

Council unveils plan for 'towers of power'



An artist's impression of a proposed "towers of power" government precinct.

ANDREW POTTS

PLANS for a giant, two-tower justice and government hub will be unveiled on Wednesday – and all council wants in return is for the state and federal governments to sign on as tenants.

The "towers of power" planned for Southport's Mal Burke car park have been mooted as the solution to the Gold Coast's stretched court system and revitalisation of the central business district.

Mayor Tom Tate said private enterprise would build the "long overdue" high-rises.

"Our city has grown to the extent that we deserve our own Federal and Supreme Court annexes," he said.

"We are not asking the state or federal governments to build a facility ... just sign on as head tenants.

"Private enterprise would build it and council's commitment would be through a joint venture arrangement. We could offer up Mal Burke car park as the land, providing the number of affordable public parking spaces was maintained."

The towers would have room for government departments, barrister chambers, courts and civic offices for the council's CEO and staff.

The height and ultimate cost of the project would be determined by the market, but \$380m was floated in 2018 when the idea was first proposed.

There was little political will from the state government back then.

Cr Tate said council would consider relocating its chambers from Evandale back to Southport where it was based until 1976.

"Justice delayed is justice denied and it is entirely unfair on the victims to have to make their way to Brisbane's Supreme, or Federal, courts, often waiting at that facility for hours on end, only to see further adjournments or delays," he said.

"I am all about the victim and they deserve a lot better than what is occurring today.

"It's time all three tiers of government came together as doing nothing will be generational.

"Let private enterprise solve this bottleneck that is stalling our court systems and causing more harm and pain for the victims."

A Bulletin report in early April revealed there were no new trial dates left in the Southport District Court for the rest of the calendar year.

Those pleading guilty will have to wait four or five months for a sentence date.

The lack of available dates has been blamed on a perfect storm of huge workloads, COVID delays and more alleged offenders wanting to defend charges.

The proposal has been welcomed by business and political leaders who have vowed to get behind the bid.

Federal MP Angie Bell said planning for the city's future was critical.

"I support Southport as a CBD, including the relocation of a department from any level of government or a federal court," she said.

Southport MP Rob Molhoek said the proposal was a significant vote of confidence in the suburb, while Southport Chamber of Commerce president Ian Kennedy said the project was "exactly what we need".

"There is no doubt the Gold Coast needs a strong and identifiable CBD and this could be the model for how the rest of the city can grow," he said.

"We need to plan for the future rather than be stuck in the past and it will give us serious credibility."

