

**Submission
No 2**

INQUIRY INTO THE MUSIC AND ARTS ECONOMY IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: North Byron Parklands

Date received: 19 December 2017

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

North Byron Parklands (Parklands) operates a 259 hectare cultural events site at Yelgun, approximately 22 kilometres north of Byron Bay on the North Coast of NSW (see **Figure 1**). The Parklands site is home to two of Australia’s most iconic annual international cultural music festivals, Splendour in the Grass (Splendour) and Falls Festival Byron (Falls Festival).

The cultural events site currently operates under a concept plan approval granted by the NSW Planning Assessment Commission (the Commission) in 2012, as well as a project approval for a temporary trial period. Following the successful operation of the site during the trial period, Parklands is now proposing to continue operation of the cultural events site on a permanent basis, and to make some changes to events including a staged increase in patron numbers for one event.

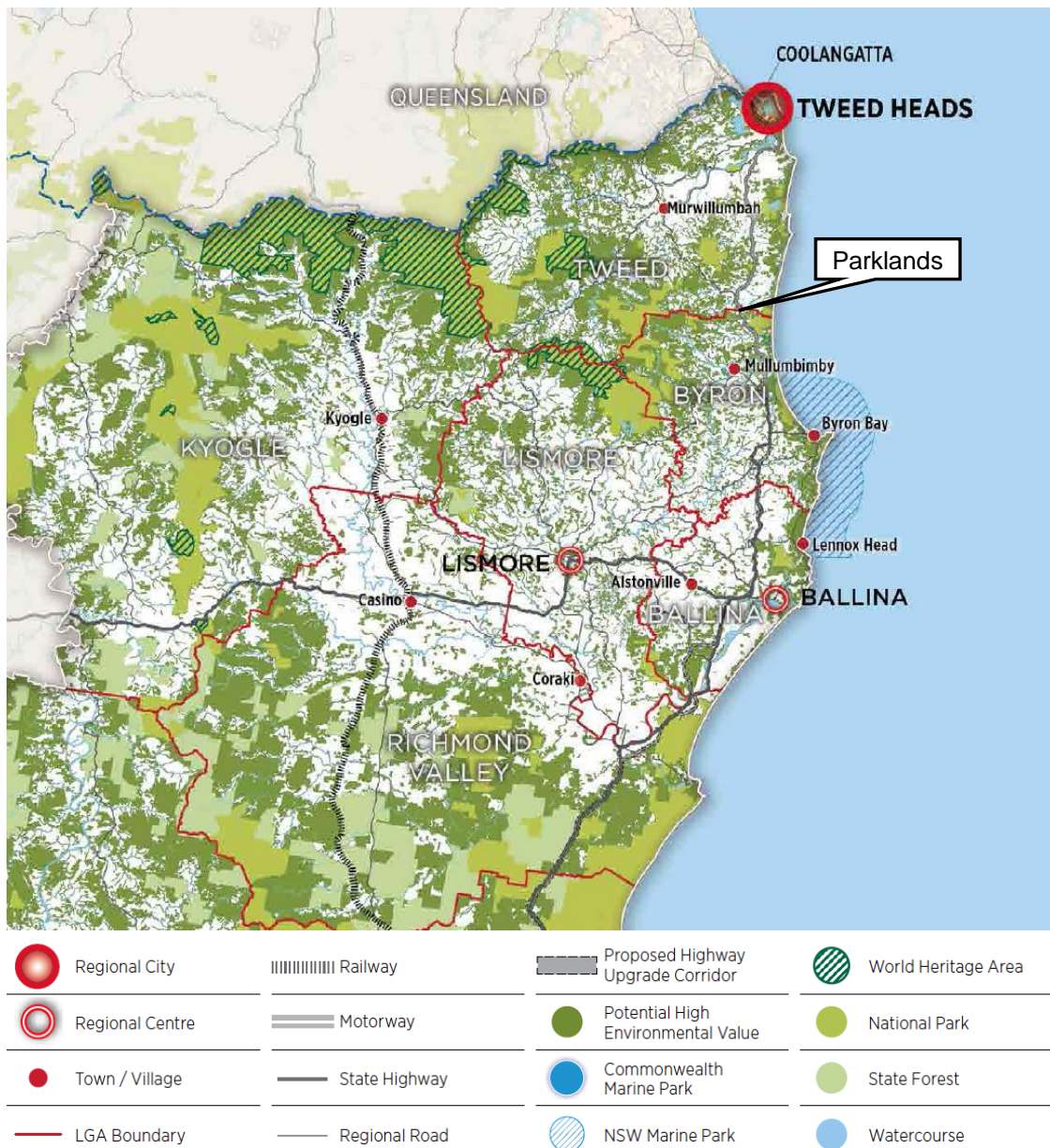


Figure 1. Regional Context (Source: Department of Planning & Environment)

1.2 History of Parklands

Splendour and the Falls Festival are two of the world's best known cultural music festivals. Splendour has been run annually since 2001, with the first 9 festivals held at Belongil Fields outside of Byron Bay. The Falls Festival started in 1993 in Lorne Victoria, and expanded to Byron Bay in 2013.

In 2008, Parklands and the event operators for Splendour identified the need for a purpose-built, sustainable cultural events site in the Byron Shire, noting that cultural events would contribute greatly to the region's economy, workforce and cultural mix. For Parklands, the current site at Yelgun met a number of key criteria including:

- it is a large cleared and relatively flat site, with a natural amphitheatre ideal for outdoor events;
- the surrounding land is relatively sparsely settled;
- it is close to a major highway and interchange;
- it is within close proximity to a number of key urban areas and cultural centres;
- it has relatively good access to transport; and
- the site is conducive to noise attenuation, being surrounded by hillsides on most sides.

