

Submission re the three concept plans provided by NBRS for the proposed Mackay Park centre - a *PerfEx.Inc*

17/01/2019

Introduction

Over the last few weeks the Council has held information kiosks in the Stocklands Shopping Centre, Batemans Bay, and Moruya, plus several focus groups for reps from groups specifically interested or involved with the proposed Mackay Park Arts/Aquatic Centre and its aspirations.

As President of PerfEx. Inc., a long-time major lobby group for a Performance and Arts Centre in the Bay, I attended three focus groups (two for the Arts and one for Community Centre users) and several hours on random days at the kiosks in town since the three options (Concept Plans) were released, plus attended earlier focus groups when the Architects, NBRS, were first engaged. As well, I have had meetings with arts groups and reps, attended meetings with both the 50m pool people and the Indoor Pool Group, and had discussions with head of the U3A and Chamber of Commerce. I have had various informal discussions with various community members and Councillors and, of course with input from the PerfEx committee and members.

Overall, when the plans were released, there was excitement that there was something to see and 'get our teeth into', followed by a general disappointment: no orientation, no scale and no measurements, and the plans so pale it was impossible to read all the room/space notes and names except in the large ones on the display stands at the Kiosk/focus groups. Yes, we could roughly guess as the 25m pool was a constant, but that was not that helpful in many cases.

However, we want to commend Council on this process – it is the most comprehensive we have seen to date on engaging the wider community on a (any) topic. We are aware that, as well, Council has also held other meetings with related interested parties, including First Nations representatives, businesses and visitors, as well as politicians.

We look forward to 'plan D' as there were many, many comments made by the general public, and in the focus groups, on changes they would like to see in the plans. Most of these were related to **practical usage of the proposed facility**, and the **nexus between a commercial proposition and a community facility**. I do not envy the architects their task, **so it is important the community is listened to and our needs and wishes reflected strongly** in the plans.

ARTS perspective: General

This submission refers speak mainly to the Arts facility as I am sure Carolyn (Harding) and others have their own observations re the pool centre.

The most raised issue was **why a gym has been included** when there are so many in town already. It was stated many times by the council reps that discussions with other Councils had reinforced the need for a gym as part of the viability of the enterprise, especially as Council will have the ability to offer a combined gym/pool membership, something the other businesses cannot.

A Fundamental Question

This revealed a strong commitment to making money from the facility and its parts, or at least breaking even. This will be welcome news to ratepayers, but **raises a fundamental question on** whether this is primarily a community or commercial venture, and this is not clear. From Council responses, particularly re the Arts facility, it appears as being thought of as a primarily commercial venture geared towards visiting artists and their usage.

This is evident in the minimal Gallery, meeting and café spaces on offer.

More and more it appears to be an **Entertainment Centre rather than a Community Arts Centre** and, as such, questions were raised as to how the 'nuts and bolts' of community life are to be catered for.

Community Centre is to be demolished

The Mackay Park venture is not a stand-alone project, which many are unaware of. It was stated in one focus group that the Community Centre is to be demolished, but no further plans were revealed. The tourism centre is also to go, with Internet Kiosk stands being the main replacement.

Losing the Community Centre is of great concern to us as the new proposed facility does not replicate or improve on the Community Centre, with its dividable hall, large and small meeting rooms, a rentable office and a commercial scale kitchen (relied on heavily by Meals on Wheels who will not be accommodated in the new centre) and flat surrounds. U3A has some 40 bookings a week there (including weekend talks); there is a youth café; dance classes; a food and crafts market; social outreach events and more. It is easily accessible (no major highway to cross), has plentiful parking; and a carpark between it and the Museum that can easily be sectioned off for outdoor markets, festivals and events. The Water Gardens flow on from it also. There is green space that could be made into community gardens.

Rather than lose this facility, built by community funds, we would like to see the Community Centre remain and made into a **locals community precinct**.

