

Submission  
No 12

INQUIRY INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTS AND  
CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE OUTSIDE THE SYDNEY  
CBD

Organisation:

Name: Ms Suzanne Beaver

Position:

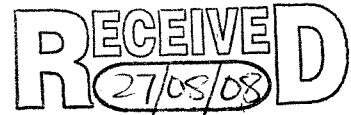
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25<sup>th</sup> August, 2008

The Committee Manager  
Public Works Committee  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000



Dear Ms Watson,

**SUBMISSION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURAL  
INFRASTRUCTURE OUTSIDE THE SYDNEY CBD**

How thankful I am to be able to participate by submitting this proposal to the Committee.

I will address each of the committee's outlined points of inquiry to the best of my ability so that your quest to develop an arts and cultural plan for NSW will be made easier as you learn of an individual's concept for sustainable culture in regional communities.

As I am a resident of the Central Coast I am focusing on Gosford where I see the potential to develop an Arts and Cultural Centre for the whole community.

1. *Issues of public and private funding and allocation of resources;*

Firstly, I wish to explain that as a young dancer in the early '70's, I, like so many other potential performers **knew** that if I wished to become professional I would have to go overseas where culture was firmly established and jobs abounded – and that is exactly what I did.

It is because of this necessity, **even today**, for our young talent to have to leave Australia in order to become professional artists that I propose that a policy similar to the European governments be implemented here in Australia, with a slight difference.

Instead of funding all of the theatre's productions (as is done in Europe), I envisage that private theatre producers would be encouraged to use the Government's theatre facilities at their own cost which would enable them to bring their productions to audiences outside of Sydney after their initial season, and/or use the regional area as an 'Off Sydney' season to test the viability of their production at, of course, lower cost for them considering city overheads.

#### 4. *Accessibility of cultural and arts education;*

Dotted all over the Coast, which I imagine is true in most regional areas of New South Wales, one discovers quite large and diverse groups doing it on their own. Trying to turn the Gosford Regional Art Gallery into a performance venue for NAISDA (National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association), did not work recently when Gosford Council needed access to a site where it could showcase Art and Dance together. As there was no other choice the event took place in cramped spaces with no stage and very little seating available for the audience during speeches and the performance.

An **Institute** for Performing and Visual Arts within the construct of a fully equipped theatre is very much needed here. There is nothing on the Central Coast that caters for artistic students. If they wish to further their career in movement, music, acting, painting etc they have to travel long distances or move away. This is not good enough anymore, especially when one learns of the great talent living on our very doorstep, some of whom have proven themselves in Major Eisteddfods, on TV in Idol, So You Think You Can Dance and Operatunity, not to mention the Rock Eisteddfods.

If the students can learn academic subjects at the same time for say the last two years of High School we could be looking at students coming from communities outside of the Central Coast that, as yet, have nothing to compare with this opportunity. From these students would then grow the ensemble for the theatre's productions; operas, symphony orchestras, ballets, plays etc. **And**, all of the future sound and lighting technicians, stage managers, prop masters, costume designers/makers, the list goes on .....

#### 5. *Economic impacts on communities;*

and leads to..... Economic impacts on the community! – Can only get better this way.

With so many people not being able to find work in their chosen profession in regional areas, the need to leave or worse not find other suitable employment has created a burden for the Government which also impacts on the local merchants who rely on disposable income to stay in business. Our country is going around in one big circle of lack at the moment.

In order to break this circle we must now become wise and use all of the resources available to us. Perhaps I should say 'brave' as funding for the Arts has been minimal in the past, limiting access to Art and Culture to the 'artsy fartsy' group.

Art is a lifestyle rather than a 9 to 5 job to which "normal people" aspire. Ultimately, artistic people work harder and longer at their chosen profession – 24/7 in fact, rather than the 8 hour a day population, in order to capture the inspiration that hits them at any given moment. Being paid for their work should be the '**norm**' rather than the exception.

6. *The adequacy of the NSW State Plan and desirability of a cultural plan for the state to maximise diversity of access, with reference to the Tourism Masterplan and other relevant planning strategies.*

Since I am not privy to the State Plan I can only keep my fingers crossed that somewhere in there, the State Government has made provision for a cultural strategy 'en tout'. Suffice to say that any cultural plan is going to enhance Tourism and the individual regions that participate will generate more community involvement, greater commercial growth, wider cultural acceptance and less unemployment, etc. etc.

