



Summary - TRRA Inc. Submission on Nelson Bay Public Domain Plan Exhibition Documents, 28 March 2019

General Overview

The Public Exhibition period closed on 28 March and the documents are no longer on display. The following is a summary of TRRA's submission to Council. The President Geoff Washington (president@trra.com.au) has a hard copy of the documents if anyone wants access.

TRRA is very pleased to note that the *Nelson Bay Public Domain Plan Exhibition Draft* recognises the need to protect the existing character of Nelson Bay Town Centre and embraces the key planning principles of the 2012 Strategy which was adopted by Council at that time.

Highly relevant statements in the introductory sections of the Exhibition Draft include:

- Page 6 - **The Vision** characterises Nelson Bay as “a Town by the Bay”
- Page 9 - ‘...natural bushland and hilly topography, which provides a dramatic backdrop to picturesque local views
- Page 11 - Reference is made to “The Existing Scenic Value” and the importance of the view corridors to the Bay and towards the “forested hills of Tomaree National Park to the south.”
- Page 13 - The opportunity to ‘enhance and enliven the existing local charm and place character’, including ‘enhancing the village character...’

TRRA Inc. cautions that the value of the proposed public domain works would be completely undermined by a reckless pursuit of high-rise developments in the town centre.

Specific TRRA comments on the proposals

Page 15 - **Three Big Moves**

TRRA supports the focus on the three broad objectives:

- A Green and Blue Network
- Streets for People
- Places for people

The consultants recognise that the achievement of these objectives requires careful planning of the traffic flows and parking provisions in and around Nelson Bay and the Foreshore. Of key importance is the diversion of much through traffic to Dowling Street as a fundamental need.

TRRA supports the proposed reconfiguration of Magnus Street (mainstreet) and Stockton Streets as shared streets, giving priority to pedestrians and allowing for closure to vehicles for events. We urge careful consideration needs to be given in the implementation to the reliance of many retail and commercial businesses on short stay car parking for their customers.

The consultants recognise the need to maintain sufficient parking close to the centre (possibly on Crown Land) and suggest that any reduction of on-street spaces be conditional on alternative provision in the town centre.

Proposals for improved cycle access are welcome. However, the narrow width of many of the roads in and feeding the CBD e.g. Magnus Street (east) may not be capable of accepting dual cycle/motor traffic.

The Blue and Green networks are strongly supported. The proposed infusion of stormwater run-off would save on town water.

The extension of street tree plantings to Stockton Street south, Church and Yacaaba Streets Government Road and Magnus Street East would help to define the extent of Nelson Bay and slow traffic on these streets. A speed limit of 40kph (not 50kph as proposed) would be more appropriate for Collector Streets shown on Page 20.

Great care needs to be given to the selection of appropriate tree species, both in terms of ensuring safety (large trunks obscure vehicles when reversing from a driveway, e.g. Magnus Street East) and tall dense foliage would interfere with views to and across the Bay and conflict with existing overhead power lines. The proposal to introduce a line of trees along the eastern side of the waterfront park adjoining Victoria Parade is questioned. Large tall evergreen trees (Norfolk and/or Hoop pines are recommended-Item 6, page 39) in addition to the line of existing ficus would dominate and overshadow a popular open lawn area.



Additional row of tall evergreens unsuited to waterfront reserve

On page 17 there is a reference to a potential use of crown land east of Victoria Parade for additional parking. This has been raised in earlier strategic planning proposals but subsequently rejected on the grounds that this space offers a desirable extension of the natural green buffer zone between the waterfront and the residential areas to the south east along Magnus Street.

The page 20 proposal to activate laneways is very welcome and has been successful in towns such as Fremantle and Coffs Harbour.

Laneway Developments Fremantle





Overhead decorative treatment Europe

We generally support the ideas for materials and street furniture on pp 22-23 but final decisions will need to balance quality against cost, taking into account both capital and ongoing maintenance expenditure.

On Page 25 proposals are made in relation to Public Art. It is pleasing to note that the proposed criteria for these installations include “reflective of history and place whilst also providing for ownership by the local community”.

On page 34 the recommendation to remove the median strip from Victoria Road is welcome, but the proposed removal of the skybridge may need further consideration as it currently provides an easy alternative connection from Magnus Street through the arcade to Apex Park and could impact on the commercial viability of the Nelson Towers Arcade.

Any proposal to relocate the Visitor Information Centre needs to be discussed with Destination Port Stephens.

On page 35 the recommendation to narrow Teramby Road appears to be impracticable.

The proposals for reconfiguring the waterfront/marina zone need more consideration and full discussion with stakeholders.

For example, the proposal to relocate the existing playground to the car parking space southeast of the Marina is not justified and in our view not desirable. The existing site is highly successful as parents are able to supervise children while enjoying views across the marina from the plentiful seating.

TRRA considers that the consultants have not given the Western Foreshore sufficient attention. They rightly identify the importance of protecting the working marina function but do not provide any guidance on how to improve the public domain in this precinct.

The recommendation on page 43 to remove the Stockton Street stage needs further consideration and consultation, particularly with those involved in running festivals. It calms traffic, provides a very well used location for outdoor covered dining and takeaway consumption and when there are festivals, it is used by performers.

On page 57 the alternative concept, to turn the northern section of Stockton Street into a pedestrian mall, creating a town Square, would need further consultation. This risks excessively limiting the circulation of motor vehicles in the town centre which many businesses consider is essential to their survival. The current practice of closure of Stockton and Magnus Streets when needed for major events may be all that is necessary.

Streetscape Design guidelines

TRRA considers that the existing surface configuration and paving materials in the portions of Magnus and Stockton Streets within the village precinct are quite acceptable and that the function of these precincts (pedestrian/motor vehicle interaction) is relatively safe due to the typically low speed of vehicles.

While the reasoning for reconfiguration to achieve a continuous level across the streets is understood, we question whether this major revamp (which would be very costly) is justified.



Magnus Street looking east

Wayfinding and Signage Design

Nelson Bay does not have a comprehensive wayfinding and signage strategy or design code. The Exhibition Draft provides a sound concept and guidelines to overcome this deficiency in the town centre which could be adopted for the entire Tomaree Peninsula.

On Pages 10 and 11 a decision needs to be made on whether gateway road signage needs to encourage all through traffic to the proposed Dowling Street By-pass route.

Implementation pages 42 - 45

While this section of the report sets out the content of the Basic, Balanced and Vision Concepts (three tiers with increasing number and scale of projects), it does not provide sufficient detail as to the sequence, timing and potential cost of the key components.

TRRA would suggest that early benefits would be had from the gateway improvements, street tree planting throughout the peripheral areas such as south Stockton, Yacaaba and Church Streets, wayfinding improvements and a strategy to divert through traffic via a Dowling Street bypass route.

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