In 2008, Byron Shire Council granted consent for a temporary place of assembly with camping and associated infrastructure at the site. The consent allowed for the Splendour 2009 event to be held with a capacity of 22,500 patrons. However, following an appeal against the legal validity of Council's consent, the Land & Environment Court ruled the approval invalid on the basis that a relatively small but integral part of the proposal was prohibited. This resulted in the Splendour 2009 event being held at the Belongil Fields site, and the next two events being held at Woodford in Queensland.

In 2010, Parklands lodged a concurrent concept plan application and project application under the former Part 3A of the EP&A Act for the use and development of the site for cultural events (MP 09_0028). The then Minister for Planning and Infrastructure was the consent authority for the proposal, as the project met the criteria for major development under the former *State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Development) 2005*.

The proposed concept plan involved:

- use of the site for cultural, educational and outdoor events with associated camping, with varying event sizes of up to 50,000 patrons (after 5 years), and a total of up to 10 event days per year (in the first 5 years);
- an administration building and gatehouse building;
- a water treatment plant and wastewater treatment plant;
- a cultural centre;
- a conference centre with associated accommodation;
- a comprehensive vegetation management plan; and
- ancillary infrastructure, including road works and car parking.

The project application involved development of Stages 1 and 2 of the events site, including:

- Stage 1:
 - event use and associated camping and temporary structures;
 - a 2.3 kilometre spine road linking the northern and southern site areas, including an underpass of Jones Road;
 - event laneways and car parking;
 - upgrading the western portion of Jones Road, and upgrading access intersections;
 - ancillary infrastructure including hardstand areas, a resource centre, stormwater works, entry treatment and signage;
 - commencement of the vegetation management works;
- Stage 2:
 - an administration building and gatehouse building;
 - an on-site water harvesting, filtration and reticulation system; and
 - an on-site wastewater treatment and management system.

Stage 3, involving the development of the cultural centre and conference centre, and completion of the vegetation management works, was to be subject to a separate application.

