



## Opportunity for candidates and constituents in coming Council Election.

***TRRA will provide the opportunity for the public to scrutinise prospective candidates in next Council election for vision, consultation, transparency and accountability at a 'Meet the Candidates' Forum.***

Despite the State Government's bungled Local Government reform, with its dubious 'Fit for the Future' review leading to a failed forced amalgamation process, elections for Port Stephens Council will now proceed (a year late) on Saturday 09 September 2017.

TRRA will host a 'Meet the Candidates Forum' at 7:00pm Tuesday 15 August in the auditorium of the Nelson Bay Bowling Club, following the tradition developed in all Federal, State and Local Government elections since 2008. There will be an impartial moderator and a timed Q&A format, which this time will be recorded on video and posted on YouTube. All candidates will be invited to introduce themselves, and to allow the public to evaluate their aspirations to represent the Community as a Ward Councillor or Mayor, and share their vision of what they would like to achieve in the next Council.

TRRA would like to see the prospective Councillors clearly state how they will consult with the ratepayers and residents of the East Ward in the future. The strategy for the Nelson Bay CBD and Foreshore is a case in point. A recent pre-emptive decision on a DA in Church Street, which in effect doubled the building height available, has now set an unfortunate precedent, already coming through in new Development Applications. Council approval was given half way through the current review of the NB strategy, **before** over 100 written submissions from residents were even considered. This concern was raised from a well-attended meeting which considered the interim report, and this has caused considerable angst in the community.

Ratepayers and residents are looking for representatives who will consult properly with them on their ideas for this beautiful area and strongly represent that view on Council on behalf of the residents. They are pretty much over the voting blocs, defamation proceedings and toxic code of conduct machinations conducted in confidential sessions at Council meetings. They want **respect** for ratepayers, other Councillors and staff, transparency, accountability and visionary long term master plans, not ad hoc decisions made to placate developer pressure.

Residents should take their responsibility to understand the issues facing their Council very seriously and carefully choose from the candidates that are willing to consult at public meetings and forums, and they should be aware of the unintended consequences of the preference deals that are made in these contests which created the voting bloc in the current Council.

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