

Letter to the Editor

Live Webcasting Fears Unfounded.

An article Posted on the Examiner's Website "Council's webcast return hot on Candidate's lips"(16 August) reported on the strong support by candidates at TRRA's Forum for reinstating the Council's webcasting of its meetings.

TRRA was delighted that West Ward Councillor Paul Le Mottee told the Examiner that he will support switching the camera back on. However, he was quick to cite advice of the present and former General Managers that the risk of webcasting of meetings was too great. A council spokesman also referred to the possibility of breaching the Privacy Act or of broadcasting defamatory statements.

A check of NSW Councils reveals that Newcastle City, Central Coast, Wollongong, Mid Western Regional, Lismore, Northern Beaches, North Sydney, Lane Cove, Queanbeyan and others already offer webcasting. These councils have weighed the risk and must have decided in favour of providing a window on democracy.

If the webcam's added exposure curbs aggressive and demeaning statements by Councillors and encourages respect for truth and integrity, the perception by the public of Port Stephens Council can only improve. The prospect of legal action for defamation which applies, whether or not there is webcasting, may well be reduced by the incentive for speakers to keep to the facts.

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