



## Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents Association Inc.

### **PS Council Staff recommend Councillors Jump the Gun on DA for Church Street Apartments**

**Council's Planners have recommended that a DA for an 8-storey block, rising 29-32 metres, be approved for 11-13 Church Street, Nelson Bay.**

This is more than double the existing allowable height under the current LEP. The recommendation is made despite the fact that Council has just received submissions on its Discussion Paper for the revision of the 2012 Nelson Bay Town and Foreshore Strategy. A key issue in this Paper was the policy on building heights in the town centre. Proposals to lift heights across the entire town attracted much community concern in a recent TRRA public meeting attended by 200 residents, in community organisations and in the local media.

**TRRA had called for the Council to hold off a decision on the Ascent apartments until the results of the discussion paper are determined later this year.**

TRRA was encouraged by Council's referral of the plans to an independent design review panel, Newcastle's Urban Design Consultative Group (UDCG). UDCG's report is included in the 11 April Agenda papers for all Councillors to read.

UDCG's report on the proposal was highly critical, concluding that '*[The Group] could not support the proposal even if it complied with the 17.5 metre height limit...*' and '*...the application cannot be supported.*'

The report expressly states that '*...it cannot be agreed that the overall design achieves "design excellence".*' It also states the '*the height and bulk are both excessive*' and that '*the lack of daylight and ventilation to the internal corridors ... is a further fundamental shortcoming, which cannot be overcome without major re-design.*'

The 2012 Strategy included a provision to grant a bonus of two extra stories on certain high potential sites but only if a proposal achieved outstanding design excellence and made a significant contribution to strategic public benefits such as improvements in the public domain.

It is very difficult to see how the planners could recommend approval which would preempt the outcome of the Strategy Review and in face of the damning independent review of the design.

TRRA will be very disappointed if Councillors also jump the gun on this approval.

Geoff Washington  
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