

Submission  
No 55

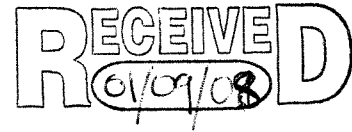
INQUIRY INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTS AND  
CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE OUTSIDE THE SYDNEY  
CBD

Organisation: Friends of the Performing Arts Precinct  
Name: Mr John Holt  
Position: Hon. Secretary  
Telephone:  
Date Received: 01/09/2008

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28<sup>th</sup> August 2008-08-28

The Committee Manager  
Public Works Committee  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St, Sydney NSW 2000



Submission by  
FOPAP (Friends of the Performing Arts Precinct Inc)  
to the  
Inquiry into the Development of Arts and Cultural Infrastructure outside  
the Sydney CBD

Dear Ms Watson,

About FOPAP.                      Established 3 years ago

- (a) To support the establishment and sustainable operation of a world-class Performing Arts Precinct at Gosford waterfront for the performance of music and other performing arts and the nurture of cultural appreciation;
- (b) To ensure that the Precinct includes an iconic building housing a fine purpose-built acoustic concert hall and is in prime location where it will attract performers, audiences and tourists to the Central Coast;
- (c) To encourage the development of performance skills in music and other appropriate art forms through integration, within the Precinct, of the Central Coast Conservatorium with educational facilities that are state-of-the-art;
- (d) To provide support, expertise, services and fund-raising to assist those responsible for the planning, design, construction, outfitting, funding, staffing and operation of the Precinct;
- (e) To sponsor performances and cultural displays in the Precinct;
- (f) To do all other things as may be incidental or conducive to the attainment of all or any of these objects.

(from FOPAP Constitution)

(see also Speech to Council 14-6-05)

GOSFORD A new regional capital .....but shabby and down-at-heel

State authorities have openly recognised that Gosford City, situated between Sydney and Newcastle has long been passed over in the competition for public funds to establish modern public infrastructure.

There is only one theatre building on the Central Coast - the Laycock St Theatre of North Gosford. While this has been an excellent community asset over the previous 20 years for dramatic performances, its relatively small capacity, proscenium stage and unsatisfactory acoustics have seriously limited its use.

Gosford is home to many excellent local performance groups. -:

Central Coast Symphony Orchestra

Central Coast Philharmonia

Central Coast Chorale

Central Coast Concert Band

Central Coast Brass Band

For all of these the performance spaces available are club auditoriums, church halls, school halls or community halls. These also are all acoustically unsuitable.

The ever increasing population of the Gosford Region has outgrown the Laycock St Theatre and we are seeking a greater range of performance spaces and infrastructure. Young talented people living between Berowra and Lake Macquarie must travel to Newcastle or North Sydney to find a Performance High School. Music lovers wishing to hear any of Australia's major orchestras must head for central Sydney and factor in two hours of travel for the trip down and two hours for the return .

Only three years ago Gosford Council commissioned the formulation of a Vision for the year 2025, a "Strategic Direction for the Future". This Vision, now wholeheartedly embraced by Council, envisaged Gosford in 2025 as the "Creative Coast" and noted (p. 34) that

"A new Performing Arts Precinct is the centrepiece of the thriving Gosford arts and culture scene. Programs in the arts, theatre, music, dance, cultural programs and other offerings enjoy broad-based public and private support, and have contributed to the revitalisation of Gosford CBD, supporting the establishment of new restaurants, hotels and other businesses.

Council and community groups have secured significant corporate sponsorship for many of the City's festivals and events. Arts, cultural and cultural heritage exchanges between Gosford and other cities enrich the community with new artistic and cultural perspectives, and promote Gosford's reputation as a centre of artistic and creative excellence to the rest of the world.

Tourism plays a central role in Gosford's arts and cultural scene, building on the region's natural and environmental assets. As with eco-tourism programs, Gosford has become an arts and cultural destination in its own right, providing significant economic benefits and reinforcing the region's natural environment and cultural heritage. Arts-based tourism makes a vital contribution to the community and is integral to the prosperity of the region. "

Gosford Council has recently established a list of 30 priorities for its attention. The Gosford Waterfront, which now includes an area designated as being for " culture, arts, performance, entertainment" has been recognised as the No 2 priority on this list. Our group, FOPAP, has long recognised that this location is the best place for the establishment of a top-class acoustic concert hall and an adjoining Conservatorium of Music. This latter would replace the existing Dickensian conditions under which our teachers and students have to work. ( See accompanying DVD )\*

Clearly, the achievement of the cultural goals of our region will depend on concerted input from Federal, State and Local governments as well as from community and private sources. Arts and cultural infrastructure is the "sine qua non" of this future.

\* Concept drawing only.

