



## Member Communication – January 2016

### IMPORTANT IMMINENT MEETING DATES:

#### Public Meeting on Proposed Council Merger

Called by MP Kate Washigton Wednesday 27 Jan 2016, 5.30-7.30 pm,  
Raymond Terrace Bowling Club [HERE](#)

#### The Future of the Tomaree Lodge and its Residents

TRRA Committee Reps have been invited to attend a meeting organised by MP Kate Washington with Minister Adjaka (Disability Services), 11.00 – 11.30 am Shoal Bay Resort Tuesday 02 Feb 2016. We will Report On this on the Website and at General Meeting.

#### A public inquiry in relation to the Merger Proposal

Will be held under section 263 of the Local Government Act 1993 at the following time(s) and venue(s):

- Horizons Golf Club (Salamander Bay): Thursday, 4 February 2016, 09:00am – 12 noon
- Marina Views Function Centre on the Harbour (Newcastle): Thursday, 4 February 2016 3:00pm – 5:00pm and 7:00pm – 10:00pm

*Members of the public who would like to attend are requested to register at*

*[www.councilboundaryreview.nsw.gov.au](http://www.councilboundaryreview.nsw.gov.au) or by contacting 1300 813 020. Members of the public*

*who would like to speak at the public inquiry are requested to indicate that they wish to do so when they register to attend.*

*If you are considering making a submission be aware that “Submissions should refer directly to the proposal and submission authors are encouraged (but not required) to focus on one or more of the factors in section 263(3) of the Act, being:” [Click Here for factors](#)*

#### Public Meeting called by Mayor Mackenzie 14 February (No Details yet)

**TRRA General Meeting, Crow’s Nest Room Nelson Bay Bowling Club 7.00pm**

Tuesday 16 Feb. - Guest Speaker, Reports etc.



**Press Release: [Merger Proposal for Port Stephens and Newcastle Councils.](#)**

The Attached Press Release is the position reached by the TRRA Inc. Management Committee based on a careful consideration of the information provided on this proposal so far. A further document outlining the full pros and cons of the proposal in detail is being prepared, we are working on a Submission and a Financial Analysis. They will all be posted on the website ASAP.

**Reform**

We are well aware of the need for reform over time to reduce costs and create efficiencies in the administration of Local Government in NSW, we know that we lag other states. We support that goal but that principle is not what this debate is about. This discussion must be focussed on the specific proposal that is before us right now.

All Councils received a letter from the Minister in November 2015 that spelled out the situation, either engage with other Councils and put forward constructive proposals about how they would like this reform to proceed or we will impose a solution upon you. Our Council failed to respond to this opportunity, and at the Mayor and General Manager's behest, chose to rely on the flawed and easily manipulated 'Fit for the Future' process to ensure that it would be business as usual at PSC for the foreseeable future. They were very wrong.

Make no mistake, the Mayor and his group are not interested in any reform, they just want to maintain the status quo and their cosy little voting bloc as long as they can. ***TRRA certainly does not support another 4 years of what we have just endured.***

Unfortunately the solution that the NSW Government is seeking to impose on our community is definitely not in our best interests either. It is a stinker.

- It reduces fair representation from what we had prior to the last election, 5800 ratepayers per Councillor to 17,700 per Councillor.
- We end up inheriting Newcastle Council's higher Infrastructure backlog in addition to our own.
- Financially, we will be bailing Newcastle out, not the other way around.
- The savings over 20 years on the Government's own figures are paltry (about \$14.00 / head / annum) and virtually all comes from staff reductions over time, and we all know what that will mean to service delivery and employment in the area.



## Why have they done this?

The fact that they have recommended this proposal, completely ignoring their own 'Fit for the Future' benchmarks only reinforces our interpretation of this as a purely political exercise by a Liberal Government to get rid of a few of its own potential problem individuals, whose names have crossed the Ministers desk too many times recently in codes of conduct, submissions and complaints and recently cost them a State seat.

It is also a dubious solution for "what to do about Newcastle" from their political viewpoint.

TRRA are extremely concerned at the desperate actions of these Councillors in appropriating \$200k of ratepayer funds to protect their own jobs and positions. What will this money actually be spent on. What is a 'public Information Campaign?' If it is more of the rhetoric we have heard from Mackenzie about blowing up Stockton Bridge to sever the LGA from Newcastle, plastering the place with offensive signs and enlisting the help of Shock Jocks etc. **We can think of a lot of better things to do with the money.**

We have checked the website of the consultants that they want to pay to prepare their submission, and we now know where Council got the advice on how to manipulate the figures to provide the favourable benchmarks in the 'Fit for the future' process.

TRRA will be writing to Council demanding a detailed budget on what our money is to be spent on so that we can evaluate its effectiveness and even its legality.

## Is this Hobsons Choice? Are we between a rock and a hard place?

The way Makenzie and his people are painting this, we only have two choices Baird's way or Bruce's. We hope it is not too late, but TRRA says that if we are going to spend any precious ratepayer funds, that they would be better spent doing what should have been done in November when the letter was received from the Minister, **exploring other alternatives that might be available. Talking to the other Councils in our area and looking for other solutions.** The Governments case is pretty flimsy, blatantly political and unconvincing, but the Status Quo leaves a lot to be desired as well. **We would like to think that a proper independent consultant might be able to find a compromise that may be better for the majority, not just the few.**

**Be wary of the populist scare campaign that is about to commence, using your funds, be very careful what you wish for.....More Info [HERE](#)**

Dick Appleby  
Media Officer, Webmaster

