



## Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents Association Inc.

### Council decision on Nelson Bay high-rise pre-empts community input

***“TRRA have supported this review, how can Councillors ask for submissions from the community for a review then pre-empt its findings with this approval?”***

At its next scheduled meeting on 9 May 2017, Port Stephens Council will decide whether to confirm the approval of a 32 metre apartment tower at 11-13 Church St, Nelson Bay – twice the current height limit. *“While development of this ugly hole in the ground is long overdue, Councillors run the risk of setting a precedent that flies in the face of community expectations”,* said Dick Appleby, Acting TRRA President.

Council is currently consulting the community on a planning strategy for the town, with height limits a major issue in the discussion paper. **This process has not been completed.** TRRA hosted a meeting at the Nelson Bay Bowling Club in February attended by some 200 local people. The overwhelming sentiment was opposition to high rise development in the town centre. At a well-attended meeting of business people the following week, there was also strong support for maintaining the current character of the town. We understand that there were more than 100 written submissions on the Strategy review, and Council planners have confirmed that they will be reporting back to Council in only a few months.

Dick Appleby said *“TRRA applaud our local East Ward Councillor John Nell for moving to defer approval until the community’s views about height limits are evaluated, and welcome Cllrs Dingle and Kafer’s support for re-consideration of the matter at the 9 May meeting”.* By that time it may only be a couple of months before the staff report can be taken into account. *“TRRA have supported this review, how can Councillors ask for submissions from the community for a review then pre-empt its findings with this approval?”* he said

Approval of the 32 metre tower, which will be at least a third higher than any other building in town, including the Landmark apartments, would set a precedent that would undermine the expected outcome of the Strategy review, a revised height limit to allow for reasonable modern development, with modest exceptions allowed only in exceptional cases.

*“In this case”* Mr Appleby said *“Council would be ignoring the conditions that it set in the 2012 Strategy, and dismissing the advice of an independent design panel which assessed the proposal for Church St, and found it wanting. We have written to our two other East ward representatives – Councillors Dover and Morello – and called on them to support their colleagues common sense proposal to defer approval of this DA so that the community’s view on height limits are clear and can be taken into account.”* said Mr Appleby.

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PRESS RELEASES