

WYONG SHIRE COUNCIL

23 July 2008
To the Ordinary Meeting of Council

General Manager's Report

339 Central Coast Bid for Australian Surf Life Saving Championships 2010-2012

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SUMMARY

At Council's Ordinary Meeting of 23 April 2008, Council resolved to support a Central Coast bid for the 2010-2012 Australian Surf Life Saving Championships. Following this resolution several key stakeholders have met on a number of occasions to progress the bid. This report provides additional information for Council to consider supporting a formal bid for these championships.

RECOMMENDATION

That, subject to agreement with Gosford City Council and subject to the New South Wales State Government agreeing to cover any payments to Surf Life Saving Australia, Council proceed with a bid for the 2010-2012 Australian Surf Life Saving Championships.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting held on 23 April 2008 the following was resolved:

"RESOLVED unanimously on the motion of Councillor BEST and seconded by Councillor EATON:

- 1 That further to Surf Lifesaving Australia's decision to seek expressions of interests to host their 2010, 2011 and 2012 National Championships, Council as a matter of urgency hold initial discussions with Gosford City Council, Central Coast Tourism Inc and Surf Lifesaving Central Coast to establish the level of support for a Central Coast bid for the 2010, 2011 and 2012 Championships.*
- 2 That Council recognise for any such bid to succeed Council must form a genuine partnership of the key stake holders and that the bid should be on behalf of the Central Coast as a regional initiative."*

The Australian Surf Life Saving Championships are held in great affection as an Australian icon that promotes family values, sport, the volunteer ethic, a healthy outdoor lifestyle, life saving skills, teamwork, first-aid training, sportsmanship and above all community spirit and mateship.

The Australian Surf Life Saving Championships were conducted at Kurrawa Beach on Queensland's Gold Coast from 1997 to 2006 and were allocated to Scarborough Beach, Western Australia for the 2007 to 2009 Championships.

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In 2004 a contract was signed with Surf Life Saving Australia and Coffs Harbour to host the Championships from 2010 to 2012. Originally these Championships were to be held at Park Beach, but were later transferred to a green fields site at Boambee Beach. As Boambee Beach is located in a sensitive environmental area it was necessary to carry out studies, planning investigation and construct a significant amount of infrastructure within a limited time frame. As a result of the unavailability of Boambee Beach the New South Wales Events Corporation surrendered their option for the 2010-2012 Australian Surf Life Saving Titles and negotiated to secure the option for the 2013-2015 series, where it will be held at Boambee Beach, Coffs Harbour.

This decision has resulted in Surf Lifesaving Australia placing the 2010-2012 series on the open market and releasing tender documents seeking expressions of interest to conduct the event.

Surf Life Saving Australia have also instructed that each State can only nominate one location and that the tender process must be completed in conjunction with its State's Events Corporation. The tender process will close on 13 August 2008.

Stakeholders

Following Council's original resolution, a group of key stakeholders were formed to progress a bid by the Central Coast region. The key stakeholders included:

- Wyong Shire Council
- Gosford City council
- New South Wales Chamber of Business
- Central Coast Tourism
- Surf Life Saving Central Coast

Over the past six weeks stakeholders have held a number of meetings to progress the prospect of making a formal bid for the Championships. Each local government area nominated two beaches. Gosford City Council nominated the Ocean Beach/ Umina area and the Wamberal/Terrigal area, with Wyong Shire nominating Soldiers Beach and The Lakes Beach.

Officials from Surf Life Saving New South Wales met with the representative from Surf Life Saving Central Coast and advised that after inspecting the four locations, Wyong Shire's Lakes Beach would be the preferred location.

Gosford City Council staff have formatted a report and recommendation on this matter and it will be presented to Gosford Council on Tuesday 22 July 2008.

Should both Councils decide to support a bid and tender to hold these Championships, representatives of the stakeholders working party would need to liaise with representatives of the New South Wales Events Corporation to formulate a professional document to submit on behalf of the Central Coast region.

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Australian Championships

The Australian Surf Life Saving Championships date from the first championship held at Bondi Beach in 1915 and with the exception of periods in both World Wars has continued uninterrupted every year, usually in March or April.

The Australian Surf Life Saving Championships are believed to be one of the largest multidisciplinary events in the world, regularly attracting around 7,500 competitors. In comparison, the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth games attracted 4,500 athletes. Statistics and surveys also indicate that an additional 8,000 families with supporters and up to 1,000 officials also attend the event.

In addition to the above, supporters and athletes, statistical information is available that indicates that the event attracts over 100,000 spectators during the six days of competition with the culmination of the Championships on the Sunday expecting crowds of between 30,000 and 40,000 on this day alone.

As the majority of surf life savers reside on the east coast of Australia, it is possible that should the Central Coast bid succeed and due to its proximity to the major cities of Sydney and Newcastle, the event could spike above that of previous years, especially with direct access from airports and the F3 freeway.

