaco Mayor Heather Henderson said: "The Regal Theatre has played an important part in the social setting of Subiaco over the past seventy-six years, from when it was first opened as a picture theatre in 1938 to today where it has cemented itself as one of the most popular performing arts venues in Perth. The Regal Theatre has a special place in the hearts of many West Australians and we are expecting this tour to be a favourite in the series."

The building is widely recognised for its heritage significance and is listed on the City of Subiaco's Register of Places of Cultural Heritage Significance, as well as the State Heritage Register and the National Trust's List of Classified Heritage Places.

Richard Diggins said the Regal Theatre Foundation Ltd recently received a \$1.5 million grant from Lotterywest to undertake a total restoration of the theatre, which is to be progressed in stages.

Mr Diggins said: "Stage one will commence over the Christmas period this year and include updating works on the balcony, the replacement of the existing wooden fire escape with a fireproof steel structure and the re-roofing of the entire building."

He continued: "Stage two will commence in late 2015 and see the installation of new seats and major works in the auditorium. Those who attend the walk will also see samples of the seats under consideration and have a chance to try them out and give the directors an opinion on their choice."

The city's See Subi on Sunday walking series offers the community free guided walks through Subiaco that allow participants to enjoy its history, heritage and

beauty. The walks take approximately one and a half hours to complete and are suitable for all ages.

Community members with past and present connections to the areas visited are invited to share personal anecdotes that enhance the appreciation of the location explored during each walk.

'The Grand Dame of Subiaco' tour will take place at 1.30pm on Sunday 14 September starting and finishing at the Regal Theatre, corner Hay Street and Rokeby Road, Subiaco. For more information, visit the city's website [www.subiaco.wa.gov.au](http://www.subiaco.wa.gov.au)

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### **Photos**

Image 1 – Paddy Baker and another unidentified man stand at the foot of the carpeted staircase leading to the Lounge in the Regal Theatre, C. 1950  
Image 2 – Regal Theatre building from the front, date unknown.

### **Notes to editor**

#### **About Regal Theatre**

- The Regal Theatre was officially opened in April 1938. It was a glamorous affair and the inaugural program included *Shall We Dance* with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers and *Love Under Fire* with Loretta Young and Don Ameche.
- "With a beauty and utility in design, capacity for patrons, and standard of comfort on the highest plane to be found in suburban theatres, and comparable in some respects with the best theatres in the city, the Regal Theatre, which has been built on the site of the old Coliseum, Subiaco, was officially opened on Saturday night by the Mayor of Subiaco (Mr Walter Richardson). A large crowd was present." ('Regal Theatre, Subiaco', *The Western Australian*, Monday, April 25, 1938).



- The Regal was named after King George VI who, at the time of opening, had recently ascended the throne, and who was later acknowledged by the installation of a crown and lettering spelling out the cinema's name in neon over the front entrance.
- “At the time of its opening, the Regal was indisputably Western Australia’s finest cinema , with a number of unique innovations, the most ingenious of which was a ‘crying room,’ which enabled nursing mothers with trouble infants to watch and hear the films from the comfort of a soundproof room.” (*Spillman* (1985), *Identity Prized*, pg. 264)
- In 1976, Stan Bird and John Thornton established the Regal Theatre as a performing arts venue and it is now one of the major venues operating in Perth.

### **About City of Subiaco**

The City of Subiaco is recognised as a local government leader in a range of areas such as environmental and social initiatives, and long-term planning for the future. It is located in the inner metropolitan area of Perth and includes the suburbs of Subiaco, Daglish and parts of Nedlands, Shenton Park, Crawley and Jolimont. A major centre for employment with a diverse and growing business sector, the city provides important services including waste collection, town planning and public recreation facilities, to more than 19 000 residents. The city aims to maintain its vibrant sense of community and enhance the lives and well-being of everyone who lives, visits and works in Subiaco. For more information about the City of Subiaco, visit [www.subiaco.wa.gov.au](http://www.subiaco.wa.gov.au)