

IPC – Ocean Shores 10 December 2018

North Byron Parklands Cultural Events Site SSD 8169 and MP 09 0028 MOD 3- D540-18

Speaker: Dr Laurel Cohn

I have been a community representative on the Regulatory Working Group for the past 2 years and I have the privilege of access to some of the intricacies of the North Byron Parklands operation and an understanding of what this involves. This informs my address today. Over the time that I have been on the RWG, together with Ray Darney, who will be speaking later, NBP have responded to concerns and issues brought to the table and have improved their operations on a number of fronts. In fact, in the history of the RWG over the trial period 52 recommendations have been raised by ^{the RWG} ^A All have been acted upon. This shows the importance of the RWG as an oversight body made up of representatives with local knowledge. It is pleasing to see the continuation of the RWG as a recommended condition of consent.

I acknowledge that North Byron Parklands has been able to manage the two large festivals on site at current capacity limits with limited inconvenience to the general community. And I acknowledge that as well as opposition, there is much support for the festivals in the area. However, I do not support the proposal to expand the patron numbers and festival days as outlined in the SSD application and have key concerns in terms of social impacts, the proposed incremental increase in patron numbers, ongoing monitoring and reporting, and the proposed contributions to council.

Social Impacts

Firstly, in talking about numbers I will refer to the numbers on site, not just patrons, as that is more relevant to social impact. According to the EIS (NBP's figures) 35,000 patrons means 40,290 people on site, and 50,000 patrons means 57,850 people on site (page 35 of EIS). I note that the only time in the Assessment these numbers were used was in relation to the Bushfire Assessment, which rounded it up to 58,000 people. To be clear, the proposed increase of 15,000 patrons from current limits equates to an increase of 18,560 people.

The assessment maintains that any social impacts are temporary in nature. However, the increase in days and numbers will necessarily increase demand on the short term holiday rental market in Byron Shire and neighbouring shires. This has knock-on effects reducing the long-term housing rental market. Byron Shire is currently one of the least affordable places to live and rent in Australia. The lack of housing for low to middle income workers is seeing people leave the shire and changing the social structure of our community. The proposed increase

in numbers and event days at the North Byron Parklands Events site will only exacerbate this issue. I believe it is important to acknowledge the big picture here. This is a 365 days per year social impact, not a short term impact. Affordable housing is now acknowledged as a serious issue around the country and an issue for planners, amongst others. Events sites such as North Byron Parklands, and its proposed festivals, contribute to the affordable housing issue, albeit not intentionally.

Incremental increases in patron numbers

While I do not support increase in numbers, I would like to address the Assessment's recommendation to adjust the incremental increase in patron numbers from the 7,500 per year proposed by NBP to 5,000 per year, following advice predominantly from the RMS (regarding traffic) and RFS (regarding fire management). I believe if there is to be an increase in patron numbers the incremental increases should remain at 2,500 per year as they have through the trial period as this has proven to be a successful formula, allowing NBP to respond to issues that arise and stay within KPIs. The jump to 5,000 is unproven. As an RWG member I know that each year, NBP finds itself faced with new scenarios in regards to traffic in particular as patterns of transport change and shift unpredictably. The ability to respond to a double in the increase in numbers per year is not proven.

Another unpredictable factor is the weather, and let's not forget the elephant in the room – Climate Change. We are undoubtedly seeing an increase in severity and frequency of hot weather events and fire events. I acknowledge that NBP has an impressive emergency control centre and various contingencies and plans in place. However, we don't know yet, what the next year, and the year after that, will bring in terms of weather events. The climate is becoming less predictable and it would seem prudent for the State Government to take the precautionary principle here, maintaining the status quo of a 2,500 patron number increase per festival – which is more easily managed – to ensure patron safety.

Reporting

It is not clear to me from the Assessment report and Proposed consent conditions what happens in terms of reporting when the numbers reach the proposed maximums – 57,850 for SITG, 40,290 for Falls. The report says 'ongoing monitoring'. This raises a number of questions: Does this mean that NBP needs to continue to meet the KPI's each festival in order to earn the right to run another one? What happens if they don't meet the KPI's? Is there a provision for the numbers to be wound back if it looks like they can't meet the KPI's?

Contributions to council

Lastly, It is pleasing to see that a proposed consent condition is an agreement with Council to ameliorate the costs associated with impacts on amenities and infrastructure. I do not, however, understand why there is a cap of \$120,000 on the proposed contribution from NBP that is not commensurate with the cap on patron numbers as per their own formula of \$1 per festival camping patron per

night. By my calculation, with a maximum of 25,000 campers at Falls for five nights and 30,000 campers at SITG for five nights that comes to \$275,000. It doesn't make sense that additional patrons doesn't equate to additional money to council.

I thank you for the opportunity to raise these issues.

Laurel Cohn

[REDACTED] NSW 2483
[REDACTED]