



Introduction

This proposal is submitted by PerfEx, the acronym for the Batemans Bay Performance and Exhibition Centre Working Group Incorporated, which has been lobbying, networking, supporting and fundraising as an umbrella group for the local cultural organisations for almost ten years. (For further detail see the PerfEx story at <http://www.perfex.org.au/about-perfex.html>).

The **PerfEx** mission statement:

“To bring to completion the construction of a centre for the performing and visual arts, to meet the current and future needs of the Batemans Bay Community”

We are very pleased to have been given the opportunity to submit a proposal for our vision for the redevelopment of the old Bowling Club Precinct in the preparation for the future Master Plan and in this submission, we are strongly supported by numerous cultural and community organizations, as well as tourism operators, the business community, educators and trainers and individuals.

Our vision is for an iconic Performing Arts Centre combined with a Tourist Information facility, which, whilst reflecting the personality of the region, displays exciting architecture. There is potential for a multi-level iconic Cultural Arts’ facility building with stunning water views over McLeods Creek and the Clyde River.

We envisage a development which fosters creative vibrancy, which in turn, provides economic opportunities for our picturesque town; the gateway to our unique Nature Coast.



In recognition of this, our suggested name for the precinct is **‘The Gateway Precinct’**, to be known as **‘The Gateway’**.

This would reflect the position the site holds, just after crossing the Clyde, and on entering the Eurobodalla Shire. It would be an opportunity to present the Shire as vital and engaging, and a thriving community in itself, attracting tourism, cultural partners and businesses.

The aim is that all our resident population, young and old, able and not, indigenous and non- indigenous are proud of this development and feel a sense of ownership and inclusion; whilst for visitors, we hope the centre provides a unique and exciting experience, so that they leave our area feeling that we are progressive, vibrant and creative.

We would like to be able to house the Sydney symphony orchestra one week; a wedding another week; an art exhibition another and a regional football dinner the following week, in a state of the art, multi-use Centre. It must be a facility from which the whole Shire can benefit.

This document is intended to provide a starting point for discussion for what we believe would fulfil both what is needed and what we are hearing the community of Batemans Bay would like to see on the current site of the Batemans Bay Bowling Club in the Master Plan.





History and Rationale

HISTORY: Performing and Visual Arts and Multi-Use Centre

In March 2010 the result of the Council funded Arts Infrastructure Report found that Batemans Bay needed an Arts Centre as a matter of 'immediate priority'. Already six years have passed and nothing has been provided.

Currently, there is extremely limited dedicated community arts space in Batemans Bay, apart from the small gallery next to the Tourist Information Centre and the Community Centre which is essentially just meeting rooms. At present Batemans Bay primarily utilizes the Catholic Church and High School for its concerts and the Malua Bay Surf Club and High School for art exhibitions. These impose many limitations on concert and performance style and size of audience.

The Arts Community does not have a space to call its own. The old School of Arts in Orient Street was pulled down in the late '60's and the sale of the site funded the 'community' basketball court at Hanging Rock, which in a very short time was only used for basketball. Consequently, Batemans Bay has not had any real dedicated Arts' space for nearly fifty years.

Rationale

- Batemans Bay is the designated Major Regional Centre for the South Coast and sits at the entrance to the Eurobodalla Shire and beautiful Nature Coast.
- The Precinct represents a symbolic gateway to the Eurobodalla, while affording Batemans Bay a sense of community. It can be a showpiece for our town and Shire.
- Currently Batemans Bay lacks a real 'heart'. We believe that providing a cultural focal point, bringing many disparate groups together, has the ability to restore the 'lifeblood' to our town. Such a facility would give Batemans Bay the

much-needed facelift and focus which it has so long been denied, and the whole Shire will benefit from the spin-offs.

- In the developed world, Culture and the Arts are now recognized as the fourth pillar of a healthy and sustainable society along with the social, environmental and economic requirements. All levels of Government are expected to provide this. This concept has recently been reinforced by the G2I Report.

- Research has shown time and again that Cultural Arts' facilities need to be co-located with other tourism services and in the peak population centres, to ensure tourists visit several aspects.

