

# **Report for NSW Planning and Environment**

## **North Byron Parklands Cultural Events Site - Tweed Valley Way and Jones Road, Yelgun**

Cultural Events Site - State significant Development Application  
(SSD 8169)

**16 February 2018**

I am writing as an individual who works and spends a significant part of my week in the seaside town of Brunswick Heads that is situated south of the North Byron Parklands Cultural Events Site.

This summer 2017/2018 I was involved as co-ordinator of a project called 'Taking Care of Brunswick Heads during the Falls Festival'. This project is a partnership between the Brunswick Heads Visitor Centre and the Falls Music & Arts Festival so that locals and visitors alike can enjoy the delights of Brunswick Heads during the busy Christmas/New Year period.

Community liaison was undertaken before, during and after this year's Falls Festival to gain feedback, suggestions and support during the duration of the Falls Festival. Establishing relationships with the various stakeholders involved is a very important and vital function of the project to facilitate a harmonious experience for all involved.

This year the energetic feel of the town was the most harmonious since the commencement of the Falls Festival at the North Byron Parkland site.

This is a credit to all who have worked on the project in the past that laid a solid foundation for us this year as well as the involvement and cooperation of local residents, business operators, project volunteers, local, state, interstate and overseas visitors, festival patrons, Falls Festival staff, North Byron Parklands staff, Byron Shire Council staff, Brunswick Heads Visitor Centre staff and volunteers and engaged toilet cleaning contractors.

There was plenty of space for everyone with people spread out comfortably in our parks, rivers and beaches and our cafes, shops and hotel. The town's open spaces were clean as well as rubbish bins emptied and toilets regularly cleaned.

The car parks were a premium as the timing of the Falls Festival coincides with the busy summer holiday period when the town's holiday accommodation is fully booked and the town attracts locals and visitors to the town for day trips.

During the first festival in 2015 I was told that there was a large influx of cars from festival patrons adding to the large numbers of cars from locals and visitors creating a large problem with parking. In response the Brunswick Heads Chamber of Commerce approached the Falls Music & Arts Festival to discuss finding solutions to parking and other possible negative impacts on the town. Out of this discussion the idea of the 'Taking Care of Brunswick Heads during the Falls Festival' project was formed.

In 2016, an arrangement was made between the Brunswick Heads Visitor Centre and the Falls Music & Arts Festival to restrict festival patrons' vehicles from leaving the site and to bus festival patrons in and out of the local towns during the festival.

Since 2016, the Falls Festival security company has provided a marshal for the bus stop in Park Street in the centre of Brunswick Heads. The woman engaged this year was in my opinion excellent at her job. The six volunteers who worked with her enjoyed her company and thought she did a great job as a security guard. She liaised with the bus drivers about when to stay and when to leave, she kept festival patrons off the footpath in front of shops in Park Street, she monitored festival patrons attempting to take alcohol and opened drinks onto the bus and supported the harmonious energy of the town during the festival.

This year with the funding from the Falls Music & Arts Festival we engaged a professional toilet cleaner to clean the portable toilets near SLSC/ tennis courts, toilets at Torakina Park, Terrace Park and Banner Park. She cleaned each of these toilets twice during her three hour shift.

The cleaner we engaged, the Byron Shire's toilet contractor and I met and we kept in touch throughout the days of the Falls Festival liaising on how to best keep the toilets clean. I also had communication with Byron Shire Council regarding blocked toilets and a fence post left at Terrace Park.

Prior to the Falls Festival this year I met with Byron Shire Council and we walked around town inspecting the existing bins and possible additional bins to meet the increased demand during Falls Festival. Out of the funds provided by Falls Music & Arts Festival we ordered 5 extra recycling bins & 3 extra waste bins drop off and pick up and two empties from Saturday to Tuesday to cover any additional use because of the Falls Festival.

This worked very well. A small problem with bin location was identified on Saturday and two extra recycling bins and two extra waste bins were placed together at Banner Park in a high traffic/usage area. Bins were not overflowing and little waste was put on the ground.

During the festival we had three groups of volunteers cleaning up the town from Saturday to Tuesday starting at 7.30am and finishing at 4.30pm. They reported less rubbish at the start than last year and very little rubbish during the festival period. The placement of the bins, the example and work of the volunteer litter collectors and the participation of the whole community (residents, visitors and patrons) kept the town in my opinion and others 'cleaner than normal'.

A local resident from Booyan Street reported people sleeping in the laneway behind his home and one day someone parked their van in front of his rear gate and went for a surf. He was unable to get his car out until the driver of van returned from his surf. No other incidents were reported.

Brunswick Heads has a homeless population of about 150 people out of a permanent population of 1737. We have people sleeping in their vans, cars or in local parks and the bush all year. The number of people sleeping in vehicles increases in summer. As mentioned above I received no confirmed reports this year of anyone sleeping in a vehicle trashing the town or creating disturbing noises.



The weather this year was high twenties to low thirties. Perhaps 5 degrees cooler than last year. There was a thunderstorm about 4pm on Tuesday afternoon 2 January.

Shane Porter was the contact person from the Falls Festival for anything outside the Falls Festival. He was very reliable and efficient in providing tickets for the volunteers as well as providing bus timetables and monitoring buses coming to Brunswick Heads.

Neil Johnson from North Byron Parklands setup on Friday 29 December and dismantled on Wednesday 3 January the water barriers at the bus stop in Park Street. We had an extra barrier that gave us a bit more room. A 6m x 3m Gazebo was put up and down each day to provide shade for our volunteers, security marshal and the festival patrons.