The pay-off will be great as the

"Creative Coast nurtures the arts and culture economy, attracting talented residents and visitors who seek Gosford's unique tourism and wellbeing experiences." ( Vision 2025 p.40 )

We therefore submit that it is essential that the long term social, financial and cultural injustice to the Gosford Region be now redressed by the provision of arts, cultural and educational infrastructure that will allow for the development of young talent, for the cultural well-being of the increasing numbers of retired citizens coming to live here and for the widespread recognition of the Gosford Region as a spectacular and rewarding tourist attraction.

Attachments -:

\* DVD "A Central Coast Regional Performing Arts Precinct for Gosford City"

\* Speech Delivered at the Gosford City Council Community Forum by  
FOPAP President John Pinn 14<sup>th</sup> June 2005

John Holt

Hon. Secretary

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SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE GCC COMMUNITY FORUM, 14/6/2005.

I speak as Chairman of the Friends of the Performing Arts Precinct. FOPAP is an incorporated association launched in April 2005, to pursue Mr John McInerney's vision of a cultural/educational precinct near Gosford's waterfront.

A Steering Committee that represented the major Central Coast music and choral ensembles and the Conservatorium was active in the 12 months prior, submitting proposals, a petition and comments on the Council's Draft City Centre Plan. FOPAP has replaced that Committee.

We have a vision of potentially greater impact than "a concert hall" and we are seeking a broader discussion of our vision and the issues involved, to help to find the best solution.

The Friends' association comprises people from the arts, music, cultural, business, professional and general communities who feel strongly the following:

1. Gosford and the Central Coast need and deserve **proper concert performance and music education facilities** for its present and future generations
2. **In the right location**, such facilities will have huge benefits in terms of amenity and economic inflows to Gosford and can complement cultural developments in Wyong
3. **Gosford's waterfront has immense but unrealised potential** at the southern gateway to the Central Coast. It is **imperative that key sites are preserved and used for the maximum benefit to the community.**
4. **An iconic building complex of an appropriate and acclaimed design at the waterfront could gain national and international recognition** as a tourist attraction in the same way that the Opera House has worked for Sydney

The Precinct must be a significant complex that provides facilities to address specific needs yet is still accessible by and of benefit to a broad cross-section of the community.

I am told that the 'social benefit' of the Opera House in Sydney has been calculated at more than 30 times its cost. If the amenity of our Performing Arts Precinct is integrated into Gosford's cultural and social life and into the lives of our children and youth, its benefit could be even greater.

**The facilities:**

**A major performance space** (or concert hall, if you like):

- if it is properly designed (raked floor, large stage, good acoustics), it will attract performers and audiences from far outside the coast. Music performers will travel hundreds of kilometres to perform in a good venue.

- likewise, concert-goers in Sydney's north from as far south as Pymble will gladly choose to head up the F3 or take the train, rather than have to face Sydney's city chaos to attend concerts there. They could double our potential market for large events.

**A variety of secondary performance spaces and rehearsal facilities** will accommodate a wide variety of performances, such as bands, jazz, dance, drama, cultural displays and theatre (the latter in genres that will not compete with Laycock Street Theatre).

**Educational facilities:**

- the 1000 or more students of the Conservatorium will ensure there will always be young active life (and spending power) around the Precinct and its performance spaces;
- so will a Primary School with a performing arts focus (such a school is consistent with emerging educational trends and has been part of the Con's vision for years) – the Con already teaches some 350 very young children in its Early Childhood program;
- and schools and youth performance groups across the Central Coast will have access to facilities that will be envied throughout the state.

**Open spaces, promenades etc.:**

- will be needed for cultural displays and activities and food and drink outlets will cater to workers, students, audiences and visitors.
- these "soft edges" of the complex provide an important interface with those people in the community who may rarely go to a concert but will make numerous visits for other social or aesthetic reasons.

**Site selection** is critical to maximise the amenity - and the economic benefit to Gosford.

The Precinct can provide a focal point for the development of the waterfront as a public place and can be a drawcard for visitors.

In the right spot it can help to connect the city centre with the waterfront and to develop the waterfront as a safe active people place (GCC's own Development Principle #4).

In the right spot, it can provide a spectacular entrance to Gosford.

The site must be accessible to public transport and parking. Families and children using its schooling facilities must have safe access.

It should allow access to and integration with other waterfront facilities without interfering with through traffic.

There are 5 possible sites near the waterfront that might be considered but selection is difficult while the traffic flow problem through the area remains unresolved and the future needs of the Gosford Primary School unclear. Our concept can incorporate improved facilities for the school but council has to resolve the traffic flow problem. A brave new long-term strategy is required.

To quote from the Steering Committee's submission on the Draft City Centre Plan:

"Gosford has a uniquely beautiful location and waterfront. Gosford's Council and its citizens have a choice – a choice, in our view, which will have an impact on Gosford's status as a city throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We can take a short term view . . . or we can create history and initiate a transformation that will help to establish Gosford as a spectacular tourist city and put it on the national cultural map as a place to live and work."

J. D. Pinn