- We are being left behind by our neighbouring Shires in providing cultural facilities. The Shoalhaven to our north has a 900-seat performance centre in Nowra, and has just completed a 1000-seat renovation to the Ulladulla Civic Centre. To our south, the Bega Shire Council has provided a 300-seat auditorium in their new Performing Arts Centre. (Apparently the Shoalhaven sees us as their greatest threat as a performance and event provider because of the attraction of our abundant scenic assets).

- The Eurobodalla has been identified as a low socio-economic environment, in which the three key employers are Tourism, Retail and Aged Care. Overlaying this challenge, with arts/culture /tourism there is the chance to create genuine social capital, while realizing improved education and employment opportunities. This precinct would cater for all age groups and cultures; and encourage social interaction, awareness and respect amongst all generations.

- A multi-purpose facility catering for arts, events and tourism will bring visitors to town and the wider Shire all year round, filling the motel beds, which might otherwise be empty in the slower months. The Community Centre booking office currently has to turn down those looking for suitable premises for large functions and events.



Who Benefits

- Broad local community
- Community Art groups
- Visitors to the region
- Local businesses
- Tourist operators
- Individual amateur and professional artists
- Children and their families
- Shire youth
- Senior members of the community
- Community job-seekers
- Local food producers such as Oyster farmers.

The Opportunity

A once in a generation opportunity has arisen in which the community can co-create with the Council in a collaborative venture in which business, tourism, education, arts and culture can reflect and build our future together

As is mentioned in the site information: “This is a significant site in Batemans Bay and with the right development on the site, has the potential to have a major positive impact on the future of Batemans Bay and the Eurobodalla.”

The vision for the new development must include community use to truly reflect the vitality and diversity of the Town and Shire. We therefore support the vision of the Council in recognising that:

“Given the strategic value of the site at the entrance of Batemans Bay, the site and the broader precinct will have a significant influence on achieving a future vision for Batemans Bay and has the potential to be a landmark development that will be a catalyst to stimulate economic growth. Council is considering options to ensure that a truly outstanding development is achieved on the site.”

We would like to propose that, considering its site, local importance, sense of community ownership and capability to attract business, culture and tourism to the Shire, that a landmark and innovative building of striking yet practical design be built on the northern area of the Precinct site.

“Co-working spaces generate their own energy. When you put creatively driven people in the same place where they can focus on what they do best, you see collaborations and support networks develop that foster new business and attract clients,” Ms Cooper said.

(From pop-up innovation group sponsored by Council – South Tribe)



Batemans Bay Precinct Redevelopment

<http://www.esc.nsw.gov.au/inside-council/project-and-exhibitions/proposals>

“The Batemans Bay Bowling Club and Aquatic Centre Precinct includes the former Batemans Bay Bowling Club site, Mackay Park sporting fields and associated infrastructure, the Batemans Bay Swimming Pool and the Mini Golf site. The precinct is located on the western side of the Princes Highway across from the Batemans Bay Town Centre. The land is bounded to the west by McLeods Creek and the Clyde River wetlands. The total site area is approximately 8ha.”

INTERNAL

- Acoustically designed state-of-the-art performance spaces, large and small, for music, dance, drama, film, etc, with change rooms. Moveable tiered seating would be desirable;
- Large multi-purpose space for M.I.C.E (Marketing, Incentives, Events and Conferences);
- Central foyer space for mingling and gathering between activities and attractions. This could double as gallery/exhibition space;
- Gallery spaces for local artists, visiting artists and a Museum visual display covering visual arts/aboriginal arts/sculpture/photography/textiles/wood/glass/metal work etc
- Workshop spaces – ‘wet’ and ‘dry’;
- A Visitor Information Centre incorporating a retail shop, selling the best of locally produced art, hand-crafted artifacts, local produce, plus an oyster interpretive centre;
- Café/restaurant with catering capabilities;
- Meeting/training rooms for cultural and community groups;
- Youth amenities;
- Child-activity areas and facilities;
- Disabled accessibility and amenities;
- Administration offices;

- Storage;
- Restroom amenities, lockers and change rooms;
- Logistical operations support – ramps, loading/unloading etc.

EXTERNAL

- Outdoor staging and performance areas;
- Markets
- Festivals
- Long vehicle/caravan/ coach parking.

By combining these elements the Centre becomes a place reflecting our community vitality and would become a hub of activity for use by all ages.

