

**EUROBODALLA SHIRE COUNCIL**

**PUBLIC FORUM**

All members of the community who have registered have been advised that they have a **maximum of five minutes** to put their case.

Ordinary Meeting of Council on 23 May 2017

<b>Name</b>	<b>Subject/Comments</b>
Jeannie Brewer	PSR17/024 Batemans Bay Mackay Park Precinct Concept Plan - Contract Variation

Madam Mayor, Councilors, the General Manager, Council Staff, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak this morning.

My name is Jeannie Brewer and I represent PerfEx (the acronym for the Batemans Bay Performance and Exhibition Centre Working Group Incorporated.). I am also one of the nine community members of the Mackay Park Precinct Re-Development Sunset Committee. I want to begin by thanking the Councilors and Council staff for having the foresight to bring us to the point where a project of this scale is being planned and for giving us the opportunity to be a part of this exciting potential game changer for our Shire.

PerfEx is in its eleventh year and I have been involved from the beginning. The difference in the arts' scene in the Shire today compared with 2007 is phenomenal. Compared with then, when the arts were seen as a bit elitist locally, now they are mainstream and embraced. Back then, we were traditionalist in our outlook, but in a few short years, the arts now encompass technologies and formats that we would never have dreamed of, and those technologies will continue to evolve, so we have to be mindful of this in our planning. Since 2007, the *River of Art* has been born. This wonderful event brings many visitors to our Shire and last year contributed almost \$3.5m into the economy. Also, we now have the Batemans Bay Readers and Writers Festival; the Pastel Society is planning its third open National Exhibition and in the past has drawn entries from as far afield as Cairns and Adelaide. The Basil Sellars Art Prize has gone from strength to strength and this year, the Batemans Bay Chamber of Commerce is running its first Sculpture Event, *Sculpture on Clyde* and by offering a winner's prize of \$20,000 will ensure first rate entrants from far afield.

Culture is acknowledged as the fourth pillar of sustainable development and promotion of the arts can also be an economic life-saver and has served to successfully revitalize many struggling economies. A famous example is Glasgow, on the other Clyde River, where the arts now contribute very significantly to the Scottish economy, bringing in a monetary sum only marginally below tourism. Of course it took faith, commitment and funding, but it happened. Did you know that in Australia, more people visit museums and art galleries than attend the football and cricket combined?

For good reason, I believe that the Eurobodalla is on the cusp of something great, which with foresight and courage can turn our Shire around; all the ingredients are coming together; we're proposing a wonderful Arts and Cultural facility; we have internationally renowned artists residing in our Shire representing many creative fields and we have what I believe is a critical mass of visionary, creative and capable members of the community who have the will and determination to make things happen. Therefore, and this is a point I can't stress enough, with close and open collaboration between the community and Council, together we have the potential to turn this place into the Byron Bay of the south coast. And we must not forget that we are a State designated Major Regional Centre on the south coast. Did you know the Shoalhaven look at our arts' scene with envy and are very worried about the day the Eurobodalla caters in a serious way for entertainment and events.

I fully understand why there was the need for the first Mackay Park concept plan and business case, which fulfill both the Council supplied brief and the necessary regulatory requirements, prior to progressing the project, which brings me finally to the two motions which are on the table today.

First Option 3 which is the funding of a further business plan for the inclusion of a 1,000 seat theatre, rather than the suggested 500 seats. Even if it's not 1,000 seats, I believe that this suggestion deserves further discussion for all the reasons put forward already, but which I will not go into today. Your Planning Staff assure me that this discussion can take place at a later date, when we look more closely at the detail.

However, Option 2 which is engaging the consultants to produce a further Business Plan for de-coupling the arts and cultural facility from the Aquatic and Recreation Centre and placing it on the northern part of the precinct, is a no-brainer. For relatively little cost in the scheme of things, we absolutely should have the comparison. The current plan has the Cultural Centre tucked away beside and under the Aquatic centre, under the same roof, at the southern, shady end of a cramped site which allows absolutely no room for flexibility or later expansion and with our back to the road! The alternate is a potentially iconic, stand alone building on a roomy site, with ample parking and walking access to the suggested boardwalks on McLeods Creek, at the gateway to our Shire. This detached model would also allow for the Aquatic Centre to shine on its own.

In addition, the northern site offers a far superior position for a Visitor Information Centre, being so clearly visible from the highway and potentially offering many more long-vehicle parking spaces than the first concept plan. I was talking to my hairdresser the other day in the Village Centre and we all know that hairdressers know everything. She told me that lack of long vehicle parking is far and away the most common complaint she hears.

With respect Councilors, I will finish by saying that the correct decision today will ensure the vibrancy of our culture and tourism well into the future, so on behalf of the arts' community, I urge you this morning, not to close the gate on the Gateway, but to please vote in support of Option 2.