



By email to: council@portstephens.nsw.gov.au

22 November 2012

Peter Gesling
The General Manager, Senior Planning Staff, Port Stephens Council

Re: Extension of Public Exhibition: Draft Local Environmental Plan 2012

Dear Mr Gesling,

TRRA calls on Council to extend the formal exhibition period on the draft LEP, for at least another two weeks an preferably four weeks. Council has chosen to exhibit the draft, and seek submissions for only the minimum 28 days required. For such a complex suite of documents, with major long term significance for Port Stephens communities, this is wholly inadequate.

It has taken the first three weeks for interested community groups to review the documents (it is very difficult to review the map layers on line so attendance at the only two locations to view hard copy is necessary for most people) and the helpful consultation sessions put on by planning staff have only just concluded. It is only after these two stages that groups can fully assess the implications – they then need time to brief their constituents and seek feedback before finalising a submission. This is simply not practical in the one week remaining before the submission deadline of 30 November.

From attending several of the consultation sessions, it is clear that many individual property owners are only now becoming aware of the consultation and are expressing serious concern about the lack of time to discuss with neighbours and prepare submissions.

In recognition of the importance of the LEP, the former Group Manager, David Broyd indicated to TRRA that the consultation period would be longer than the minimum. While planning staff have helpfully indicated informally that they will try to consider late submissions, unless the deadline is extended many interested parties are likely to just give up, thinking that they will have missed their chance.



We fully understand that Council is under pressure to get the final LEP to the Department by 1 July next year, and is working back from that deadline. We also understand that planning staff were put in a difficult position with conflicting requirements in July from the Department of Planning – requiring pre-exhibition consultations with some other state agencies while also suggesting exhibition before the recent elections. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the public must not be parties to be ‘squeezed’ by these pressures.

We urge Council to formally extend the exhibition and consultation period well beyond 30 November, and to publicly announce this so that interested parties are not deterred by the imminent deadline from having their say on this important planning instrument.

Yours sincerely,

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