



Salamander Shopping Centre - Council railroading through its third rate scheme

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Note: The Mayor has refused 'public access' to TRRA to present its concerns on this DA, and once again, Council's consultation processes are a sham. Interested parties who had lodged objections only received notice on Monday, giving them only 24 hours to review the Council papers and make representations. As at 12 noon today, TRRA Inc has not received their notice.

"If Council gets its way, the Tomaree community is condemned to a third rate centre at Salamander for the next 50 years" said Nigel Waters from the Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents Association Inc (TRRA).

TRRA wants to see new shops and facilities at the Centre, with the associated jobs, but in a modern integrated design that meets the needs of the 21st century. "What Council is entrenching is an outdated suburban mall – unfriendly, inefficient and environmentally damaging" said Mr Waters. The Council's designs turn their back on, and potentially damage, the spectacular Mambo wetlands, and leave the future of the library and other community facilities up in the air, with limited potential for future integration into the centre. Options for improved traffic management, pedestrian flow and better parking are all closed off by the Council's short term vision.

The current DA is just the first stage of the Council's 2009 plan – rejected by the community – with no significant changes in the four years since, despite community workshops in 2012 clearly re-enforcing the demand for a better solution.

There is a clear conflict of interest in Council deciding its own application. "Council's professionals are clearly unhappy about the plan, but as employees they cannot be expected to stand between their employer and bucket of cash" said Mr Waters "That is why the DA should have gone to the independent JRPP (Regional Panel) – Council have cynically avoided this by staging the development and keeping the cost of works under \$5 million – although there are real question marks over the accuracy of this costing"

There are also unanswered questions about the legality of the proposed sand storage at Diemars Quarry, which in itself would involve damaging and dangerous trucking through a residential area.

"TRRA calls on Councillors to recognise the folly of their short term approach to this major centre, and finally agree to a proper process to deliver the vibrant modern integrated community hub that Tomaree residents and visitors expect and deserve. " said Mr Waters

Nigel Waters

TRRA Inc. Planning Committee 0407 230342 planning@trra.com.au

Background

At the Council meeting on 23 April, Councillors will consider, and are expected to approve, Council's own Development Application (DA) for a 3 lot subdivision of the remaining Council owned land around the existing Salamander Centre. The DA includes the first stage of the long planned perimeter road and other infrastructure works to give access to two main parcels of land.

One parcel (Lot 2) to the north of Aldi and Kmart is earmarked for a BigW store (the subject of a separate DA which will be decided by the Joint Regional Planning Panel (JRPP) in May. A second parcel (Lot 1) is the vacant land between the Rigby Centre and MacDonalds, known as the circus site, which Council intends to sell, but with no currently declared bidders. The remaining land down the western side of the site, surrounding the Library, Community Centre and Child Care Centre, and adjoining the protected Mambo wetlands, is left for future uses without at this stage any proposed uses, or associated infrastructure, although it is clear from the plans that Council intends to extend the perimeter road from the Big W car park down the edge of the wetlands to join Salamander Way.

TRRA maintains, as it has for over four years, that Council's proposals are a third rate scheme that will condemn the community to an outdated 'big box' style of mall development for the next 30-50 years. TRRA welcomes the prospect of significant new investment in the Centre, and new retail options, with associated jobs. But the opportunity is missed to give Tomaree residents what they expect and deserve – a first rate state of the art modern regional centre, integrating commercial and community facilities in an attractive and pedestrian friendly urban space.

More than ten years ago, Council commissioned a report on just such a centre, and its recommendations remain a useful benchmark, even though successive poor decisions have limited the full potential. There is no reason, other than lack of imagination and obsession with short term cash returns, why a vision for the Centre as a vibrant community resource cannot be realised.

Last year, Council's commercial section cynically ran a consultation on 'planning principles' for the Salamander Centre, to divert attention from the fact that it had already made critical decisions further limiting the options. The consultation did however reinforce community demands for good design and integration, and TRRA now calls on Council to give the agreed Principles some teeth in a Development Control Plan (DCP). Without this Council will be free to sell off Lots 1 and 3 for another series of separate developments, compounding the existing traffic and environmental problems with the overall site.

Council has also cynically manipulated the planning process to keep the subdivision DA away from the independent JRPP – which criticised the lack of a masterplan when it considered Council's previous DA in 2010. This also means that outstanding concerns about drainage, traffic, acoustic and visual buffers, aboriginal heritage, and the effect on the Mambo wetlands and Koala habitat have still not been adequately addressed.

TRRA accepts that 'the numbers' on Council mean that the Tomaree community's preference for a properly planned and integrated Salamander Centre will likely be ignored yet again. But we continue to demand that the next stages in the development of the site, including the Big W store, have to meet the standards set out in the Planning Principles.