“Does community sentiment count for nothing councillors? It's not just the swimming community that is unhappy with the current plans - there are many, many others. What will happen with the youth café in the community centre for the Koori children? They will not be walking across the highway to a much smaller venue. Please rethink.”
.....Aunty Ruth 3 days ago The Beagle

Aunty Ruth, I quite agree. It is essential we have a locals' community Centre on the CBD side of the town, within walking distance from it; a locals' precinct to complement the one in Mackay Park, not compete with it or be swallowed by it. One we can wander into....(SM)

Is it justifiable to replace the Comm and tourism centres with **less** facilities for locals?

More and more we see council prioritising visitor experience over local community. Ironically, if there are plans to sell it, will people remember that when the bats arrive in numbers, the whole area is almost uninhabitable for noise, smell and health/sanity issues?

Will the locals use the new facility often enough for it to be 'seen' as a local amenity? No doubt the pool complex will, with its variety of facilities to meet the needs of all ages, and the tendency for users to be there for long periods to make it worthwhile to go there, but we are not so sure on the Arts area in its present form and layouts, and with poor visual and mental accessibility from the CBD.

- Moruya is getting an Art gallery, café, open space
- The Botanic Gardens are getting new facilities including Art gallery, new cafe and open space and has room for workshops

What will be better/different about this facility? How do we complement the three rather than compete?

Three Concept Plans

This submission does not address each plan separately as there would be much repetition and may miss the focus of giving input to 'Plan D'.

While each of the three plans is slightly different, there were many general (and mostly practical) issues raised. The separation of the buildings was very popular and the use of the space between the two, as a usable creative space, was raised often.

In all discussions with Council we were asked to focus on general issues rather than the nitty gritty, such as internal layout, and no visible scaling or dimensions made some discussion difficult.

Overall, issues raised were:

- Gym – a concern. No competition for local businesses. Three more businesses are going this week. One is Target!
- If there is to be a gym, can it be upstairs (people will go upstairs for a gym, but not so easily for a gallery, and with our demographic nearing 40% for over 60s, this needs

to be considered)? Can the ground floor area then be used for Art/photography/local exhibitions and community events, with a large, usable kitchen beside it?

- An interesting concept to split the buildings and have the wet and dry workshops across from the Arts facility. Could enable extension into outside space. Can this area be flexibly enclosed, i.e. boulevard/plaza to be covered (does not need to be walled in) to make more usable. Can such an idea make better use of light- less shade and not a wind-tunnel. Nice negative- space shape.
- Include ability to extend workshop and other areas to outside green or paved space (shade/shelter)
- Orientation be adjusted to make more use of the northerly, green field and sky aspects. Northern sun aspect an essential component for cafe, walkway/esplanade, pools. Be very careful of overshadowing in winter.
- Could more be made of the open green, sky and tree vistas? These are seen as invaluable as they cannot be built out and are sharp contrast to the relentless busyness of the highway
- Rework the 'aspect' of the arts centre - front, back, highway frontage, etc. How can it present well to both the town/highway/bridge and the carpark?
- Reorientate
- Loading dock and access for theatre, bands, artists, exhibitions. Question: say a large orchestral tour came to town. Does the arts centre have the practical design for loading, storage and removal?
- More accessible parking and drop off needed –loading and people
- Café facilities for the Arts community (Art/Music/Theatre etc). Do we want a snack pool café or a gathering and lingering café? Surely a north/west-facing café with good light meals would attract a lot more users than just pool users? Maybe we need two cafes? Café space on northwest side with good natural light and views outside. Easy to get to. A 'lingering space' is needed.
- More meeting rooms and storage (or keep the community Centre and reduce meeting rooms)
- Less 'maze trip' to loos and more female loos. The relative number of male/female toilets seems inadequate
- No long corridor queues for WCs at interval please
- The wisdom of placing toilets in a foyer next to a bar considering the press and ambiance of interval at an Arts/Theatre event is questioned
- The scale of the foyers - appearing too small for the number of patrons in the theatre
- Less- hard-line shape – not attractive and does not link visually to pool complex shape
- Keep utility areas away from 'approach'
- Create good flow between activities in the buildings
- ***Art exhibition areas being so small. Is this tokenism? Do we want a gallery tucked away? Larger gallery/flexible use space needed
- Bus parking areas
- Making access for setting up exhibitions easier

