



**EcoNetwork
Port Stephens Inc.**

20 April 2012

HEIGHT LIMITS PREVENT COMMUNITY SIGN OFF ON NELSON BAY STRATEGY

Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents at their meeting on 16 April were ready to endorse the latest draft of the Nelson Bay Town and Foreshore Strategy but balked at a last minute provision which would permit, should developer applications be successful, an additional 2 storey variation anywhere in the town centre and at the Bowling and Tennis Club sites south of Dowling St.

TRRA Chairman, Geoff Washington, said: "It is disappointing that this last minute bonus to developers was inserted which opens the way for 7 storeys across the entire town centre and up to 9 storeys against the hills at the south of the town".

"Members believe that these heights have the potential to seriously block views towards the bay and to intrude on the wooded backdrop to the town" he said. A recent survey of public opinion by the Hunter Valley Research Foundation confirmed an overwhelming preference by both residents and visitors for restraint in building heights and protection of Nelson Bay's views and its natural setting.

TRRA and EcoNetwork are prepared to welcome and lend their support to the Strategy as originally put to Stakeholders on 21st March at a Council Workshop. This retained the existing limits of 5 storeys in the town centre, 7 at the Clubs and 3 storeys on the foreshore. The two storey variation bonus for outstanding design excellence and strategic public benefit would still be offered, with our support, on the 4 "opportunity sites" identified in the strategy.

Councillors are being urged simply to return to this proposal which is generally acceptable yet also gives a reasonable incentive for attractive projects on the key "Opportunity Sites". TRRA has also drawn attention to the higher costs to council of the variation provisions which will require assessment by an independent panel of design experts, whose rulings are bound to be contested in the Courts.

Speaking for EcoNetwork, Darrell Dawson said: "The height controls must encourage a sustainable urban outcome taking full advantage of natural sunlight and ventilation. This will not be achievable under controls which encourage a big city townscape".

Geoff Washington Chairman, TRRA 4981-3916	Darrell Dawson, Convenor, Town & Urban Planning Committee, EcoNetwork Port Stephens 4981 0170
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