

TRRA CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2010/2011

“MAINTAIN YOUR COMMITMENT AND REMAIN VIGILANT”

TRRA enters its 5th year representing your interests

We are now well recognized:

- By the Tomaree community
- By the Council staff
- By Councillors
- By State Departments
- By Craig Baumann and Bob Baldwin

Notable achievements over 2010/2011

- Held PS Council to the State pegged rate increase for 2010/11 and 2011/12
- Not the 8.6% increase originally sought
- Focused attention on precarious state of PS Council's finances
- Arranged a “meet the candidates” opportunity before the NSW election
- Forced a review of the Port Stephens Planning Strategy and contributed positive ideas
- Reversed planners' proposals for dense high rise development in Apex Park and the Nelson Bay foreshore
- Secured Council's commitment to prepare a Traffic and Parking Study for Nelson Bay
- Prevented PSC subdivision and ad hoc sale of land at Salamander Shopping Centre
- Had Input into the Concept Plan for Nelson Bay Marina Precinct.
- Supported local groups at Boat Harbour (tennis court) and Anna Bay (Landcom)

Notable failures (despite strong lobbying)

- Did not secure a master plan for Salamander Shopping Centre
- Did not secure a comprehensive reform of Council's administration and financial management

Key initiatives over the past year have included:

- Continued involvement in the Nelson Bay Town and Foreshore Advisory Group
- Link with business, tourism and environmental interests
- Attended the June NSW Hunter Community Cabinet Meeting
- Met with new Minister for Local Government and the North Coast

- Maintained interaction with Mayor and East Ward Councillors
- Addressed Council Meetings via public access on three occasions
- Met with Craig Baumann, Member for Port Stephens
- Continued local Media liaison
- Press releases and interviews

NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY:

- New State Government has shifted more responsibility to Local Councils e.g. Part 3A Planning Approvals referred back to Councils
- Ministerial responses to TRRA Representations point to a reluctance to get involved

COUNCIL'S FINANCES

- 2011 Long Term Financial Plan admits:
 - “ A substantial shortfall in funds to address council’s sustainability gap” (Page 4)
 - “ Council’s business model requires fundamental change” (Page 10)
 - “To fund the shortfall.... solely from rates a permanent increase of 12.08% in year 1 required plus rate pegging each year to 2021” (Page 5)
- Council’s Sustainability Problem in Dollars
 - \$26.5 million backlog in asset renewal
 - \$7.9 million annual maintenance gap
 - \$6 million underlying operating deficit including depreciation 2009/10 & 2010/11
 - Value of Cash Investments \$20.7 million while total of Restricted Funds is \$36.0 million - deficiency of \$15.3 million

TRRA Actions

- Met with Council’s senior staff last year with list of questions
 - Answers did not address the real issues
 - Assurances were given that all was well
- Comprehensive submission to former Minister for Local Government
 - Referred to Department conducting a review of Council’s administration
 - Progress report requested in April from new Minister Page
 - Report of Review is with council, not yet public
- Mayor has indicated there is nothing to be concerned about.
 - He dubs Council critics a “vocal minority”

TRRA hopes DLG report will call for major reforms

Council’s Recent Responses

- Need for action acknowledged
- Council wide “sustainability” review
- Rationalization of tourism/industrial development staff
- Decision to sell / lease Samurai Resort
- Council instruction to save \$ 750,000 from head office expenses

Council places its faith in:

- Asset sales to fund shortfalls??
- Profits from Salamander land sale
- Mining sand from its land at Tomago
- Major rate increase - 12 % above the peg

PLANNING TIME BOMBS

There are several key planning strategies soon to be approved. These include:

Port Stephens Planning Strategy

This will underpin a revision of the Port Stephens LEP

TRRA's submissions:

- Queried basis of statistics and projections
- Queried excessive focus on growth e.g. additional 15,000 sq.m. of commercial floorspace for Nelson Bay by 2031

TRRA called for:

- clarification of future roles of Salamander Bay and Nelson Bay
- controls on junk and ribbon development on Nelson Bay Road
- limits on "tourist" development on Rural 1a zoning
- improved tourism infrastructure on the Tomaree

Planners are revising draft for Council's adoption

Nelson Bay 2030 Strategy

First Draft Plan Released in 2008

TRRA challenged:

- Projections for additional 1,200 dwellings and 1,500 jobs
- Proposals for high-rise
- Inadequate traffic and parking strategy

Subsequent Draft included even more 5 storey development on the foreshore and in Apex Park and in the CBD

Following TRRA lobbying and East Ward Councillors actions:

- Council adopted policies rejecting development on eastern end of foreshore and Apex Park
- "Final draft" recommended to Council FOR ADOPTION in May 2011
- additional 1,900 dwellings
 - Persisted with high rise for the foreshore and Apex Park

TRRA and NBTFAG strongly criticized this draft

Council refused adoption and directed planners to revise with specific instructions

Town Planner Broyd's reactions reported in the Examiner on 16 June were:

- " I accept that the key aspects of the town models are not acceptable to the local community – particularly proposals for five storey developments on the foreshore"
- " There is a real need for us all to take our blinkers off"

Five months down the track the planners next moves are:

- Stakeholder workshop on 3 Nov.
- Survey of public opinion on the future of Nelson Bay
- A revised report due by February 2012

TRRA must continue to scrutinize this process.

I DOUBT WE HAVE SEEN THE LAST OF THE TOWN PLANNERS' HIGH DENSITY VISION

SALAMANDER SHOPPING CENTRE LAND SALE

2009 - Council lodged a D.A. to subdivide 9.5 hectares

- 7 parcels of land would be sold by council
- No assurances were given to existing community facilities
- No master plan was included for the precinct
- Main objective - potential \$20-30 million to fund Budget deficits

TRRA called a public meeting to gauge public opinion

TRRA's submission to Regional Planning Panel called for:

- A Masterplan
- Provision for community facilities
- A traffic plan

Council's Planning Consultant and the Regional Panel considered a master plan essential

In 2011 Council abandoned its DA, and called for Expressions of Interest for englobo (whole lot) sale

TRRA

- Called for EOI's to include a Master plan
- We also pressed for an open tender process

The draft contract has NO conditions aimed at achieving a quality, integrated town centre

Council has accepted an offer by Tinklercorp for \$22.05 million

TRRA will have another chance to call for an integrated town centre when Tinklercorp lodges a DA for subdivision or development

PLANNING ADMINISTRATION PRACTICES

Council's recent client satisfaction survey rated Land Use/ Town Planning the worst performing section

TRRA has criticized:

- Quality of strategic planning
- Insufficient detail in DA display documents
- Council's frequent overriding of planners' recommendations on DAs

IF TRRA DOES NOT REMAIN VIGILANT WHO ELSE WILL???

TRRA NEEDS YOUR CONTINUING SUPPORT and VIGILANCE

Geoff Washington, Chairman