



DIGGERS CLUB PLANS UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Local residents and Tomaree Ratepayers & Residents Association (TRRA) members packed the Nelson Bay Senior Citizens Hall on Sunday to hear a detailed presentation on the extensive Nelson Bay RSL Club proposal for its site on Shoal Bay Road - by Club General Manager, Malcolm Anderson. The Council has approved the re-zoning of the site without a height limit, paving the way for the Club to implement plans and apply for approvals, based on its tabled conceptual drawings for the site. These buildings range from three to seven storeys. The Council rezoning approval is currently with State Planning for consent.

The General Manager's presentation was followed by detailed addresses by representatives of the local Concerned Citizens Group who outlined the scale of the development and the impact it would have on the amenity of the local residential area.

Mr Anderson said that the Club was under extreme financial pressure due to policy changes made at the state level affecting club revenue, particularly the ban on indoor smoking. This had led to an initiative to restructure the Club's offering and to optimize the return from its assets. This includes a proposal for major redevelopment on the site to include an 'international brand' high-rise hotel, a 600-seat conference centre, a second tower of serviced apartments, a private hospital and shops. He said that the conference centre would not be viable without the 150-room hotel.

Jackie Hallam and Brian Armstrong of the Concerned Citizens Group stressed that the proposal would impact enormously on the area, which has traditionally been residential.

The Club has bought up residential houses over the years and is now seeking to change the zoning to allow for significant medium to high density buildings. The plans would impact particularly in relation to traffic which was already a problem in peak periods, and infrastructure items such as roads, parking, drainage and power which were also severely challenged. The capacity of the site to provide the required parking for cars and tourist buses was questioned and fears expressed that this would overflow into residential streets and require a sacrifice from the adjoining Rugby oval.

Antisocial behavior and noise had been a problem for some time and would be exacerbated by the increased development. Residents surrounding the Club fear that their amenity will be threatened and properties will be severely devalued. There will be overshadowing and blocking of the views of residents to the south of the Club.

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PRESS RELEASE

Mark Brady, President of TRRA, commented that 'the meeting had been hugely successful in creating a forum for the plans to be laid on the table and for the community to voice their concerns. TRRA, having heard the case for and against the development, will give balanced consideration to the views expressed in this public meeting, and work on a detailed submission voicing its opinion to Council. This will be made available in a later Press Release for community information. The Association will be pressing Council for full consultation in the future on this issue.

'TRRA has raised the 'ad hoc' approval for development by Council as a primary concern, with councillors, council and government ministers, as TRRA believes that until a fully developed planning strategy is implemented for the peninsula then no-one really knows if this proposal is the right way to go.'

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