7. *Any other relevant matters;*

Art relies on individuals. It is not a theory to be learnt but an expression of life and culture to be experienced and accessed by everyone.

When you sit down to examine the state's cultural needs, it might be beneficial to consider this aspect of Art, and use it as your measuring stick, rather than using just facts and figures as the means test for whether we can **afford** to extend art and culture to regional Australia.

The infrastructure has to be built to cater specifically to the creative aspect of our artistic Australians, similar to the Sporting Institute in Canberra which caters to the specific needs of the sporting fraternity and has produced excellence as is apparent in our current Olympic Team members, besides others.

Is sport more important than art? As our Nation comes of age we recognise, appreciate and acknowledge the need to invest in our artistic community as we have done with the sporting community.

### *In a Nutshell*

1. The construction of an Institute of Performing Arts at the site of the Gosford Primary School. It will act as the cultural **Hub** for the local community/region and tourism.
2. Education, skills training, performance and conferencing facilities will enhance the economic stature of the region.
3. A faculty and administration of men and women *experienced* in their fields, not just 'educated'.
4. A new Wage Award that covers the specifics of theatre contracts, i.e., 1<sup>st</sup> year Corps de Ballet to Principal Dancer etc, so that 'apprentice' performers can learn their trade and still be paid fairly. Musicians would probably have other delineations for orchestra contracts – not my forte – likewise trade awards.

Therefore, government funding can provide the venue and work for artists of all modalities (including technical experts), entertainment and culture for the community plus receive revenue from privately funded theatre and cultural events.

2. *Suitability of public infrastructure for arts and cultural life;*

In Gosford's fair city where the scenery's so pretty  
I once set my eyes on her beautiful foreshore  
And, low and behold my fancy took hold  
As I 'visioned a theatre magnificent and bold

We all need a little break in the bothersome business of pondering, so please excuse my need to inject this project with a touch of whimsy – even though it has not strayed from the subject of Gosford's having suitable public infrastructure for an arts and cultural venue.

At the moment, the most appropriate position for a proper theatre is also the location for Gosford PS and in front of that is a large field, so a building would have to be constructed. As for roads and other necessary infrastructure, Gosford Council has been upgrading that area with major street widening, lighting and parking etc. to meet the needs of Bluetongue Stadium and the crowds that it necessarily attracts to its sporting events.

Currently, we have **one** theatre of any substance which is the Laycock Street Theatre where the Gosford Musical Society currently entertains the community with voluntary performers; the old Court House/Jail tries valiantly to serve as the Central Coast Conservatorium of Music premises (and its growing number of students); and then there are the usual community and school halls that charade as performance venues.

3. *The desirability of locating cultural facilities in close proximity to create hubs;*

Gosford's foreshores are exceedingly beautiful and one wonders why Gosford is such a ghost town when it could be the 'creative hub' of the Central Coast, drawing residents, visitors, and tourists to enjoy cultural activities throughout the year.

In the location mentioned above, the potential to create an area of convergence for day or night usage is unlimited. Providing eateries, some 'art' specific shops and a ticketek office etc, would increase the theatre's viability whilst at the same time giving the people a place to relax and imbibe some wonderful midday attractions. Then in the evening it becomes a place for meeting and enjoying whatever is on the menu of Art and Culture currently inhabiting the structure. Not to mention its convention appeal.

All the time I want to write Institute, however that word belongs in the next consideration.

It is not possible to deliver the nuts and bolts of this submission in such a short letter, however, I am confident that it allows your Committee to have confidence in the fact that opportunities abound for the State Government when it comes to developing Arts and Cultural Infrastructure outside the Sydney CBD.

Once again thank you for this opportunity to voice my vision for regional Australians. Along with others here on the Central Coast (Friends of the Performing Arts Precinct amongst others) I ask that we be involved in future plans as we are the artists who know the needs of the people involved – we're very good at being frugal!

I am at your service for further research and information. My contact no. is 0414 333 744 and my email is [sbeaver1@bigpond.com](mailto:sbeaver1@bigpond.com).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Suzanne Beaver". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "Yours sincerely," text.

Suzanne Beaver