



Submission - Strategic Committee Meeting 7 October 2008, Regional Tree Vandalism Policy

The Tomaree Ratepayers & Residents Association (TRRA) has only recently become aware that council is considering this issue. Due to time constraints it has only been brought to the attention of our committee but has not been put before our membership generally. However a number of the executive committee have discussed the matter and reached a consensus view which we believe should be conveyed to Council. All agree that this is a very important matter which needs careful consideration by Council and we are willing to assist in this process.

We are aware acts of vandalism in our area and support the need for clarity in the approach to prevention and appropriate reactions once there is an offence. Discussion to date suggests that there should be emphasis on policies which are focused on prevention of this problem. These are:-

Preventative measures:

1. Improved public education on the value of trees and other vegetation in the environment particularly in relation to coastal erosion, landscape values and wildlife habitat;
2. Policies which would avoid the planting of trees and other vegetation on Council controlled lands which would block existing views from privately and publicly owned land. Careful species selection could go a long way to avoiding the creation of circumstances which encourage vandalism;
3. Policies which would avoid the planting of trees and other vegetation which create serious overshadowing/elimination of light and sunshine, root invasion or storm hazards for properties adjoining Council land;
4. Consultation with local committees and affected landholders before new landscaping/vegetation management or rehabilitation decisions are taken.

We also believe that policies governing responses to acts of vandalism should take account of the following issues:-

Responses to vandalism:

1. Council or other relevant authorities should investigate all incidents and make it public that this action is in train (this in itself would discourage those considering acts of vandalism);
2. Where an offence is identified prosecution action should be taken;
3. The installation of view blocking devices such as bunting, screens and stacks of containers should only be considered as a last resort. We question whether these measures are appropriate in locations which are in the centre of tourist activity. Clearly such installations may seriously detract from the appeal of iconic Tomaree attractions. The actions themselves eg. the Containers at Boat Harbour can have a serious negative impact on the local environment. Investigation, publicity, and prosecution are considered to be the preferred first line reactions.

Robert Young, Acting President, Tomaree Ratepayers & Residents Association