On 24 April 2012 the Commission, under delegation of the Minister, approved the concept plan and project application.

In approving the project, the Commission concluded that the use of the site for cultural, educational and outdoor events and the associated events is appropriate, and that large outdoor events should be able to be carried out without significant impacts on the community, subject to effective environmental management planning and monitoring. Notwithstanding, the Commission adopted a precautionary approach by approving the project subject to a number of terms and conditions, including allowing:

- outdoor events for a trial period of 5 years, up until the end of calendar 2017;
- up to 3 trial events a year, with capacity gradually increasing over the trial period, including:
 - one large trial event a year (with up to 35,000 patrons in Year 5);
 - one medium trial event a year (with up to 25,000 patrons in Year 5);
 - one small trial event a year (with up to 15,000 patrons in Year 5); and
- a total of up to 10 event days per calendar year.

1.3 Events Conducted to Date

Since the original concept plan and project approvals, North Byron Parklands has invested over \$25 million to develop the Parklands site.

Parklands has now held a total of 9 large and medium events under the project approval, including five Splendour events and four Falls Festival events. No small events have been held on site. **Table 1.1** outlines the events that have occurred to date.

The events are subject to a comprehensive suite of environmental, health and safety (EH&S) management, monitoring and reporting requirements, and consultation with key stakeholders.

Table 1.1: Events Held To Date

Trial Event	Event	Date	Permitted Patrons	Actual Patrons	Event Days¹
1 st Large	Splendour 2013	Jul 13	25,000	25,000	4
1 st Medium	Falls Festival 2013	Dec 13 - Jan 14	15,000	15,000	4
2 nd Large	Splendour 2014	Jul 14	27,500	27,500	4
2 nd Medium	Falls Festival 2014	Dec 14 - Jan 15	17,500	17,500	4
3 rd Large	Splendour 2015	Jul 15	30,000	30,000	4
3 rd Medium	Falls Festival 2015	Dec 15 - Jan 16	20,000	13,980	4
4 th Large	Splendour 2016	Jul 16	32,500	32,500	4
4 th Medium	Falls Festival 2016	Dec 16 - Jan 17	22,500	22,500	4
5 th Large	Splendour 2017	Jul 17	32,500	32,500	4

¹ Event days do not include bump-in and bump-out days that occur on both sides of an event for the assembling and dismantling of temporary infrastructure. The project approval allows up to 21 bump-in days and 14 bump-out days per event.

In addition to these medium and large events, two minor community events (involving a primary school cross country event involving more than 10 north coast schools with approximately 820 school children and parents) were held on the site in June 2016 and June 2017. Parklands has been approached to hold additional similar minor events on the site in 2018.

1.4 Future Events

Whilst successfully managing the Parklands site under the existing concept plan and project approval, the trial period and cap on patron numbers has caused business uncertainty and restricted the ability for Parklands to invest in long term infrastructure.

Subsequently, Parklands is now seeking to move beyond the trial period, and to re-define the event size and frequency to allow for events of up to 50,000 patrons (on a staged basis, and subject to meeting key performance indicators).

To this end, in January 2017 North Byron Parklands submitted a preliminary environmental assessment to the Department seeking approval for ongoing events after the trial period, with events of up to 50,000 patrons under limited circumstances (ie. the subject application). The proposal is classified as State Significant Development (SSD), and will be assessed under Part 4 of the EP&A Act. The Environmental Impact Statement was lodged with the Department on the 15th of December 2017 and will be placed on public exhibition until mid February 2018.

It is hoped a decision to grant permanency will be provided in late 2018.

1.5 Existing Infrastructure

Parklands has established a range of infrastructure to support the cultural events site, in accordance with the existing approvals. The current development on the site is shown on **Figure 2**.

