

12 March 2009

Mr Peter Gesling
General Manager
Port Stephens Council
P.O. Box 42
Raymond Terrace 2324

Dear Mr Gesling,

A number of our members have recently commented on the state of the Foreshore from the Nelson Bay Marina to Fly Point.

Although this is the most strategic area of Port Stephens in relation to tourists, the parks are more degraded than most in the local government area. A number of visitors have commented unfavourably on them in relation to other coastal towns of New South Wales and other states of Australia.

The grass in the parks is extremely worn or has returned to sand. This relates to several factors.

1. Each school holidays a carnival leases the area just east of D'Albora marina. Apart from its other problems of noise and ugliness, which have been outlined in several recent letters to Council, the grass where it stands and around it becomes totally decimated. A member recently wrote to Council and received a reply that this area was leased to Town Centre Management and that they were responsible for restoration of the area after carnivals left. From our observation nothing has been done here for years except *Worn grass follows carnival's departure* mowing of the grass (and we congratulate Council for doing that conscientiously).



Smaller more permanent carnival rides nearer the marina have been removed recently and the worn grass here has been replaced with gravel.

Carnival rides replaced by gravel and sand
Bark under ficus in background not comfortable to sit on

2. Along the foreshore there are fittings for sprinklers. Whereas at Dutchies, Little Beach and other parks these seem to operate each morning through summer, those along the beachfront to Fly Point, the beach area of highest traffic in Port Stephens, do not operate. It is not possible to retain park grass on sand in summer with high traffic without water. Can these not be fixed and made operable?



Unused sprinkler fitting surrounded by dead grass

The shrubs along the beach at the Fly Point end are in very poor state and there is very little shade. Replanting is necessary here, with low shrubs to stabilize the dunes, but not of species such as the ficus that Council has used on the western end of the foreshore. These latter are growing to form a curtain that will completely obliterate the views of the town and all residents behind. The root systems of the figs are problematic and all the grass under them dies. Council is dealing with this by replacing the grass under them and in other worn areas of the foreshore with bark. This looks most unattractive against the worn grass and people are unable to sit on it under the trees as they used to (See photo above).

In addition there is considerable erosion along the joining line between the grass and the beach along the entire foreshore. New green netting fences to stabilize the dunes have been installed recently along the Fly Point end of the beach, but erosion is bad east of the eastern groyne and along the Marina Beach. Because of the high use in this area and the desirability of retaining the view of the Bay an alternative treatment for heavy traffic such as the steps at Little Beach is more desirable and urgently needed.



Eroded Beach East of Groyne



This path washed out the week after this photo was taken

Along the beach east of the eastern groyne the short paths leading to the beach through the fences are constructed very cheaply and temporarily, in one or two cases just with sand and no stabilization to hold them. These are very heavily used. They have washed away and had to be replaced at least three times in the last year. In other coastal areas of Australia much more substantial yet environmentally attractive paths are built. They are very short in length so should not be exorbitant in price to build adequately.

There is little maintenance of the area along the eastern groyne. Thousands of tourists depart here or book cruises each week. Tall weeds grow along the path and in the rocks. The skips and bins provided for garbage are extremely ugly, especially when combined with the plethora of utility boxes which seem to grow in number every week. The area at the entrance to the western groyne is equally ugly with similar problems.



Eastern Groyne visited by thousands of tourists a week - neglected and unattractive



Entrance to Western Groyne – equally degraded

This entire area raises the most money for tourism of any in Port Stephens yet it is the most neglected.

Council did a Nelson Bay Foreshore Master Plan in 2002. The Lands Department completed a Nelson Bay Foreshore Plan of Management in 2008 and a Port Stephens Waterfront Master Plan in 2009. Yet meanwhile, apart from mowing dead grass, next to no maintenance is carried out along the Nelson Bay Foreshore. Caring for the lawns by watering them and replacing dead patches, tending shrubs and replacing those that die should be routine as part of the responsibility of any Council Parks section, and cannot wait the outcome of the various plans. It has been left so long that it will be very hard to retrieve. There is mention of replacing the beach in the marina with an extension of the boardwalk. There is much opposition to this. In the present economic climate the future of the various plans and Macquarie Bank is very uncertain. We will be left with no beach, no parkland and NO tourists. Not to mention the lack of amenity for the residents who pay rates for the maintenance of these areas. The rates here, especially along the waterfront, are as high as any in NSW.

TRRA feels the situation has reached a crisis point and requires attention. If the money we pay for rates is not adequate for routine maintenance of our parks, and in most local government areas it seems to be, are there any environmental, infrastructure or other grants we can apply for to at least rectify the damage that has been done by neglect?

Yours sincerely,

Robert Young
Chairman