An integrated facility would provide a convenient, welcoming experience for visitors. They can have a coffee, find out what’s in the area, browse through the gallery and check out to see what is showing in the theatre; learn some of our history or wander over to the pool.

While we are aware that a Business Plan will be required for further clarification of our ideas, we feel this would be more appropriate to be developed once an ‘in principle’ agreement of our ideas is given by Council, in which event we would be very happy to develop a collaborative vision.





Master Plan

After many years of community feedback, the final Cultural/Arts/Community building should accommodate the following:

Performing Arts Centre



It is widely acknowledged in all our investigations, that dedicated Community Performance Spaces are desperately needed. The performance areas in the new development should accommodate both large and small performance possibilities. Larger performance events such as the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Oz Opera (both of which expressed interest in coming to the Bay through the auspices of the south Coast Music Society, but were not able to because of our lack of adequate performance facilities). Smaller performances would be the more local or musical events catering to more intimate productions.



To do this the facility will need state-of-the-art inclusions: acoustics, lighting, sound system, air-conditioning, plus other necessary operational amenities: toilet facilities, change-rooms and storage spaces. Mobile tiered seating is essential.

A roomy, well-designed foyer where refreshments are served is essential as an adjunct to the performance spaces.

All of the above would be conducive to an atmosphere of creative expression and interest, making us a destination for performing Arts, which in turn would boost the revenue for the town and wider Shire.



Event Centre

Since adopting our PerfEx mission statement, research, demand and viability factors all point to a full multi-purpose centre being the right model for Batemans Bay. Such a centre would also need to accommodate Marketing, Incentives, Events and Conferences (M.I.C.E.).

An auditorium and connected spaces would make holding such events a prime source of income. Weddings, concerts, art exhibitions, camping and caravan shows, festivals such as the Batemans Bay Writers' Festival, conferences and seminars, could all be accommodated here.

Batemans Bay could then maximise the benefit of its proximity to Canberra and other centres.

Flow-on from such events would benefit the town and Shire through increased accommodation and hospitality spending, and can often be an introduction to our area for attendees, facilitating return visits.





Master Plan

Visual Arts Centre

The new centre would need to accommodate exhibition spaces, workshop and storage spaces as well as a retail outlet for both local and national exhibitors. Already the south Coast Pastel Society attracts artists from around Australia when they hold their National art exhibition.

By providing activity areas as well as display areas, the range of involved, creative people in the community can be demonstrated and encouraged. The area is home to several arts organisations, photographic groups, woodworking groups and textile arts groups, all who have expressed an interest in using the new facilities. The River of Art would be another group who would utilize space each year and local preparation for Riverlights could also be accommodated. Our local aboriginal artists are keen to be given the opportunity to display their arts and heritage.

The opportunity for encouraging creativity and an interest in the Arts in our youth is a rewarding prospect. For instance, our artists are very excited about involving High School students by giving art classes and encouraging their creativity.



Visitor Information Centre (combined with the Retail Store)

Tourism is the prime income-generating industry for our Shire and to have a friendly, interesting and informative initial contact point is critical to making visitors feel welcome and more inclined to extend their stay, and to return.

Relocation of the Visitor Information Centre would centralise information for tourists, and allow leverage to other business and local interests such as accommodation and sites of interest. The local Historical Museum has committed to small exhibitions which reflect aspects of our heritage, for visitor context and appreciation of the area and its people. Libraries and other organisations will also contribute displays.

Our highly regarded Oyster Industry could be promoted by this facility through events, retail outlets, displays and education events.





Master Plan



Retail Store

(combined with the Visitor Information Centre)

A retail outlet of quality local produce and products, and local arts and artifacts that reflect the area and its heritage, would also be included.

Education Centre



Rooms will be used by the community for various learning activities by such organisations as the U3A; youth and cultural groups. It will open possibilities for courses in various fields such as hospitality and tourism (in conjunction with providers such as Adult Education; employment agencies; hospitality groups, etc), by providing hands-on training within the venue. This would be an ideal situation for young people to gain event management training and retail work experience. Adult Education is particularly interested in this aspect.

A multi-purpose centre would afford the opportunity to conduct “real life” project-based education programs, in which students would provide a key resource.