- The number of parking spaces to meet the demands of a concurrent theatre and pool event (not viable to close one when the other is open, as has been suggested)
- The placement of roof terraces on the south side of the buildings when, if placed on the north side (being above mozzie level) commercial and community events such as open air cinema, cocktail parties, pop-up restaurants, local food tastings and promotions could be accommodated there
- Where are the outdoor, covered areas for theatre, arts and dance?
- The size of theatre, from 500 to 350. Again, council reps said this decision was made after discussion with other councils re viability. Could be okay. Let's try it. Better than what we have.
- Is there sufficient room for storage, movement of theatre and music equipment, people and costumes?
- What are the expansion options?
- Can the entrances be more inviting and accessible?
- Add outdoor performance areas – particularly for lunch-time and afternoon times (NW sides)
- Include creative technology areas – film, video
- Include good sound systems to encourage musicians to use the facility
- Is there provision for youth enterprises such as techno-centres or facilities? (now mentioned in the media but not in the focus groups)*
- Can utility areas be more on the southern/highway sides as little traffic – foot or vehicle – will come from there?
- How is ease of access from across the highway and CBD to be encouraged/developed?
- Could delivery/cartage vehicle access to loading points be made more accessible and away from the approach, to the Arts building particularly?
- Safety and lighting and outdoor weather protection – e.g. covered walkways
- Is there safe piano storage to ensure use by Music Society?
- Are there noise abatement provisions in the plan to avoid the history of music events being shut down because of complaints from the two aged residential facilities with 100yards of the centre? How will outdoor event noise be managed (Music, theatre etc)? “The bowling club venue was basically closed by complaints from the retirement home down on the river, the pub the same from retirement apartments at Stocklands. I can see the council selling the bowling site in a few years for apartments or a commercial and apartment complex, if that's the case the performing arts centre will come up against noise abatement complaints. It must be designed to contain performance noise.”
- Where are the extension options for the theatre complex (if not the theatre itself)?
- What sustainability features are included?
- Give no less than taken away, i.e. more meeting rooms, better catering
- Will the facility be used for polling in elections (local, State and Federal)?
- What's the “WOW” factor of the ‘iconic’ character?

****“The visual arts require an Art gallery area of similar size to the Batemans Bay High School Main Hall, a venue that has been hired over many years for exhibitions by Creative Arts Batemans Bay Inc. It is not possible to run such exhibitions in the unreasonably small Art gallery room shown on the plan.”*

Plan A seems to have the most interesting ideas, with a central promenade/plaza between the two buildings that could be used for all sorts of things.

It has a large gym on the ground floor. It was suggested this be moved to the second floor, and the downstairs space to be made into exhibition space, with kitchen and function room attached. Also that it be moved closer to the highway side to prevent block shading of the outdoor pool area and to expand the plaza area.

The café to be moved to a position between the two facilities, with multiple service points so that there can be a casual service side and a café service side opening to a pleasant, tree populated area.

*‘In addition, plans for the centre feature an auditorium, wet and dry workspaces, soundproof dance and rehearsal studios, a recording studio and meeting rooms.’
<https://www.beagleweekly.com.au/single-post/2019/02/15/Federal-Labor-Will-Invest-25m-In-A-New-Leisure-Centre-For-Batemans-Bay>

The Pool

A few general things re the pool:

- Parents like to be able to see their offspring while they are in a pool, or even a crèche, and even both when they have more than one child. The present plans need adjustment to enable this
- Is there adequate room for marshalling schools for carnivals, or for seating a whole school?
- The capacity to raise (or slide) the pool walls to enable an indoor/outdoor experience seems to be essential but that level of detail was not shown
- To maximise the sun year-round, the majority of pools need to be clear of solid shade caused by adjacent buildings
- The positioning of the entrance to the pool effectively cuts it off from people interested in both Arts and the pool, whereas a closer relationship could well inform users of activities in both areas
- Are there ‘enough’ lockers in the pools amenities?
- Can there be more ‘free-activity’ space? (school groups and picnics)
- Bus parking and pantechnicon turning spaces need clarification
- With no elevations it is hard to foresee the effects of shadow lines (Are the terraces shaded in winter? Do the corridors proposed on the separate concepts get any sun? Where is the predominant wind direction? Are we creating wind tunnels or shade corridors?)

