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Soldiers Point  
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Editor,  
Port Stephens Examiner,  
(via email)

Dear Keith,

At yesterday's presentation meeting of the RSL Proposal I suggested that individual comment be put to the Tomaree Residents and Ratepayers Association (TRRA) so that, in any further submissions or discussions by the TRRA to council, councillors or state government, the views of the community can be aired.

I know this is early days as far as this proposal is concerned and suspect there will be significant further discussions as to its merits or otherwise.

I don't think that the question is whether the Tomaree Peninsular needs the type of facility that the club is suggesting

Yes, we do need a first class conference, entertainment and function centre.  
Yes, we do need more quality hotel accommodation and  
Yes, we need to improve our attraction in the provision of these facilities to ensure the continual growth of tourism and hence employment growth.

I query whether there is a need, at this point in time, for additional serviced apartments, an additional medical centre or an alternative hospital when there is one around the next corner that can be surely expanded to meet the changing broader community.

What does concern me is the issue as to whether, just because the club is 'pushing the buttons' for these facilities that council and councillors like to hear, should the community be expected to accept that this is the only opportunity available?

Is it appropriate to have everything from a large licenced club, 600 seat conference centre, 160 room hotel, serviced apartments, medical centre, hospital, medium density retirement housing and retail/commercial outlets, ranging in heights from 3 - 7 storeys, in a rectangle of land some 500 metres x 100 metres?

Would not the community and visitors/tourists be better served by council identifying areas that could better accommodate these various uses without placing undue and unnecessary stress on infrastructure, road systems, current operating establishments and commercial zones?

Should the community accept a conglomeration of building structures of varying heights and bulk in what is, and has been a dominant residential area?

It must always be borne in mind that this club was initially allowed to be located within a zoned residential area so as to provide reasonable access to the community for such a facility.

It has developed over the years because of the growth of the community, and it has purchased additional land, out of the profits from the community.

That land was all zoned residential, so it would appear the club has had a long term agenda for significant growth. With their current land holding and invested funds, they can't be seen as 'poor'! They simply want to change the zoning to become richer.

And, the club did erect a third level, in a zoned, 2-storey residential area, without the submission of a Development Application or any approvals from council.

This in itself shows a blatant disregard to state government and local policy as well as the local community in which it operates.

Council has now approved, for the existing club site to be rezoned Recreational 6c, without any height restriction. Surely this can only be the thin edge of the wedge for the balance of the site to Gowrie Street.

One can only hope that State Planning is more astute than our councillors when assessing this application.

So, at worst, rezoning will be approved and the club will achieve its aim in submitting detailed development plans and proposals.

If so, this will be a significant development for the area and quoted to be in excess of \$100m.

Council should insist on full plans, full building heights, including roof structures to be detailed, together with a scale model of the buildings proposed. This will ensure the community can properly assess the impact in both streetscape and skyline. It will also enable a better opportunity to understand the size, scope and bulk of all structures to all street frontages.

There should be full and independent environmental impact studies and traffic studies completed with an absolute requirement that sufficient parking be provided, on site, so as not to place any imposition on the surrounding residential community.

There needs to be detail as to tourist coach lay by areas, taxi drop off and pick up, delivery truck movements and any other aspect that would create interference with the surrounding residential amenity.

We should obtain absolute certainty that any requirements to upgrade services or infrastructure, as a result of any development, will also be undertaken at the club's cost and not at the expense of the ratepayers.

We should insist on a proper and full exhibition of any proposal, with sufficient time for interested parties to consider, compile and submit their views.

And possibly we should look toward an architectural competition to ensure that we achieve the best outcome in design and building form and we should insist that it meets all the standards with respect to environmental sustainability.

On developments of such magnitude, all stakeholders need to have certainty. On developments of this magnitude, a proponent should be able to, and prepared to, invest the money to meet these requirements. A few 'mud maps' and a lot of 'motherhood statements' are, in my mind, totally insufficient.

Yes, we need the facilities, but at the end of the day, we need to ensure they are the right facilities, the right place and the right decisions for the long term future of the Tomaree Peninsular and its community, not just the Nelson Bay Diggers.

I look forward to a lot more discussion and public scrutiny on this and other proposals that affect our community.

Bob Young.