



PROPOSALS FOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES IN NELSON BAY, 26 May 2015

Firstly I would like to thank the Mayor for providing TRRA with this opportunity to raise a matter of public concern which we believe requires early action by Council.

Our concern relates to the process which has been followed in requesting proposals for the commercial development of the two Donald Street Car Park Sites in the heart of Nelson Bay. Tonight I intend to detail our concerns and to suggest actions to overcome problems we identify with this process. The closing date for applications is 19 June

We congratulate Council for addressing the need for parking in Nelson Bay and the revitalization of these key sites.

TRRA maintains a strong interest in the quality of development in Nelson Bay.

We were dismayed to find that the Requests for Proposals Package (RFP), being sent to interested parties, has serious omissions which are likely to result in less than optimal proposals.

Proponents are required to provide concept development plans for the sites including provision for “sufficient Council owned public car parking”. The package does not provide any indication of Council’s vision for the future of Nelson Bay as a town centre or to its

objectives for the future uses of the two sites on offer. There is no guidance as to the desired capacity, user components or charging policy for the public parking spaces. No reference is made to the recommendations that parking spaces on the Foreshore might need to be relocated in the longer term.

Most importantly there is no reference at all to the Nelson Bay Town Centre and Foreshore Strategy adopted by Council in 2012. This provides guiding principles for the character and quality of future development in Nelson Bay. It also refers to parking needs and addresses building bulk, design, height, street frontages, landscaping and access.

In 2013 GHD consultants reported to Council on its Nelson Bay Transport and Parking Study. This Report contains a detailed description of travel patterns and flows and of parking usage as well as strategy for management of parking into the future. The package does not refer to this document.

The full cost of these important planning studies, which extended over some 5 years, must have gone well beyond 1 million dollars.

Earlier this year Council adopted a plan for the extension of Yacaaba Street to Victoria Parade. This decision has implications for the future role of the Donald Street East Car Park site in catering for visitors attracted to the foreshore. Again no mention is made in the package of this key decision.

Finally, Council's Planning staff have been working on a revision of the Port Stephens Development Control Plan 2013. The revised DCP will be recommended to Council for adoption at its 14 July meeting. This document contains significant amendments to general controls such as floorspace ratios and other specifications which will be relevant to proponents in developing proposals for the car park sites.

Nelson Bay town centre is the subject of a number of specific provisions in the DCP. No mention is made in the package of the impending revision of the DCP.

Against this background we urge Council to take corrective action. Our suggestion is that details of all the relevant information cited above be sent out as a follow-up to applicants who have received a package. In addition this advice should now be included with any packages sent to new applicants.

Our contention is that more fully briefed proponents can be expected to deliver higher quality proposals and research and briefing costs to Council and developers will be saved.

The problem of the 14 July timetable for the revised DCP, could be overcome by making available, immediately, the draft revised DCP as a guide to likely changes and by extending the deadline for submissions, say by 6 weeks, to allow account to be taken of the DCP as adopted by Council.

In any case TRRA believes that 5 weeks as originally allowed was too short a period to allow interested developers to fully consider the possibilities for these iconic sites and to prepare creative concept plans.

Geoffrey Washington

TRRA Inc. Committee Member

26 May 2015