PROPOSED VENUE - THE LAKES BEACH

Required Criteria

The Lakes Beach was selected because it best met the specifications provided by the Australian Surf Life Saving Association to conduct an Australian Championship. A total length 1.7 km of beach is required to conduct these Championships with The Lakes Beach having in excess of that amount. However, more importantly the back of beach area is currently vacant with intermittent car parking and far removed from residential properties.

The back of beach area is reserve (number 88683) for public recreation, with Council being appointed the public trustee of this reserve in 1972. As the trustee, it should enable Council to carry out wide back of beach works as it has care, control and management of the area.

The tender document provided by Surf Life Saving Australia requires 1,000 car parking spaces within 1 kilometre of the venue.

Whilst three car parking areas exist in back of beach areas that accommodate up to 500 car parking spaces, there is also the opportunity to use a closed portion of road that is currently used for a walking and bicycle track, for temporary car parking. This area could facilitate parking opportunities for between 500 and 700 cars, while still maintaining a walking and bicycle track. Arrangements could also be made to utilise the rugby field at Budgewoi for surplus or overflow parking, although this could damage the field. In addition, there is scope to increase either permanently or on a temporary basis, car parking facilities at the back of beach. It is therefore most probable that sufficient carparking can be provided to satisfy the requirements of the tender document.

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The tender document also requires access to 18,000 beds within 30 kilometres of the venue. Advice from Central Coast Tourism has confirmed that this criteria can be met.

Environmental Benefits to The Lakes Beach

During the 1960s and 1970s The Lakes Beach was once used for extensive sand mining and with the exception of a few isolated pockets of native vegetation, the major portion of the back of beach area is overrun with exotic species such as bitou bush and the fore dune is significantly impacted by erosion and uncontrolled human activity.

The environmental benefits of conducting the Australian Championships at The Lakes Beach is considerable, with the appropriate funding it is possible to repair the damage to the dunal system that was caused by mining activities of a past era and to control and direct current human activity within the area to minimise any impact on this sensitive location.

It is also an opportunity to revegetate the area with native species and provide infrastructure such as car parking, walkways and viewing decks that will allow community interaction in the restored dune area. Early discussions with local dune care representatives indicate support for such a direction, as extensive works have been carried out by this group on the fore dune located to the north of The Lakes Surf Club and they considered that a connecting walkway with viewing decks would be a tremendous benefit to both the environment and the community.

Required Back of Beach Works

Should Council proceed with the bid for the Australian Surf Life Saving Championships it would be necessary for a landscaping and infrastructure plan to be developed with haste so that the cost of these works could be determined. Without this plan it is difficult to identify all the works required and the costs involved, however some would include:

- Additional car parking either permanent or temporary
- A boardwalk or alike track connecting the current village boardwalk of East Budgewoi to The Lakes Surf Clubhouse along or behind the dunal system, incorporating viewing decks
- A landscaping plan, which would include restoration of the fore dune
- Controlled access points to the beach that would permit both vehicular and pedestrian traffic
- The construction of either a temporary or permanent Beach Arena that would showcase beach flag events and the finish of premier water events such as the Iron Man/Diamond Lady and the open Taplin Relay
- Other works not yet identified.

Economic Benefits

Historical data indicates that this sporting event injects between \$15 million and \$30 million annually into the local economy. Studies from the Gold Coast indicated the amount to be close to \$30 million annually with more recently the Premier of Western Australia, Alan Carpenter stating he expected \$25 million to be injected into the Western Australian economy annually for three years.

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Coffs Harbour City Council indicated in fact sheets associated with their successful bid, that the event would generate in excess of 144,000 visitor nights, bringing a net economic benefit of about \$30 million to the region and creating a number of full-time jobs. They also concluded that a percentage of attendees would return to Coffs Harbour at other times for holiday purposes.

The tender documents released by Surf Life Saving Australia indicate that an independent economic report for Eventscorp Western Australia determined that the 2007 event generated \$23.8 million for the Western Australian economy, achieving a return of \$13.30 for every \$1 invested. The event also won the Western Australian Tourism Award in the major events and festivals category in that year.

Central Coast Tourism stated more recently that based on the number of competitors alone the event would inject into the Central Coast economy approximately \$15 million annually.

The new infrastructure, which would be provided to facilitate this event and include such things as cycle ways, boardwalks, car parking and beach set up will not only leave a legacy for the community and future generations of Wyong Shire and the Central Coast region as a whole, but will also provide opportunities for the Central Coast to attract other sporting events such as the New South Wales State Surf Life Saving Championships, surfboard riding events, triathlon events, Iron Man and Diamond Lady events and beach volleyball to name a few. Indeed early indications from Central Coast Surf Life Saving suggest that should the Central Coast be successful in obtaining the Australian Titles for the 2010-2012 period that the State Titles may also be located to the same venue simply for logistic and financial reasons.

The sheer number of competitors and supporters will result in many utilising accommodation across the Central Coast region. This is based on the fact that when the Championships were held on the Gold Coast competitors stayed in accommodation from Tweed Heads to Southport and presently due to the lack of accommodation in the Scarborough Beach region, the majority of competitors and supporters have sought accommodation in Perth some 20 minutes from Scarborough Beach.