IT/Computer/Film/Music Centre



Today’s business, communication and education worlds are based on computers and internet access. In those arenas creative collaborations produce film, on-line virtual realities, plus business and communication opportunities. We envisage a studio/workshop area dedicated to online creativity and expression. This is another community service/ income-producing aspect of the proposed use of the site. It is vital that we include our youth, and being able to offer this type of education and activity is to be welcomed.

Storage



Storage is an essential component for the many stakeholders of this facility and must be well-provided and designed. Organisations within the community and using the wider precinct would utilise these area for such things as exhibition-panel storage; U3A equipment storage; and Museum Heritage records.



Master Plan

Workshop / Studio / Activity Spaces

The new facility will need to provide various options for well-designed workshop spaces, accommodating a range of activities (both ‘wet’ and dry’) such as art workshops, education in the practical arts, music and drama. Currently, local organisations use spaces scattered about the area and would appreciate a central location.



Meeting Rooms

In our community there are many organisations that require the use of meeting rooms – organisations such as Art groups (BBACS, PerfEx, Pastel Society, EFTAG, etc) and Community groups (Probus, CWA, Lions, U3A, etc). Many of these groups require meeting rooms on an on-going basis and this facility could provide a centralized place for these. Child-minding activities and services could be incorporated and would be a welcome addition for those using the facility.



Outdoor Stage / Seating and Activity Areas

Outdoor performance areas (both open and partially covered) have a charm of their own and would ideally be included to give a range of performance options in the design. For instance Tropfest and Music in the Vineyards have set a fine precedent for such events and a local variation could be Music under the Stars or Stars in the Bay.

Outdoor areas can also accommodate such things as café precincts, activity areas and child-activity areas. They are also suitable for display walls and information bulletins of the area or the activities of the precinct and town.



Markets Venue

The precinct is in an enviable central location for markets and festivals and these activities should be part of the design brief, to include such things as community car-boot or artist’s markets. It is intended that these would complement but not compete with the specialty and local food producers markets, such as the Moruya artisan and local producers’ markets.

Neither would they compete with Corrigan’s Markets as the Precinct Markets would be specialty and occasional ‘feature’ markets, sometimes associated with larger events and festivals.





Master Plan

Long Wheel-Base Parking

The existence of flat, open parking areas suitable for long-wheel base vehicles opens the potential for increasing the number of coaches, campervans and other long-wheel base vehicles bringing trade and visitors to the Shire. By providing incentives and an interesting and informative focus, the stopover rate could be increased, resulting in boosted tourism and trade. It has also been suggested that the bus interchange could operate from here, thus removing the bottleneck from Orient Street.



Café / Restaurant

One way of attracting and encouraging people to linger is through a café and restaurant with good food and coffee, and having a welcoming ambience.

With a commercial kitchen on site, which gives the ability to cater for all types of functions, and Adult Education and employment agencies in the Bay, the café and restaurant could also provide the additional benefits of hospitality training and retail experience for youth. Local produce and products could be featured, or visiting chefs could host demonstrations.





Tourism

“More Australians go to art galleries each year than go to the AFL and NRL combined. Culture employs more people than agriculture, construction or even mining, and indeed contributes as much as 75% of the economic benefit of the mining sector.”

Brisbane festival director David Berthold <http://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/news/arts-ministry-points-finger-blame-australia-council#.dpf>

We are missing out on potential tourist dollars. Tourism Research Australia, which provides the data for Destination NSW, shows that the South Coast of NSW receives the second highest number of visitors outside Sydney (higher than the Blue Mountains and Byron Bay!). However, it also shows that the South Coast receives the second lowest overnight visitor spend in the State and Eurobodalla itself has the lowest! The reason for this disparity is that, whilst Batemans Bay is the designated Major Regional Centre, it does not have sufficient infrastructure and attractions to entice people to stay, or people are unaware of what we have to offer.

Bus and coach operators avoid the Eurobodalla as they believe our centre lacks infrastructure and attractions. Also our streets do not accommodate tourist coaches easily. Basically they stop in the Shoalhaven and then Fish Pen at Merimbula. We need long vehicle parking adjacent to services and attractions. The Bowling club site provides this.

