




Speech By
Hon. Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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ADJOURNMENT

Sunshine Coast Arts, Convention and Entertainment Centre

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (10.06 pm): It is time to climb every mountain and turn the dream of a Sunshine Coast arts, convention and entertainment centre into reality. I welcome council's identification of the importance of the regional facility in the Maroochydore CBD and the setting aside of land, but I urge them to bring forward their road map to deliver it. As a keen musician and patron of local theatre and choir groups, I believe it is vital that council not leave its run too late but put together a comprehensive submission to seek funds from the proposed \$8.6 billion Strong Choices Investment Program. Anyone who suggests that this facility can be delivered without council is dreaming. We need more than dreams; we need a road map. As this project is on council land and will be owned by council, they have to also own the process. That is important so that it does not burden ratepayers but helps them.

There is a great opportunity to seek funding for a properly scoped, rigorously planned arts, convention and entertainment centre. I am keen to work with council on their road map to deliver this and would urge them to make it a high priority as part of a vibrant future for the Maroochydore CBD and the whole of the Sunshine Coast. I believe the best way to sustainably fund this project is for co-investment from council, state and federal governments and, most importantly, the private sector, who are best placed to deliver an international five-star hotel which complements the site. A project such as this can be staged to grow, but first it must start.

The \$8.6 billion Strong Choices Investment Program includes a proposed \$100 million for cultural infrastructure, but there is also a proposed \$500 million for projects with local government co-investment, which is a possible source. For the public to have their say about how they want the Strong Choices Investment Program funds spent, they can go to strongchoices.com.au. The government's plan is to cut the state's debt burden and reinvest funds from the sale or lease of up to 11 per cent of the state's assets. This would fund the investment program and reduce the state's \$80 billion debt burden, which costs \$450,000 per hour in interest payments. For the coast's state government MPs, our first priority for regional infrastructure is the duplication of the north coast rail line. This is necessary to unlock the public transport network and to get people off the road between the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane.

One of council's priorities is the Sunshine Coast airport upgrade, a very important project and one the state has already helped facilitate by contributing millions of dollars in strategically important land. However, the arts and convention centre is also important to the Sunshine Coast and must be driven by the project owner: the council. I am keen to work with them and urge their support to move this project up their list of priorities. Together we can make beautiful music for the Sunshine Coast.