

# We need to keep the Star shining

**Paul Nicolaou**



**E**vents appear to be moving very quickly in relation to the future of Star Entertainment Group as it desperately seeks a breathing space to survive.

If it ultimately goes under – let's hope it doesn't – also lost will be a footnote of NSW political folklore. Who would remember the pathway to Sydney's first legal casino wasn't announced in Macquarie Street? Of all places, Premier Neville Wran revealed the casino plan on the Great Wall of China during a state visit to Beijing in the early 1980s.

There was no particular synergy. Wran's accompanying media party just needed a strong story lead on a quiet news day.

At the time, illegal casinos with their associated scandals and corruption were a hot political issue, so news of a legal venue was a big event.

Decades later, we're at a point where far more than political folklore is at risk. The collapse of Star Entertainment would be catastrophic for our city.

So much depends on its continued viability. At risk is everything from the wonderful Lyric Theatre to two hotels, restaurants and small businesses. Four thousand jobs depend on this complex. The casino is almost incidental to what Star offers overall.

Personally, I think it would be a tragedy if we lost the Lyric Theatre, where Hamilton is playing to sold out audiences.

As we compete with Melbourne as the arts and entertainment capital of Australia, Sydney can ill-afford to lose the Lyric.

Star Entertainment needs a pathway out of its troubles, not the road to oblivion from which our city would be the ultimate

loser. Major venues such as The Star are part of the infrastructure that supports large-scale tourism, conventions, sporting events, and theatre.

It is understandable that Premier Chris Minns would be reluctant to intervene to save Star Entertainment. But isn't this one of those classic situations where for the good of the state and our city, it is too big to fail?

No one would expect the government to employ taxpayer funds to save it and all of its jobs and associated businesses.

But it is in a position to give CEO Steve McCann the time he needs to turn the business around.

Unfortunately, as things stand, it appears time and momentum are not on his side and that could mean bad news for Sydney.

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