The Tourist Information Centre should be operated from this site, in conjunction with other activities, as the site is easily accessible to those coming into the Shire. Lights at Beach road provide safe turning ability and the site provides ample long vehicle parking.

Preliminary, enthusiastic discussions have taken place with Oyster Trail representatives who would love to include an Interpretative centre. The Precinct is ideally situated as, geographically, it is central to the whole trail and is very close to our local oyster farms. It would be a shame if we lost this opportunity to another Shire.

The Museum has also expressed a keen interest to provide changing mini-displays featuring the heritage of the town, to spark interest in further exploration, such as a History Walk.

Aquatic Centre

There are instances where Aquatic Centres can work well with Tourism and Arts' facilities and we are very willing to participate in further discussions which might include such an idea.

An indoor heated and therapeutic pool has long been recognised as a need in the community, especially with our ageing population. The Aquatic Centre proposal includes this and consequently we add our support to their proposal.

Income and Operations

Our proposal suggests that the Culture, Arts and Tourism facility be Council run, with a paid independent manager overseeing the whole facility, supported by a Community-Council Management Board.

We envisage that there would be five enterprises within the facility and each would need to be treated separately, to suit their individual requirements.

These are:

- Theatre and Performance;
- Events;
- Gallery;
- Visitor Information Centre;
- and Restaurant / Café.

There would be various sources of income generated by use of the site:

- The primary source of income would be from leasing the events/conference and exhibition facilities;
- Leasing opportunities would also lie with the café, restaurant and retail outlet. For instance a large, well-fitted commercial kitchen and dining area will allow for the possibility of a stand-alone restaurant business.
- Income would also be generated from:



Income and Operations

- Commission on sale of artworks and products;
- Community use of meeting rooms, workshop areas and storage*;
- Occasional uses of the facility for events of a specific or targeted nature, such as a festival;

***Local stakeholders should receive the benefit of reduced fees to encourage regular and on-going local use.**

These fiscal opportunities would generate income for both the Manager and the Council.

FUNDRAISING

Community fundraising suggestions:

- 'Buy' a brick/carspace/pavement tile
- Crowd funding via Facebook, etc
- Raffles
- Charity events
- Sponsorship and in-kind contributions
- Fundraising performances and events.



Conclusion

The Precinct development is a unique opportunity to revitalise the centre of town and reflect the community and shire interest in arts, culture and tourism.

Because this proposal includes a Visitor Information Centre and meeting rooms, the current Tourist Information Centre and Community Centre sites would become surplus to requirements. These valuable assets could be sold and the proceeds used to offset some of the development costs of the site.

Employing Central Management, and co-managing with the community through volunteers and work experience activities, plus the leasing of individual sectors, would minimise management and running costs for Council.

The fact that multiple stakeholders share a common facility for multiple purposes, will have greater appeal for State and Federal politicians when providing funding opportunities.

An ongoing CAT (Community, Arts and Tourism) Centre will ensure a reliable and ongoing income and ensure both cohesion and inspiration for the community. Combining all the above facilities would mean that such a complex is abuzz with people on a daily basis; people of all ages.

It would provide a 'heart' to the Bay, whilst giving the community the sense of ownership of the facility, which is critical to its success.





Community Concerns

Community concerns to be taken into account

The recent re-categorisation proposal and Council calls for Expressions of Interest from private investors and developers have raised grave concerns in the community that this iconic site could be taken out of community ownership.

The Bowling Club site has always been in community hands and was originally bequeathed by Eric Fenning, a local businessman and Councillor. This gift was given within living memory. People of the community regard it as their own, for now and forever. It is worth more than money to us.

Sale of the site would yield an immediate injection of funds for the Council but is also likely to create lasting enmity against Council in Batemans Bay. Short term benefit for loss of long-term gain is a bad mistake.

This Precinct development is an opportunity to add to our town's proud identity and promote its cohesion. Should it leave community hands it would become a tool of division and acrimony.

This site is unique, at the entrance to town and the Shire. If it was sold, the community could never afford to buy it back. This opportunity to create such a strong community identity will never arise again. We must not lose it!

Several possible inclusions are strongly opposed by the community:

- An aged care facility (the sound levels and hours of activity on site would clash with the nature of aged care);
- A generic fast food outlet (or multi-national business). This can be an opportunity for the local area and its businesses to display its capabilities and produce, and to benefit from these;
- Any business, such as a cinema, that competes with an already existing local business.