Revision of design principles requested: attached

With elections due, this project and areas has now become a political football**:

'The next New South Wales state election is scheduled to be held on Saturday 23 March 2019 to elect the 57th Parliament of New South Wales, including all 93 seats in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly and 21 of the 42 seats in the New South Wales Legislative Council.' (Wikipedia)

We encourage council to prioritise Community and Cultural needs in their discussions with politicians, complementing sustainable business and infrastructure foundations for the Shire.

****TAFE Batemans Bay: an absolute game-changer**

<https://www.beagleweekly.com.au/single-post/2019/02/13/TAFE-Batemans-Bay-an-absolute-game-changer> February 13, 2019 People from the Bay will be able to access the training they need to get a job and get ahead with the NSW Government today announcing that a brand new TAFE will be built in Batemans Bay. Member for Bega Andrew Constance was today joined by Minister responsible for TAFE NSW Adam Marshall for the announcement. "Today's announcement is an absolute game-changer for Batemans Bay," Mr Constance said.

As well as practicality and meeting our perceived needs, use of the facility by locals is also contingent on financial accessibility, for which no information has been made available other than a proposition that locals would get a season pool pass at a lesser rate than visitors to the town.

We look forward to seeing plan 'D' and whether the time, money and goodwill expressed in the consultation process, results in a design closer to our community expectations. If it does, we could have a wonderful asset to be proud of, and to draw people to the Bay, but let's not forget to provide for the locals first. Let's keep the existing Community Centre to complement the Creative Arts space catering for the wider community, especially for those that are neither Arts nor Pool orientated, such as local meetings, youth clubs, Meals on Wheels, in other words, the **practical social cohesion** aspects of community life.

6.11 Mackay Park Concept Masterplan

Draft Plan of Management, Mackay Park, Batemans Bay 54

Appendices

1. Design principles for Regional Aquatic, Arts and Leisure Centre

A. For how the centre sits in the Mackay Park Precinct:

The site of the proposed facility is a key landmark site in Batemans Bay, connecting the wetlands and sportsground to the west to the town centre to the east. The site will also play an important role as the **gateway** into an important new recreation, community and tourism precinct for the town. It is, and will increasingly be, a key destination in Batemans Bay and the region for residents and visitors and a significant community asset. The design of the new Regional Aquatic, Arts and Leisure Centre should recognise and respond to the site's location and surrounds, and its important role and function, through:

A1 Sensitive integration of development with the adjoining wetlands.

A2 Physical and visual connections to the Batemans Bay Town Centre, including vistas to enhance the visual connection between the waterfront/wetlands and the central business area.

A3 Strong physical and visual relationships with existing and future uses on surrounding and adjoining lands, including the Mackay Park ovals and any future use of the former Bowling Club site.

A4 High quality visual presentation to public spaces, including the Princes Highway (and from the new elevated bridge over the Clyde River that is currently being designed), that demonstrates to passing travellers and local residents that artistic and cultural activities, as well as health and sporting activities, rank highly in the priorities of the local community.

A5 Excellence in architecture that enhances the streetscape and complements the existing waterfront character of the town.

A6 Design that reflects in an appropriate manner elements of Batemans Bay's history (natural and cultural) and its present coastal character, while also looking to its future, through building form and materials, landscaping and public art.

A7 Landscaping that adds to the unique setting and contributes positively to the development of a landmark building on a landmark site.

A8 Activation of public spaces, including streets and public open space, creating meeting places and other opportunities for social interactions.