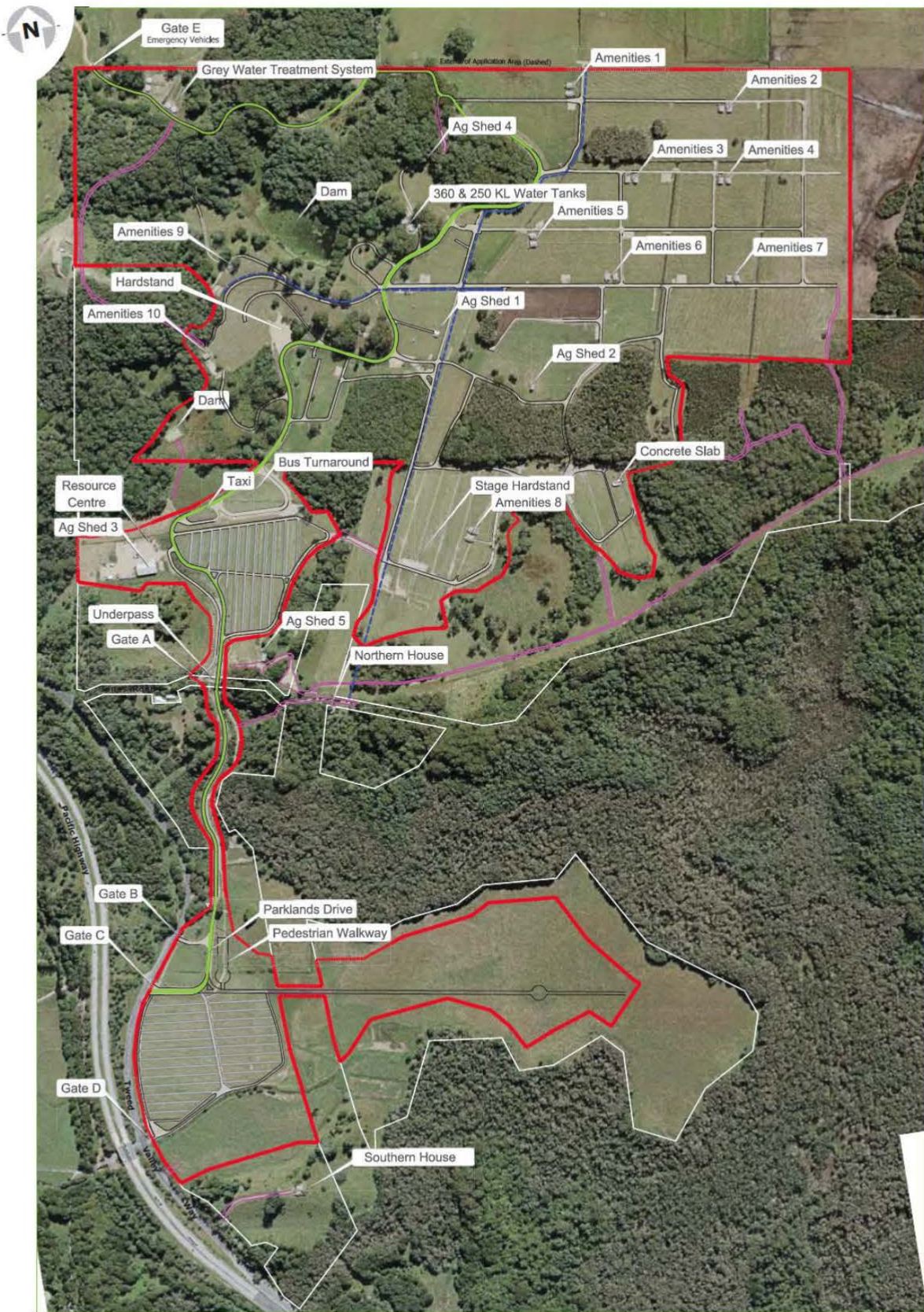


Figure 2.5: Existing Site Plan (Source: Parklands)

Access within the event areas is catered for via a network of laneways and associated infrastructure, including:

- 4 metre wide event laneways within the site to service events;
- vehicle car parking and pedestrian access including bus/taxi/car shuttle bus set-down and pick-up areas;
- associated drainage infrastructure;
- pedestrian accesses connecting the northern and southern parts of the site; and
- a bus terminus, taxi and 'kiss and ride' facilities.

