

67-year-old theatre to close soon



Stratford's Regent Theatre will close after the August school holidays, says general manager of Kerridge Odeon's theatres and leisure division, Doug Coward, Auckland.

The company owns the 67-year-old Broadway cinema hall which is for sale.

Mr Coward earlier said the cinema would close unless patronage improved. He has now confirmed the September closure date.

It was not a step the company took lightly, he said.

The Regent and some other company-owned theatres have been running at a loss for some years now. In the past, larger and more viable theatres helped sustain running costs of many smaller town cinemas.

Kerridge Odeon was reluctant to close any cinema, because it affected overall business, he added.

If there is a sudden turn-around in business and patronage improves markedly, the company will not need to be invited to keep the theatre open, Mr Coward said.

Increased staff wages and operating costs, drops in patronage and greater competition for the entertainment dollar have all contributed to the closure-sale announcement says theatre manager Merv Thayer, Stratford.

Average attendance figures this year are considerably down on last year's, he said.

The Regent (formerly The Kings) was Stratford's first cinema house. It was built about 1919. It was later joined by the Plaza Cinema on the corner of Broadway and Regan St (now Taranaki Farmers' building), about 1934.

The Kings was closed for a while with the advent of television, but reopened in 1969 when the Plaza building was sold.

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