



The General Manager  
Port Stephens Council  
[council@portstephens.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@portstephens.nsw.gov.au)

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TRRA makes the following submission on both the *Economic Development and Tourism Strategy*, and the *Economic Development Policy*, both currently on exhibition. We note that these two documents were presented together to the Council meeting on 26 March 2019, and are clearly related.

We have no objection to the unredacted publication of this submission.

### ***Economic Development and Tourism Strategy***

We support this Strategy which is a concise and useful framework for encouragement of the main drivers of the local economy.

The Strategy understandably focuses on development and liveability objectives, clearly reflecting the first two focus areas of the Community Strategic Plan (*Our Community* and *Our Place*), but does acknowledge that the LGA has a '*diverse industry and employment base built around the natural environment.*' (p3); that Council's role in support of development includes '*environmental management*' (p4), and that '*The popularity of the destination to both domestic and international visitors is directly tied to the unique natural environment of Port Stephens.*' (p9)

Given this recognition, we urge Council to give equal weight in this Strategy to the third focus area in the CSP – Our Environment, in pursuit of the overall objective of *Ecologically Sustainable Development* (*our emphasis*).

In this context, the 'Key Priority' of 'Advocate for business' (p10) should be qualified – Council must always balance the interests of businesses in the LGA with wider community interests – these interests may sometimes conflict, and the interests of businesses, and especially developers, should not always prevail.

The need for *Ecologically Sustainable Development* is particularly significant in relation to the tourism industry, located largely in the eastern areas of the LGA.



In this context, we were pleased to see the following statements:

In the **Land Use Planning** section on page 5

‘... the attractive and valuable natural environment and coastal and rural settings, can generate economic growth and diversity’

In the section on **Town Centre Revitalisation** also on page 5 we were particularly pleased to see this statement of intent:

‘Through the development and implementation of strategic masterplans, public domain plans and **planning controls which advocate for consideration of the agreed character of a centre**, Port Stephens will continue to attract new residents (including critical workforce), new business and increased visitation.’ (**our emphasis**)

This is re-inforced on page 10 with this statement:

*‘These unique spaces should reflect the culture and identity of each community.’*

These statements support, in our view, our continuing concerns about Council’s misguided approach to height controls in the Nelson Bay town centre, which directly contradicts this objective (and the overall vision of the Nelson Bay Strategy).

The section on **Transport Connectivity** (p5) includes the following statement:

‘Strategies to increase pedestrian traffic within the town centres are ongoing, as are efforts to upgrade of the road from the Tomaree Peninsula to Newcastle, which is currently an hours drive in non-peak traffic.’

We welcome the emphasis on upgrading Nelson Bay Road but note that the State Government has only committed to upgrade of the section from Bobs Farm to Saltash, which leaves the Salt Ash to Stockton section as inadequate single carriageway – we support Council’s continuing to lobby for completion of this important link as the next most important priority for major road improvements (leaving aside the M1 extension which is a separate issue involving federal and state funding). Completion of the dualling of Nelson Bay Road is certainly in our view a higher priority than a Fingal Link Road, which we consider needs much more investigation, including clearer articulation of the problem and objectives, and consideration of alternative options and routes.

It is unclear whether the objective relating to pedestrian traffic in town centres relates to changing modal split (i.e. walking rather than driving) or just a general encouragement of walking for health reasons. While both are desirable objectives, there may not be much potential within the LGA’s small town centres, including Nelson Bay and Raymond Terrace, for significant modal shift.

In contrast, Council’s own approach to the development of its own land around the Salamander Centre has directly contradicted this objective. As we have argued repeatedly

in successive submissions over the last decade, the layout adopted so far with separate lots each with its own parking provision is the opposite of what should have been adopted – an integrated development that would have encouraged one stop parking and pedestrian movement to all destinations within and around the Centre. We submit that it is not too late to pursue a more ‘pedestrian friendly’ planning of the remaining lots to the north and west of the privately owned centre, and Council should also be actively engaging with the Centre owners about long term re-development of the entire Salamander Centre as an integrated mixed use centre incorporating retail, commercial and community uses as well as medium density residential development such as shop-top housing.

We also note that Council’s approval of around 600 manufactured home sites at three ‘out of town’ locations at Anna Bay and Bobs Farm has directly contradicted a policy of encouraging pedestrian (and cycle) traffic. If this Strategy is to contain such a policy then Council must be consistent in its approach to planning throughout the LGA.

## **Conclusion**

Subject to the comments above, TRRA supports the ‘Key Priorities’ and ‘Measures of Success’ set out in the table on page 11 under the heading ‘How will we get there’. TRRA looks forward to working with Council to implement the Strategy.

## ***Economic Development Policy***

This Policy sets out the specific role of Council in helping to implement the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.

The Policy is understandably focussed on the enabling role of Council in support of business in Port Stephens, and TRRA has no objection to the articulation this role.

However, in light of our comments on the Strategy itself, we submit that the Policy should include greater recognition of the need for *Ecologically Sustainable* Development and for a balance between the needs of businesses and the wider interests of the Port Stephens community as expressed in the first three focus areas of the Community Strategic Plan.

Nigel Waters

On behalf of  
**President,**  
**Tomaree Ratepayers & Residents Association Inc.**

**Phone contact until 16 May 0407 230 342**

