



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

AGM 2015-2016

Geoff Washington, President

Introduction

As President of TRRA Inc I welcome you to our 2016 Annual General Meeting. After my introductory remarks I will hand over to other members of our committee to report on specific activities and achievements over the past year.

As usual the reports will benefit from a PowerPoint presentation put together by Dick Appleby. As Webmaster Dick also keeps us up to date on TRRA's activities, and issues affecting the Tomaree Peninsula. The Website has become a critical medium for our communication to members and the wider community. We very much appreciate Dick's expertise and commitment to this task.

2015/2016 marks the 10th year in which TRRA Inc. has represented the interests of the Tomaree community. The long list of major initiatives on our first slide demonstrates the scope of TRRA's efforts to further our corporate objectives.

TRRA has needed to be vigilant in monitoring the many issues coming before State and local authorities to assess their impact on the Tomaree Peninsula and to take whatever actions are open to us to influence decisions on these matters.

Submissions on Major Issues

The last year has seen a number of State initiatives which have major implications for Port Stephens. These include proposals for council amalgamation, the Hunter Regional Plan, a Crown Land Management Policy, Apex Park Master Plan and a Port

Stephens Pathways Plan. These have required careful assessment and preparation of submissions to communicate our local concerns and viewpoints. All members of our committee have made significant commitments in this regard, but I would like to give special acknowledgement to Nigel Waters and John James for their contributions.

In the past, TRRA made submissions to relevant authorities on the issue of election donations and we were interested to note ICAC's report on "Operation Spicer Investigation" released in August which vindicated our serious concerns relating to our electoral system.

Relationships with other Community Groups

We have sought to strengthen our relationships with other representative groups in the local community and, where appropriate, we have supported and cooperated with organizations such as the Tomaree Business Chamber and EcoNetwork. We are now financial members of these organisations. We continue to liaise with and support local interest groups at Soldiers Point, Anna Bay, Bobs Farm, Cabbage Tree Road, Williamtown and the Boomerang Park Action Group. In the coming year TRRA will seek opportunities to address organisations such as Probus and Rotary.

Last month the president of the Tomaree Business Chamber invited TRRA to join a new action group "Nelson Bay Now" which will "create a united voice and cohesive advocacy group who are concerned about the current state of Nelson Bay and its future". Other members include Destination Port Stephens, D'Albora Marina, and a number of leading businesses in the Bay. TRRA accepted and after two meetings, the group is meeting with senior council officers on the issues of a parking strategy for the CBD and a review of the Nelson Bay Town Centre and Foreshore Strategy which has been initiated by Council.

Guest speakers

TRRA continued with a bi-monthly meeting programme. We have arranged guest speakers on matters of special interest including:

- 16 Febuary: Dr Samuel Mills, Oxford University - "How Countries should Manage their Natural Resource Wealth"

- 19 April: Bianca Gordon-Smith, Port Stephens Telstra NBN Manager - “NBN Roll-out on the Tomaree Peninsula”
- 16 August: Ryan Palmer, President, Tomaree Business Chamber - “Current Issues and Projects in the Tomaree Peninsula”
- 18 October: Ron Land, Vice President, Hunter Koala Preservation Society - “Proposed Koala Hospital, Samurai Beach”.
-

Meet The candidates

Since its inception TRRA has sought to ensure that our voters in all elections have a chance to meet and hear from their candidates before casting their ballots. We have run “Meet the Candidates” forums to which all candidates are invited with the objective of informing our members and the public at large, on the personalities and policies of those seeking to represent our interests. Considerable effort was devoted to the arrangement of a forum for the Federal Election in July this year. A packed house attended at the Nelson Bay Bowling Club which is a measure of the success of this venture. Presentations were made by candidates for the Labor, Greens and Citizens Electoral Council and a message was read from the Christian Democrats candidate who apologized due to illness. TRRA and those attending were disappointed that due to a diary conflict the Liberal Party Candidate did not attend. I should take this opportunity to reconfirm that TRRA remains an apolitical organization which does not support any particular candidate in elections.

At the conclusion of this meeting, those attending were reminded of the difficulty of securing the attendance of all candidates over the past three elections and were asked if they would wish to see TRRA continue in arranging such events for future elections. There was unanimous support for maintaining this initiative.

Planning Policy Issues and Monitoring Development Applications

Our Planning Sub Committee led by Nigel Waters has once again done an outstanding job. They have been very active in submitting professional and detailed submissions on State policies and to Council on various DAs and more general planning issues. John James has done excellent research and submissions to Council. TRRA Inc, and

our community are indebted to the work of this Sub-committee. Further detail will be covered later in our presentation.

Positive Results Achieved in 2015-2016

In the last year TRRA has been encouraged by some positive responses by Council to its representations. For example, Council has installed attractive landscaping at the roundabout at our gateway to Nelson Bay, a landscaped strip was inserted on the Stockton Street side of the Woolworths development and public toilet facilities inside were upgraded from one unisex to male, female and handicapped facilities. TRRA's proposals for formal pedestrian crossings on Victoria Parade together with footpaths as well as directional signs to encourage interchange between the CBD and the foreshore were installed. TRRA input to the Development of a masterplan for Apex Park was reflected in the final plan adopted by Council. Implementation of the planned upgrade should be high on Council's agenda.

We look forward to further improvements to infrastructure and maintenance to lift the appeal of Nelson Bay CBD.

In response to concerns raised by TRRA members at General Meetings, letters were sent to Council requesting action to secure a clean-up of a dilapidated industrial site at 346 soldiers Point Road and to rehabilitate the erosion on the beach at Fly Point. Council has provided positive responses on both matters.

Port Stephens Council Matters

We appreciate the regular attendance of East Ward councillor John Nell at our General Meetings as well as his willingness to provide information in answer to questions relating to council activities.

This year we have kept a watching brief on Council's finances and the management of its business affairs. We still believe that there is insufficient information released on the Council's business ventures and operations to ensure full accountability. Some key issues such as the future of the Donald Street Car Park sites continue to be dealt with by Council in "confidential" sessions prompting TRRA to lodge an informal request under the GIPA Act. This has resulted in a useful response to our 15 detailed queries.

To effectively monitor Council's accounts requires specialist accounting and financial expertise. TRRA would welcome the involvement of any member who may be able to assistance in reviewing the Council's financial statements and any other financial data which becomes available.

Acknowledgement of Contributions

I would like to thank Denis Pittorino in assisting us as Treasurer and Geoffrey Basser for the experience he brings to the TRRA Committee. Thanks are also due to Cath Norman as Secretary, Peter McBean as Minute Secretary and Margaret Wilkinson as Liaison Officer for their administration and recording of our activities as well as analysis of issues and creative ideas.

The Nelson Bay Bowling Club has been most generous in their support of TRRA by providing rooms for our Committee and General meetings. Thank you to Nicole and to the management for this support.

Finally, I would like to thank you, our members, for your loyalty, continuing involvement and support in the course of my Presidency over the last year.

Membership

Looking ahead we need to encourage our friends and acquaintances to join TRRA and to become involved. To maintain our effectiveness, we need more helpers and a strong membership base to demonstrate that we are truly representative of the Tomaree community.

I will now hand over to our Committee members to present the highlights of the past year.

Geoff Washington, President, TRRA Inc
18 October, 2016