

Update for TRRA website, 23 December (DRAFT)

Council tries to impose high rise on Nelson Bay

Nine months after receiving 82 submissions, of which Council admits ‘.. *the vast majority was against any significant increase [in height]*’, it has released a ‘draft delivery program’ which more than doubles the default height limit for most of the Nelson Bay town centre (to the level of the crane on Church St) *and* allows for unlimited variations above that.

The ‘delivery program’ - which tries to pretend that the Strategy itself remains largely unchanged - is in TRRA’s view littered with false assertions, and Council’s public statements are also misleading. It is clear that some Council staff, and previous Mayors and Councillors have long harboured a vision of the future of our town that is completely different from the maintenance of its low-rise character, which the local community has clearly and consistently demanded.

Having tried for nearly 10 years to persuade Council to respect local views, we now have to demonstrate through ‘people power’ that they cannot push a ‘developer-centric’ vision through and ruin our town forever. The new Mayor and Councillors have an opportunity to put the brakes on this runaway train and ensure that staff re-model the Strategy based on the community views they have so far ignored.

TRRA will be issuing guidance on how to make submissions on the next stage of the Strategy review when it formally goes on exhibition in February, but in the meantime and over the holiday period we need as many locals and visitors alike to have their say - watch this space for details!

Mambo wetlands – Developer tries again

On the last business day before Xmas, the owner of the 5.6 ha parcel of land at the Mambo wetlands, sold ‘by mistake’ by the State Government in 2016, has submitted a second DA - this time for a single storey dwelling. He withdrew the previous DA - for a dual occupancy - in November after a record number of objections were lodged with Council, pointing out the many environmental arguments for refusal.

Many of these arguments will apply equally to the new proposal, although details and plans are not yet available on Council’s DA Tracker website. Unfortunately, objectors will now have to lodge new submissions, by an as yet unknown date but unlikely to be before mid-late January.

The Mambo -Wanda Wetlands Conservation Group was formed earlier this year to co-ordinate efforts to protect the wetlands, including this privately owned site which needs to be brought back into public ownership as a first step. More than half of the 10,000 signatures needed to force a debate in State Parliament have already been collected on a petition to be lodged by local MP Kate Washington. More recently, Port Stephens Council has unanimously passed a motion put up by Councillors Abbott and Nell to investigate options for a buy-back, with the State Government to pick up the bill, which will hopefully lead to action in the New Year.

The Mambo Group will be assessing the new DA once details are available and, like last time, will issue guidance on how to make a submission. We suggest that objectors hold off doing so until this guidance is available - objections will need to address whatever new arguments the applicant has come up with for why the new proposal is less environmentally damaging.

Keep in touch with the campaign at <https://www.facebook.com/mambowandawetlands/>