



TOMAREE TIGER BARES ITS TEETH

A large crowd attended the Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents Association (TRRA) Annual General Meeting in support of the organisation's catch cry, 'a great lifestyle in a treasured environment - don't spoil it.'

The Chairman, Bob Young, in delivering his report of the year's exceptionally busy agenda, called on the Port Stephens Council to show real leadership and greater professionalism, and a more transparent and consultative approach to development on the Tomaree Peninsula. Mr Young said that there is an increasing ground swell in a lot of communities for local government to be better managed, and be more accountable for how public money is invested and spent.

During 2009 TRRA has been actively involved with Council, local community and business groups, as well as State Government Departments in pursuit of better long term planning – instead of the 'quick fix' - and decision making processes which are in the best interest of the Tomaree community.

TRRA has written numerous submissions on major development proposals, and contributed to forums and planning sessions on a range of issues including the Nelson Bay CBD 2030 redevelopment, Port Stephens Futures Strategy, Foreshore Redevelopment Plan, the Tourism Strategy, the Cultural Policy Strategy, and the Graffiti initiative, as well as having many members on the Residents Panel.

Through these activities TRRA has been consistent in its message that the community expects better and improved infrastructure and services, better planning that takes into consideration the future needs of this community, all environmental and ecological factors, and quality development which reflects who we are as a community.

'As a consequence TRRA membership has flourished during this year primarily as a result of the growing concern amongst residents and ratepayers about the direction council is taking in regard to short term planning solutions and irresponsible financially decisions,' Mr Young said.

'A recent example of this shambolic decision making process is the proposed sale of public land and expansion of the Salamander Shopping Centre. TRRA does not oppose any sale or improved development at the Centre but what we do expect is appropriate public consultation, transparency in the tender process, and the delivery of a masterplan which shows how the proposed expansion will be integrated with roads, traffic flow and parking, plus how our community facilities fit into this plan. These facilities should not be an afterthought, he said.

TRRA has been successful on a number of levels in 2009 and motivates members to continue to work to ensure Council is more accessible and responsible in responding to community comment.

'We have aggressively opposed Council's ambition for high rise development particularly in Nelson Bay, and their very questionable move towards Public Private Partnerships with major developers; made representations to Council regarding the relocation of the Fly Point New Years Eve Celebration; achieved agreement on a buffer zone and wildlife corridor at the industrial estate at Taylors Beach; lobbied for the upgrading of the Nelson Bay foreshore; established a graffiti action group; and continue to work towards an upgrade of Gan Gan Lookout,' Mr Young said.

Despite ongoing frustration at the lack of direction of the Council's Nelson Bay 2030 redevelopment strategy and the Port Stephens Futures Plan, TRRA has persisted with council to ensure appropriate consultation and debate prior to approval. However, Councillors' approval for the resort development on 'sand dunes' at Anna Bay is a great disappointment, as it had already been rejected previously by council and the NSW Department of Planning. TRRA continues to question the ethics of this development process.

'We have managed to get our foot in the door at Council and we hope that Council and Councillors see us as a committed group who would prefer to work with them to achieve the best results for this community, rather than be considered a thorn in their sides,' Mr Young said.

In 2010 TRRA will continue to work towards positioning Tomaree as a unique and desirable place to live and work and to ensure that the 'council is brought back to the community' as was promised by our Mayor.

Judy Washington
Publicity Officer
Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents Association
info@tra.com.au
4981 3916

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