Once again we counted and recorded the bus arrivals and departures from 8am to 4pm from Saturday 30 December to Tuesday 2 January.

## Bus Counts:

### 2017/2018

	Saturday 30.12.17	Sunday 31.12.17	Monday 1.1.18	Tuesday 2.1.18
	Arrivals - Departures	Arrivals - Departures	Arrivals - Departures	Arrivals - Departures
Patrons:	71 40	979 1100	1529 1405	1307 1449
# of buses:	13	55	65	60
Max # at any time:	43	877	1278	1087
Total:	3886 3994 passengers			
	193 buses			

### 2016/2017

	Friday 30.12.16	Saturday 31.12.16	Sunday 1.1.17	Monday 2.1.17
	Arrivals - Departures	Arrivals - Departures	Arrivals - Departures	Arrivals - Departures
Patrons:	? ?	1031 988	2130 1959	1789 1316
# of buses:	?	36	57	46
Total:	4950 4263 passengers			
	139 buses			

### 2015/2016

	Wednesday 30.12.15	Thursday 31.12.15	Friday 1.1.15	Saturday 2.1.15
	Arrivals - Departures	Arrivals - Departures	Arrivals - Departures	Arrivals - Departures
Patrons:	74 ?	405 ?	623 ?	767 ?
# of buses:	16	18	23	23
Total:	1869 ? passengers			
	80 buses			

(? = passengers not counted)

Patrons were well behaved arriving and departing. On arrival they quickly cleared the bus zone and surrounding areas.

Volunteers were engaged to help out in Brunswick Heads during the Falls Festival (Saturday 30 Dec 2017 - Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2018 ).

They were required to do four shifts sometime between 7.30am and 4.30pm in exchange for a free three day Falls Festival pass.

Those doing a three hour shift patrolled the town and the parks, helped visitors with information and directions, picked up litter with special long tongs, surveyed people about

their experience in town and kept an eye out for anything that may have potentially disturbed the harmony of the town.

Those doing a four hour shift greeted the Falls shuttle buses at the Brunswick Heads Visitor Centre and/or counted passengers alighting or departing from the buses, organised the assembly of patrons queuing for buses, helped visitors with information and directions, surveyed people about their experience in town and kept an eye out for anything that may have potentially disturbed the harmony of the town.

All the volunteers did a great job and they all expressed enjoyment and satisfaction in during their job. They all received encouraging feedback from local residents, business operators and visitors. The Bruns Bakery provided free food and drinks to volunteers at the bus stop. The volunteers work was highly appreciated by many people.

31 people were surveyed during the Falls Festival from Saturday 30 December 2017 to Tuesday 2 January 2018. 12 were from Brunswick Heads, 8 from Byron Shire, 1 was a NSW resident visitor, 4 were interstate visitors, 1 was from overseas and 5 were Falls Festival patrons.

Average ratings for Cleanliness (7.6), Attractiveness (7.8), Tidiness (8), Friendliness (8.2) and Family Appropriateness (8.5). Of the 31 people only 8 gave a rating under 7 and interestingly 4 out of the 4 people surveyed on Tuesday 2 January gave a rating under 7. Tuesday was overcast and had a thunderstorm in the afternoon.

We asked:

*How do feel the Falls Festival has impacted the town?*

A sample of replies:

We have a small business, great for business but want to ensure influx of people does not trash town.

More \$, people, energy, more fun which is positive

Busier than usual

It has a positive impact on everyone

Brings good business

Very busy – parking an issue

Parking not good

No effect I can see

Everyone seems very relaxed and friendly. Great for town

It brings tourists to the town and helps local businesses

I think it brings in a lot of people and is good for local businesses

Helped boost economy

Good for accomodation

Busier

Cool vibes

Overwhelming, too much

During and after this year's Falls Festival, I asked residents and business owners for their experience on the impact of the Falls Festival on Brunswick Heads. Below is a sample of the feedback. I have the names of these people and have chosen not to include them in this comment of the Falls Festival in Brunswick Heads.

Local resident:

*'It's as if there is no festival on.'*

Local cafe owner:

*'Did not see anyone with hangover this year. Everyone well behaved.'*

Local business owner:

*Last year New Year's Eve was so intense he closed up at 11.00 am and went home. This year I spoke with him at 5.30pm New Year's Eve and he was happy working and said everyone was well behaved.*

Local restaurant owner:

*No obnoxious customers. Normally experience at least one obnoxious customer over a weekend*

Local business owner:

*Everyone well behaved. He did so well he jokingly said he thought about retiring. Very happy.*

Local business owner who is at work until 12.30am each evening/morning:

*No problems with alcohol or violence. Falls Festival patrons polite; okay to wait in queues; no queuing for buses; buses at night – no issues, come home and go to bed. Will take a Falls crowd over normal weekend crowd - well behaved and money to spend.*

When I speak with the cafe owners they tell me the summer holidays including the festival patrons provides them with the income to help survive the rest of the year which has lower patronage. They all say they can handle more festival patrons. The festival patrons seem to come to town for food and to swim in the river or at the beach.

In my experience the Falls Music & Arts Festival staff and North Byron Parklands staff that I worked with have all been very supportive and quick to respond to any measure designed to keep the amenity of Brunswick Heads during the Falls Festival.

I walked around the town four times a day during the Falls Festival and felt there was plenty of space for everyone with people spread out comfortably in our parks, rivers and beaches and our cafes, shops and hotel. The town's open spaces were clean as well as rubbish bins emptied and toilets regularly cleaned.

This year the energetic feel of the town was the very harmonious with locals, visitors and festival patrons all enjoying the delights that Brunswick Heads has to offer.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Fitzgerald