Media Exposure

The Australian Surf Life Saving Championships are a nationally televised event and although the telecast is currently delayed due to the fact that the championships are currently held in Western Australia, it would appear most likely that the telecast would revert to being broadcast live if the event was held on the east coast of Australia. In any case the event is televised across a wide audience both nationally and internationally and it would give the Central Coast the opportunity to showcase our region to this audience.

The Lakes Beach is located amongst an environmental wonderland, there is Bird Island out to sea, craggy headlands and exposed reefs to the south towards Cabbage Tree Harbour, with the iconic heritage listed Norah Head Lighthouse dominating the most southern rocky outcrop. To the north is Munmorah State Recreational Park and Birdie Beach, and to the west is Budgewoi Lake and Toukley Golf Course - a majestic backdrop.

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These natural features listed are only a few that exist on the Central Coast and should our bid be successful an opportunity to showcase many more to a wide audience will occur.

COSTS AND FUNDING

The tender document released by Surf Life Saving Australia indicates that the minimum financial support required for the 2010 Championships will be \$1.8 million with a further \$4 million required for the remaining two years; a total of \$5.8 million for the three year contract.

In addition to the above cash contribution, further in-kind support for logistics and infrastructure totalling approximately \$500,000 per year will be required. The cash goes to Surf Life Saving Australia with the in-kind contribution being directed towards issues such as, provision of machinery, garbage collection, toilet facilities (these could be in the form of temporary toilets or amenities block), traffic control, beach cleaners, front end loader, bobcat, security and temporary work gangs. The total cost to secure the event for the Central Coast region for a three year term, without State Government support, would be in the vicinity of \$3.65 million per Council over the 3 year period.

The State Governments of Queensland and Western Australia contributed significant amounts of money to secure these Championships for their respective states, as they saw a significant injection of funds into the state's economy as a result of this sizable event. In doing so the Premier of Western Australia, Alan Carpenter stated in a speech, after Western Australia obtained the Championships for 2007-2009,"the State Government has invested \$5.85 million over three years into the event, which is expected to inject about \$25 million in the Western Australia's economy and generate significant national media attention for the State. Images of iconic Scarborough Beach will be brought out around the country and to the United Kingdom, one of our biggest tourism markets."

Surf Life Saving Australia has advised Council that the New South Wales Events Corporation had the rights to this event for the 2010 to 2012 period, however with Coffs Harbour now unable to conduct the event at their chosen location of Boambee Beach, the Events Corporation surrendered the option for the 2010-2012 term and secured it for the 2013-2015 term, where it will be held at Boambee Beach, Coffs Harbour. As a result the event has been placed onto the open market and it is expected that significant bids from Queensland and South Australia will make it difficult for the Central Coast region to be successful in winning the bid without State Government assistance.

While it is clear that the staging of the Championships would have a considerable economic benefit for the Central Coast, neither Wyong nor Gosford Council is likely to be in a position to make the necessary cash payments to Surf Life Saving Australia. Economic development to support ongoing population growth is clearly a role for all levels of government but predominantly for State Government who largely dictate where the population growth is to occur. It would therefore be appropriate for the New South Wales State Government to fund the payments to Surf Life Saving Australia through the budget resources of the New South Wales Events Corporation. The New South Wales Government established the Events Corporation last year with a budget of \$85M over three years to attract major events.

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The two Councils might well be able to provide the in-kind contributions required. Provision of back of beach works, which would be an ongoing asset for the community, may be able to be funded from a combination of Council resources, income from other Crown reserves and from the new Federal Government infrastructure initiatives.

It is therefore imperative that the Central Coast bid be supported by the New South Wales Government both financially and with an undertaking to fast track funding opportunities to carry out the required back of beach works.

It is unknown what funding was allocated by Coffs Harbour Council towards securing the hosting rights for the championships, however documents associated with the Coffs Harbour bid indicate that the New South Wales Government committed itself to a \$5 million contribution towards its share of the required works for Coffs Harbour Council to hold the Championships.

CONCLUSION

The Australian Surf Lifesaving Championships is an iconic Australian event, that is now becoming popular around the world, indeed the World Championships will be held in Germany in July of this year, and attract a significant number of competitors and supporters to the region where the event is held.

Whilst it is recognised that there is a significant financial outlay to attract and hold the event, there is evidence that indicates a far greater benefit to the region by the injection of many millions of dollars that will be spent by the participants and supporters.

There is also an opportunity, because of the national television coverage, to showcase the Central Coast to a far greater audience, which may result in long-term tourist opportunities.

Finally, the opportunity to secure an event of this magnitude seldom arises and Council should make every endeavour to acquire this event to ensure that the benefits that flow from conducting such an event are distributed to the residents and businesses of the Central Coast region. It is therefore imperative that a professional bid should be compiled as a matter of haste and be supported by both Gosford City and Wyong Shire Councils and the State Government through the NSW Events Corporation.

Enclosure

Aerial View of Proposed Site – Lakes Beach