The project has been designed to minimise private car use as far as practicable through the employment of a range of strategies such as public transport incentives, car parking pricing, car pooling systems and public transport use included in event ticketing.

Car parking areas comprise grassed or gravel areas with constructed laneways servicing the car parks. Car parking occurs either within the dedicated car parking area in the southern portion of the site or within the event area, depending on the type, size and nature of event. Generally, the southern parking area is only required during large events, and is currently sized to accommodate expected parking demand for a 35,000 patron event.

2 Event and Environmental Management

Parklands has established a comprehensive framework for the management of environmental, health and safety risks and aspects associated with the cultural events site. The framework encompasses all of the applicable requirements in the concept plan and project approval, and strives towards continual improvement of the Parklands site and events.

The key elements of the framework are illustrated in **Figure 3** below.

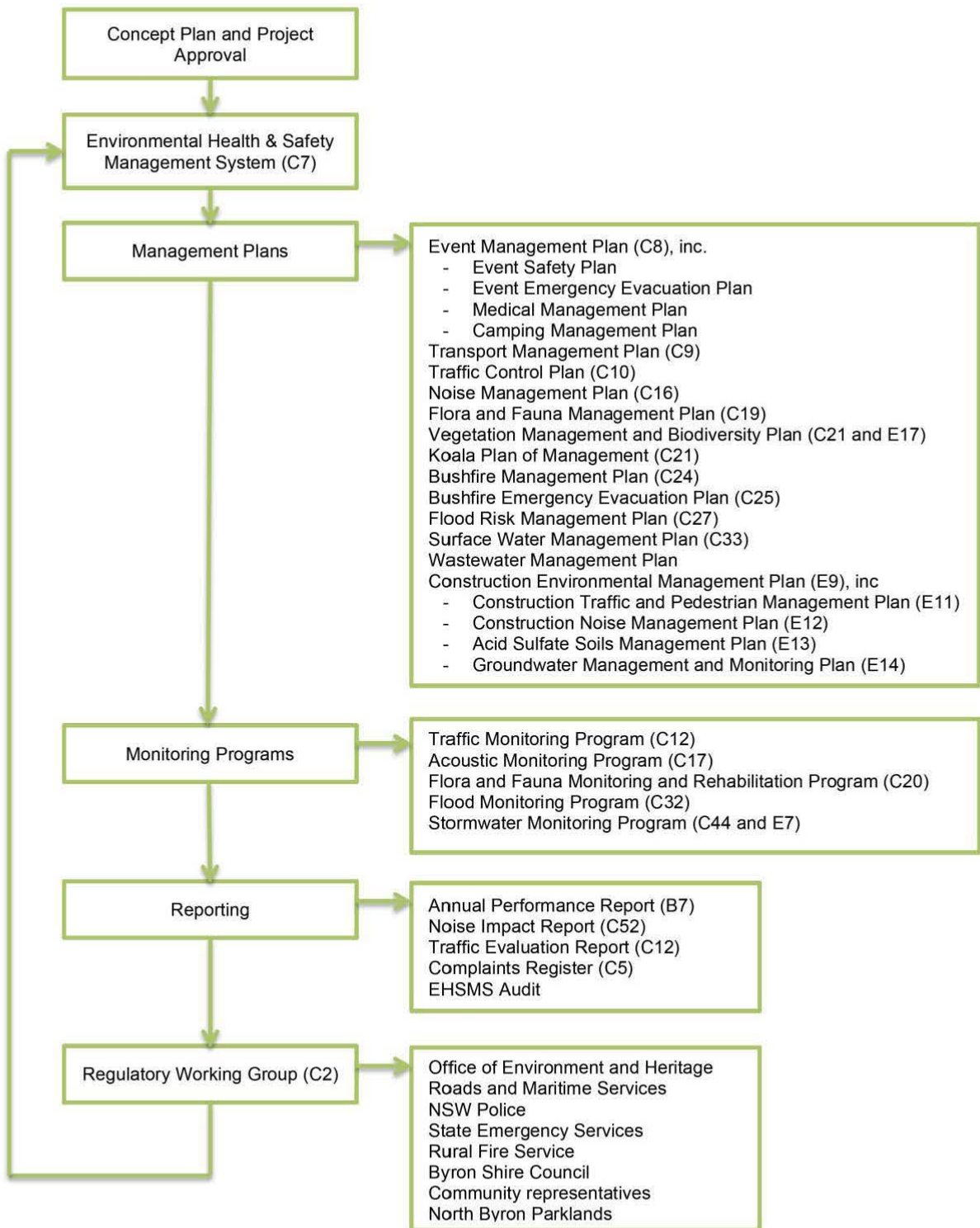


Figure 3: Environmental Management Framework
(with applicable project approval conditions shown in brackets)

2.1 Environmental Health and Safety Management System

Parklands' EHSMS is an integral component of site and event management, and has been developed in accordance with the project approval and relevant Australian Standards, including:

- *AS/NZS ISO 14001 – Environmental Management Systems*; and
- *AS 4804 – Occupational, Health and Safety Management Systems*.

The Environmental Health and Safety Management Manual (EHSMM) is the key component of the EHSMS, and sets out guiding principles in relation to a range of matters including:

- EH&S policy;
- EH&S aspects and risk assessment;
- legislation and other requirements;
- objectives and targets;
- roles and responsibilities;
- training and awareness;
- non-conformance and corrective action;
- reporting and auditing; and
- management review.

The EHSMM for the existing project includes a total of 185 key performance indicators (KPIs) under 15 'EH&S Standards' which cover the key environmental, health and safety aspects associated with the Parklands site and events. The standards include:

- safety management;
