

DH

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(granted an extension)

Good morning and thank you for having me here. My name is Donna Hingston. I am in full support of North Byron Parklands being ^{as a} a permanent site for music and cultural festivals. I have attended both Falls festival on one occasion in 2015 and Splendour in The Grass just recently in 2017.

I was not asked to speak here by anyone and I am not and have never been affiliated with any group or body that benefits financially or in any other way from the festivals that occur at North Byron Parklands. I own my own home with my husband at South Golden Beach and have lived there very happily since moving to the region in December 2015. I am a mother of two young children – an 11 month old and a 2 and ½ year old. I am very well travelled, have lived abroad from many years and I consider myself for the first time as being settled down because I wholeheartedly love where I live and I consider South Golden Beach to be a very healthy community and special place, and certainly the region as a whole to be one of the friendliest places I have ever lived. My family feels incredibly blessed to have been so warmly embraced and to have made so many great friends in such a short period of time. I have met many people in the South Golden Beach community through my daily visits to the dog beach, and pounding the pot-holed roads and pavements with my prams, babies and dog. I have a good relationship with all of my neighbours.

While not practicing anymore, by profession I am a social worker, and graduated from Edith Cowan University in Western Australia. I have worked and gained work experience remote parts of Western Australia, the Northern Territory, in both hospital settings and as a child protection social worker, in communities that lack access to basic services such as health and education, let alone access to music, arts and culture. My experience and training as a social worker has given me a good understanding of the concepts and principles of community capacity building, healthy communities, community development and advocacy and that is why I live at South Golden Beach.

I have also worked as a Project Manager for the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council, what was a national peak body that was primarily responsible for representing the often conflicting interests of the public sector, private sector, industry, unions, and other key stakeholders for any given project. I have substantial experience in the processes required to represent stakeholders in a manner that is both ethical and transparent.

I say these things because it has come to my understanding that the South Golden Beach Association, a group that maintains it represents the views of South Golden Beach residents, is opposed to North Byron Parklands as a permanent festival site. While I have not had the time to attend any meetings, if this is the case then I find this grossly unethical and inappropriate and that this committee in this instance is not representative and in line with the views of the greater community, but rather a small cohort of individuals and families that are entitled to have their opinion. In my personal communications with friends and neighbours in the local community, I have not had one conversation with any person that is opposed to the festival site. On the contrary, I am aware of a good number of locals that

attended the festival either this year or in previous years that spoke highly of the event and others that rented out their homes during the time.

As mentioned, my family attended Splendour. My oldest friend, Sally who has worked for 7 years in some of the most complex places on the planet for Doctors Without Borders advised me she was coming up to stay with us for Splendour and was generous enough to gift us a 3 day pass. I attended the festival during the days with my 11 month baby girl in the carrier and my husband would meet us at the pick-up zone at around 5pm and come in for a few hours with my 2 & ½ year old wild child and I would drive home with the baby. I would then return at around 7 and collect my little boy and take both the kids home. My husband and friend would catch the bus home at the end of each night. We repeated this for 3 days. I cannot highlight how blown away we were by the talent we had seen, how easy attending this festival was, tag teaming with my husband, switching out children depending on their sleep requirements. It was flawless. It was less stressful attending Splendour than taking the two kids to Coles at Ocean Shores to get a box of nappies. Or Perhaps getting sent some video footage of my son up on the shoulders of his dad watching Future Islands, actually he was facing the wrong way looking at the crowd, he was clowning around and about 100 people around him were laughing and chanting "Banjo Banjo Banjo" – his name. He actually believed he was a rock star! And since the festival he regularly gets up on the coffee table, which he refers to as "the stage" with the ukulele and strums away wildly while his baby sister toots on the kazoo. After attending the festival, music suddenly became something much more fun and animated and I believe he was truly inspired by what he saw on stage and the ambiance of the crowd.

And it is precisely this last point that is the most important – the very real and healthy impact on communities that access and exposure to arts, music and culture has. It is a source of confidence, self-expression and inspiration, something we as a community should embrace.

And lastly a few words on how I perceived the impact on South Golden Beach in and around the festival times. Of utmost importance to me is the safety of my children, my family and my neighbours. Did I see anything unsafe like drug use, violence, antisocial behavior or dangerous driving – no. Did I hear any wild parties – no. Did I see more rubbish and litter on the beach, maybe a little and perhaps a few more bins at this time would be useful. Did I experience a longer wait at the newly taken over shop Mrs Birdie – absolutely and I was very happy for the new owners to have this exposure and injection of business. Did I notice the businesses in Brunswick Heads and Ocean Shores effected – yes, I saw many of them experiencing a big boost in business. Did I hear the music from my house on the canal, a selling point made by the previous owners – unfortunately I did not! Thank you for your time.