A9 High levels of pedestrian amenity both day and night in relation to daylight, and lighting, water views, wind, sunlight, safety and visual interest.

A10 High levels of accessibility for people of all ages and abilities (universal design).

A11 Ensuring the development contributes to a night time economy by enhancing the streetscape at night through illumination that supports safety and accessibility.

A12 All buildings, car parks, walkways, cycleways and their immediate environs shall be designed to incorporate Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) concepts and strategies.

A13 The location and design of car parks, loading bays and services areas do not dominate the public domain.

Draft Plan of Management, Mackay Park, Batemans Bay 55

B. For the design of the centre:

The Regional Aquatic, Arts and Leisure Centre will be a high quality facility that is **attractive and welcoming, while being affordable and fit for purpose**. The design needs to work for the key components/services within the centre (arts, aquatic, leisure, visitor information, community) and also operate and flow successfully as a whole. The design of the centre will achieve this through:

B1 Innovation in the design of the centre to ensure that both the arts and the aquatic components are prominent and identifiable, and that neither appear as an "add-on" to the other.

B2 Integration and combination of the two main uses (aquatics and arts) in a manner that accommodates the needs of all potential users of the facility (including community users and visitors seeking tourist information) and provides for the sharing of 'front of house' and 'back of house' uses.

B3 Maximising flexibility in the design of the internal spaces – including potentially through the provision of moveable walls and the allocation of meeting and storage spaces, to make programming of the centre easy and maximise use to meet the needs of users of both aquatic and arts components.

B4 Internal design that reflects in an appropriate manner elements of Batemans Bay's (and the wider region's) history (both natural and cultural) and its present coastal character, while also looking to its future, through internal building form, materials, colours and through opportunities for public art.

B5 Internal design that reflects the primary uses of the different spaces within the centre, as follows:

- **The aquatic centre components should reflect health, fitness, fun and adventure;**
- **The arts centre components should reflect creativity, learning, new and engaging experiences, cultural expression, imagination and exploration;**
- **The foyer areas, including the gateway visitor centre, should reflect a sense of welcome and discovery in relation to Eurobodalla, Batemans Bay, and the facilities in the Mackay Park precinct, with common design elements throughout that identify each component is part of one combined**

centre and where appropriate indicates the connections and relationships between the different spaces in the centre.

B6 Foyer size and width to be chosen to allow for **high-level use periods, circulation, and multiple uses. Foyer design to be flexible to facilitate the gathering of arts patrons before and after events in a relaxed and comfortable setting suitable for a performing arts venue.**

Consideration to be given to shared and/or separate entrances to the major components of the centre.

B7 Building legibility – ready identification of entry/ access points, CPTED, effective way finding.

B8 High levels of accessibility for people of all ages and abilities (universal design).

B9 Minimising any sense of isolation and locating facilities such as toilets in areas of high circulation and natural surveillance.

B10 Ensuring the size and scale of the centre and the components within are appropriate having regard to the needs of the community, the available project budget and the long term financial sustainability of the centre.

B11 Facilitating the appropriate staging of construction of the facility, if required, and maximizing potential opportunities for expansion of the centre in the future (potentially through an expanded footprint and/or additional stories).

B12 Allowing transition from within the centre to the outdoors (including potentially to external gardens, decks, outdoor eating areas, outdoor performance spaces and the existing sports fields) to support activities requiring indoor/outdoor space.

B13 Incorporating appropriate (and emerging) technologies, including communications, acoustics and lighting, suitable for the intended use of the various components of the centre.

B14 The use of innovative, best practice, urban design and building techniques, plant and materials that incorporate environmentally sustainable design principles.

B15 Managing acoustics & odour issues between the two main uses of the centre, aquatics and arts, and between the centre and surrounding uses, considering user's needs in relation to comfort and working environments.

B16 Orientation and positioning of building and location of windows to facilitate appropriate solar control, maximise natural lighting to the interior where appropriate and take advantage of views from the building.