- transport and traffic management;
- environmental management;
- water management;
- wastewater management;
- fire management;
- offsite management;
- noise management;
- evacuation management;
- first aid management;
- camping;
- flood management;
- temporary structures;
- waste management; and
- community management.

The existing 15 standards and 185 KPIs are used to guide the various environmental management plans and monitoring programs and, importantly, are used to track the performance of the events. The KPIs are used as a continuous improvement tool, rather than a measure of consent compliance.

Performance of the site and events is detailed in the annual Performance Reports, which are submitted to the Department and Byron Shire Council, and published on Parklands' website.

2.2 Management Plans and Monitoring Programs

Parklands has prepared a range of management plans and monitoring programs that detail measures for managing EH&S aspects associated with the site and events. The key management plans and monitoring programs are outlined in **Figure 3** (which also include references to the relevant existing project approval conditions). It is noted that some of the plans, including the Event Management Plan, Transport Management Plan, Traffic Control Plan, Traffic Monitoring Program and Bushfire Emergency

Evacuation Plan are currently required to be prepared, submitted and/or approved by the relevant authorities prior to each event.

The monitoring programs include provisions for detailed monitoring (including real-time monitoring) of key environmental aspects – including traffic, noise, meteorological conditions and flora and fauna – before, during and after events.

2.3 Performance Reporting

As outlined above, Parklands is required to prepare an annual Performance Report in accordance with the project approval and the EHSMS. Parklands has now prepared four Performance Reports covering the first four years of the trial period. All of the Performance Reports are publicly available on Parklands' website.

The Performance Reports include detail on:

- events held during the reporting period;
- compliance with the EHSMS Standards and KPIs;
- compliance with project approval conditions;
- monitoring and management plans;
- licences, permits and approvals;
- performance and trends;
- complaints and stakeholder relations; and
- opportunities for continual improvement.

