

DA update New Year 2019

## **New residential villages**

Many people have expressed alarm at the scale of the clearing and other works taking place at the site of the former winery on Nelson Bay Rd at Bob Farm. This is the '*Sunrise*' development – originally approved by Council in 2014 as a 'caravan park' with 188 permanent sites for moveable/relocatable dwellings. The site was then sold to Hometown Australia who gained approval for 193 sites and significant layout changes in April 2018. They have now applied for further changes including a reduction in the depth of the open verges on the internal roads.

TRRA Inc has objected to the current application on the grounds that it is a significant change involving loss of open space. On top of the changes already approved the result would be even higher density and less amenity for residents.

Sunrise is one of 3 major new retirement living communities currently under construction in the Bobs Farm/Anna Bay area, with a total of more than 600 sites. The other two - *Latitude One* off Nelson Bay Road and *The Boardwalk* off Trotter Road - are not as visible as *Sunrise* but also very large developments. While these villages clearly fill a gap in the housing market, TRRA remains concerned that they are an inappropriate use of the concessions allowed for so-called caravan parks to establish what are in effect new permanent housing estates which do not have to meet the same standards as would apply to equivalent residential subdivisions on properly zoned land.

The villages are also in inappropriate locations for seniors living, far from local services and in one case not even on a bus route. These housing developments on land zoned as rural should in our view only have been approved, if at all, after a proper re-zoning process which would have had to consider the wider strategic planning issues. Instead, Port Stephens Council allowed them to take advantage of a 'tourist facility' loophole in the rural zone controls.

## **More Koala habitat under threat at One Mile Beach**

TRRA has objected to an application by the owners of an 'environmental living' subdivision at One Mile Beach to clear more of the individual sites. While they are entitled to seek to increase the commercial value of the subdivision, we have urged Council to uphold the existing conditions that protect half of the sites which contain preferred koala habitat. If all landowners with koala habitat were given approval for what they claim are only marginal changes, then the threatened Port Stephens koala population will continue to experience 'death by a thousand cuts'. Approval of this application would in our view be inconsistent with Council's declared commitment to habitat protection, and with its own investment in the new koala sanctuary and hospital just down the road from this site.

## **TRRA welcomes Council infrastructure works at Mambo Wetlands/Foreshore Drive**

Despite the disastrous bush fire that burnt out half of the Mambo wetlands just before Xmas, it is essential that everything possible is done to protect the environmental and recreational values of this precious 'green lung'. TRRA therefore welcomes a DA lodged by Council to improve the water flow between the wetlands and the Bay by replacing the narrow culvert half way along Foreshore Drive. At the same time Council will construct a shared foot/cycle path separated from the road carriageway which will make it a much safer and more attractive route for visitors and residents alike.

TRRA has encouraged Council to make full use of the amazing local knowledge and expertise of those volunteers and activists who have worked and campaigned for many years to protect the Mambo and Wanda wetlands. It is important that the proposed works maximise the environmental benefits while minimising the disruption during the construction period.