We believe that this proposal is very worthy of further detailed discussion and planning. Furthermore, all of the listed activities can be achieved under the current zonings applicable to the site.





Appendix A: Our Support Base

(41) Specific organisations/businesses (in alphabetical order) who support the proposal to have the Batemans Bay Bowling club utilised as a community hub for creative, cultural activities and community activities, and tourist centre:

- Adult Education
 - Artisan's Nest
 - Aquatic centre Inc
 - EuroSCUG
 - Batemans Bay Arts and Crafts Society
 - Batemans Bay Chamber of Commerce
 - Batemans Bay CWA
 - Batemans Bay Historical Society and Museum
 - Batemans Bay Soldiers Club
 - Batemans Bay Rotary Club
 - Batemans Bay Lions
 - Batemans Bay Writers Festival
 - Bay City Cinemas
 - Batemans Bay Manor, B&B
 - Batemans Bay Swimming Club
 - Bowling Representatives
 - Clydeview Holiday Park
 - Eurobodalla Council Tourism Advisory Committee
 - Edgewater Gardens
 - EFTAG
 - Eurobodalla River of Art
 - Eurobodalla Woodcraft Guild Inc
 - Fine Art Studio
 - Hire n Hire
 - Hospitality representatives
 - Indoor Aquatic Group
-



Appendix A: Our Support Base

- Larks after D'Arc
- Lensvision - video/education
- Oyster Industry representatives
- **PerfEx**
- Pike Family investments
- South Coast Music Society
- South Coast Pastel Society
- South East Arts
- South Tribe
- Stanwell Management
- St Cecilia Music Scholarships
- Stepz Dance Academy
- Tourism Operator representatives
- U3A Batemans Bay
- Adult Education

Strongly supported by:

- **Ann Sudmalis**
Federal Member for Gilmore
- **Andrew Constance**
State Member for Bega

The following businesses and community groups are an example of those who have pledged practical and in-kind support:

- Local community via the offer of labour and materials
- Bunnings Hardware
- G.J.Gardners Batemans Bay
- Batemans Bay Soldiers Club
- Bay City Cinemas





Appendix B: Benefits of an Arts and Community Precinct

- Provide opportunities for artistic and cultural expression;
- Provide a mechanism to showcase, communicate and preserve cultural knowledge;
- Provide connection to our heritage and to the heritage of others;
- Provide linkages between community, facilities and open public spaces;
- Create a supportive environment to explore creative ideas, innovation and debate.
- Provide an opportunity for social interaction;
- Offer health benefits associated with regular physical activity;
- Support lifelong learning with a range of educational opportunities for all ages and abilities;
- Support intergenerational education and skill development;
- Provide greater amenity in locations used for community events;
- Enhance the mental and social wellbeing of people in the community;
- Develop social capital and build volunteerism;
- Provide opportunities for people of different interests to interact and celebrate together.
- Create interesting and enjoyable public spaces;
- Contribute to the delivery of community expression and interest;
- Contribute to community wellbeing by assisting crime prevention through purposeful activity and community engagement;
- Increase amenity value in built environments;
- Enhance a sense of ownership or guardianship of public places;
- Contribute to local economies;
- Contribute to the development of a more vibrant town centre;
- Contribute to attracting visitors to the town;
- Contribute to a creative industries sector which, in turn, contributes to the economic diversity and sustainability of the town;
- Improve the skills standards of the workforce through increased educational and experiential activities;
- Develop innovative and creative entrepreneurs;
- Support for the clustering of arts initiatives has recognized spin offs for other small businesses, such cafes and other boutique businesses.

**Reference - 'Knox Arts and Cultural Plan 2012-22'
Knox Town Council, Victoria*



Batemans Bay Performance and Exhibition Centre
Working Group Inc.

We therefore cordially submit this proposal for your consideration as a reflection of community interest in Council maintaining the precinct as Community land, and providing an amenity that reflects the cultural and community life of the town and Shire, and taking the opportunity to do this in the very near future.

Submitted by:

PerfEx

info@perfex.org.au

www.perfex.org.au

Contact:

Jeannie Brewer (President) 0407105790

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