2.4 Regulatory Working Group

Parklands has also established and maintains a Regulatory Working Group (RWG) to advise on certain aspects of the project (eg. traffic, noise, bushfire, flora and fauna, etc.), and to review and advise on the performance of the project.

The RWG comprises a total of approximately 15 representatives nominated from its member groups, which include State government organisations, Byron Shire Council, community representatives and Parklands (see **Figure 3**). An independent chairman approved by the Department coordinates the RWG.

Economic Impacts

An Economic Assessment for Parklands has been undertaken by RPS Australia. The assessment includes consideration of the economic effects of the 2016 Splendour and Falls Festival events, as well as the economic effects of a permanent approval for the Parklands site.

With regard to the 2016 events, the assessment found that the 2 events, over a total of 8 event days, generated:

- direct expenditure of \$55.1 million, of which \$16.6 million was in the Byron Shire. This expenditure has increased by about 550% since the beginning of the trial period;
- total economic output of \$126.4 million, of which \$34.6 million is attributed to the Byron Shire. This output has increased by almost 200% since the beginning of the trial period;
- gross value added of \$60.7 million, with \$17.1 million in the Byron Shire; and
- 788 full time equivalent jobs, including 246 jobs in the Byron Shire.

The assessment indicates that the two events are generating significant economic benefits to the Byron Shire and the wider North Coast region.

The creation of 246 full-time jobs in the Byron Shire is particularly significant, as it represents some 2.25% of the entire Byron workforce, from events undertaken over only 8 days a year.

With regard to the proposed development, the economic assessment includes modelling of a permanent approval including 18 event days (ie. excluding the two not-for-project minor community events) at the proposed event capacities.

The assessment notes that the use of the Parklands site under a permanent approval has the potential to deliver enhanced economic benefits beyond those simply attributed to increased scale. As the use of the site is expanded, it is expected that the capacity of local businesses to cater the events would also increase, reducing the necessity for event organisers to use out-of-region suppliers. The likelihood of local businesses servicing the smaller events is also increased as they would be a better fit for the capacity of local businesses.

With these improvements, the economic assessment predicts that the operations at Parklands could generate (at the ultimate development stage):

- direct expenditure of \$155.8 million, of which \$49.5 is in the Byron Shire;
- total economic output of \$357.6 million, of which \$102.9 million is attributed to the Byron Shire;
- gross value added of \$171.8 million, with \$50.8 million in the Byron Shire; and
- 2,230 full time equivalent jobs, including 561 jobs in the Byron Shire.

The assessment indicates that the Parklands project could generate up to 4.78% of the employment for the Byron Shire, while representing over 4.12% of the economy (at the ultimate development stage). This would be achieved with only 18 event days a year (excluding non-for-profit minor community event days).

The assessment notes that such a utilisation is common among major sporting venues, but the direct economic contributions to local economy are rarely this extensive as they are generally held in major cities where the employment and economic benefits are diluted.

The economic assessment concludes that a permanent approval, at the proposed patron capacities, has the potential to allow Parklands to evolve into a major driver of the Byron Shire economy.

Conclusion

Parklands is a significant regional player in the music and arts sector of NSW. The venue and events employ large numbers of local and regionally based people and inject substantial dollars into the local and wider economy.

Parklands has demonstrated a track record of ongoing continuous improvement across a range of measures and has developed excellent relationships with various government agencies, councils and community groups. Parklands is looking to state and local governments to provide policies that:

- recognise the significant economic and social benefits the music and arts sector provides to NSW;
- encourage and maintain the establishment of music and arts venues across NSW;
- support music and arts venues and reduce the likelihood of these venues and events moving to other states and territories;
- provide clear operating guidelines that are uniform across events and across the state covering a range of matters relevant to this important and growing industry; and
- to provide business certainty to the operators who invest millions of dollars in this industry sector.