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SUBMISSION FOR NORTH BYRON PARKLANDS

I strongly object to any further expansion of the North Byron Parklands Festival events. The increased potential for harm to the sensitive environment and local residential surrounds is not worth the “so-called” economic benefits to this community. There is little local employment and this is on a casual basis, and the profits go elsewhere.

The major festivals are owned by Live Nation, a U.S. company that is currently under investigation by the Dept of Justice for serious violation of anti-trust laws.

The current approval allows 10 event days for large, medium and small music events and 10 days for non-music ‘minor community events’ of up to 1,500 people.

However, the proposed usage will increased substantially and will now be:

5 days for Splendour (35,000 – 50,000) instead of the usual 3 days

5 days for Falls (35,000) instead of the usual three days

3 days for other events up to 25,000 (could be three one-day events)

2 days for other events up to 5,000 (could be tow one-day events)

2 days for non-music focused minor community events

The current ceiling of 35,000 patrons is already creating serious safety, security and residential amenity issues. There are also grave concerns within the NSW Police Force with regards to a possible crowd crushing incident occurring. (At Splendour 2018 there was a ‘crowd collapse’ which involved 100 patrons). The Police Force also holds concerns regarding the current number of medical resources at Splendour. With the increasing distribution of illicit dangerous drugs circulating in our youth’s culture, it would be irresponsible to have an increased number – 50,000 patrons – at one event, given the potential risks and increasing deaths that are occurring at Festivals. Not until there is a comprehensive strategy formulated for pill-testing and regulation, it will be impossible to police increased numbers of young people and to prevent deaths from occurring.

The increase of liquid waste from patron numbers as it stands, puts a HUGE burden on the West Byron STP which is already under duress. This equates almost double the water of the entire Shire population and would exceed the EPA licence limits of the treatment facility. Imagine an extra 15,000 patrons!

A recommendation is for NBPL to make a substantial contribution to the expansion of the STP (which has not yet occurred), however Parklands does not have the right to determine Council’s policies on whether or not to change the capacity of its STPs, as they are biological reduction treatment plants, and cannot be ‘expanded’ or ‘upgraded’.

And importantly, the Parklands site is constrained by a range of natural hazards, it is not serviced by reticulated water or sewer and adjoins Coastal Wetlands, the Billinudgel Nature Reserve and other areas of high value vegetation.

For these reasons, an independent regulatory body needs to be established along with the management by NBPL, and this body needs to remain in close contact with both Byron and Tweed Councils, and report directly to the Dept of Planning (as consent authority) and needs to include at least two community representatives from each shire. This is so that Councils can monitor traffic, noise and residential amenity issues and impacts on the environment of which the cost definitely needs to be borne by NBPL from their profits which go out of this country.

Parklands say the festival causes no or minor impacts, but experienced ecologists have found serious flaws in Parklands’ ecological monitoring and the Dept of Planning has ignored the criticisms.

Meanwhile there are definite ecological impacts with plastic litter, discarded trash and human waste piling up with each festival. Imagine the increased impacts with 50,000 humans without any improvement in all management issues!!

There are many other important issues relevant to Parklands’ operations. The fact that profit goes overseas, while claiming it is Australian owned. There are Compliance Issues, which NBPL states have been 100% compliant, while there are, in fact, 11 breaches of consent conditions registered by the Department. Advertising for locals is another relevant issue not addressed clearly, excess of existing patron numbers and the failure of Parklands’ self monitoring of the ecology.

Noise from the Festivals is a huge concern for locals who are still being disturbed, although NBPL’s noise engineers and the DOP’s noise person both claim that noise is managed well. Better monitoring is needed by local authorities to understand noise issues generated by 35,000 patrons and musicians, and I object strongly to any increase to greater numbers for this reason alone.

These are the many objections by me to any increase in patron numbers at NBPL for all the reasons above, but the main objection is the severe to profound impacts on the environment and its ecology. Parklands maintain that no adverse ecological impacts have been detected, but the data do NOT support that conclusion because the monitoring has been totally inadequate. The criticisms of the impacts and the monitoring of these impacts run to many pages and include a rigorously independent review by Dr Martin Denny, an esteemed ecologist, and an equally detailed critique by a local ecologist who is most familiar with the area.

**The site is in the last major wildlife corridor connecting the World Heritage Wollumbin hinterland rainforest with the coastal lowland forests. This is one of NSW’s most biologically diverse localities with more than 50 threatened species in the locality of the festival site.**

I ask, how can 35,000 people in a densely confined area, with the traffic, noise and pollution created by these numbers, not have a profound impact on the ecology? Increasing the numbers will only increase the impacts and the risks inherent with these Festivals. There is saying that ‘Small is Beautiful”, but the driving force behind these corporations is more profit and more excess for all the wrong reasons in this sensitive environment. This is an environment that already has to deal with increasing tourism numbers in the millions, in a small, finite, ecologically sensitive part of the Northern Rivers.

I would, in fact, recommend a decrease in patronage numbers given its locality and the already great pre-existing constraints upon the whole area from increasing tourism. The Shire is literally being loved to death.

Yours Sincerely

Robyn Winter-Blick