



TRRA INC NEWSLETTER, 16 May 2020

Cancellation of TRRA 8 June General Meeting

In accordance with the current limitations on public meetings TRRA General Meetings can no longer be held. Should there be any relaxation of the rules, members will be advised.

Should members have issues which they would wish to bring to the attention of the Association it would be appreciated if you could refer these to Bill Salter, our Secretary, in an email addressed to secretary@trra.com.au.

NEWSLETTER

1. Matters of General Interest

Implications of the COVID-19 Virus Pandemic

We hope you all have managed to live with the limitations which have been imposed to control the pandemic in Australia and NSW. The statistics appear to indicate that the Government's and Council's strategy as well as the public's high level of compliance, have been very successful. We all look forward to proposed relaxations to the current levels of lockdown.

Local impact

The serious impacts on businesses and residents on the Tomaree have been very obvious with many businesses closed and employees having to be stood down. TRRA members may be able to assist clubs, restaurants and cafes by taking advantage of the latest rule allowing up to 10 patrons or by ordering take away meals and making use of delivery services. A deliberate effort to shop locally if possible will also help our retailers to hang on.

Streets as Shared Spaces NSW DOP New Initiative

The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment recently launched a "Streets as Shared Spaces" grant programme aimed at Councils. Whilst aimed at

Councils, communities can identify opportunities to improve their local streets which can inform Council's proposals for this grant programme but also both State and local government approaches to reimagining streets as public spaces.



This is a great opportunity for members of TRAA to identify places they love, great streets near me and opportunities to improve streets on a map and provide short comments to describe ideas. Please use the [Interactive map](#) to share your ideas.

There is more information on the website about streets as shared spaces and a brochure describing the kinds of projects that will be considered for funding. This round of funding is targeted at temporary interventions using short-term tactical methods to test projects quickly through techniques such as pilots, pop-ups or interim and semi-permanent changes to our streets, public spaces and paths.

They can be a quick, low cost method to demonstrate the value of a concept and test future permanent change. These temporary projects can generate real-time community feedback, create an evidence-base to support the planning and development of public spaces and build the case for longer-term change. The brochure provides more detail on the types of projects that can be funded.

To find out more please visit the website

Website:

- Streets - <https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities/great-public-spaces/streets>
- Streets as Shared Spaces grants - <https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities/great-public-spaces/streets/grants-for-councils>
- Have your say – <https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities/great-public-spaces/streets/have-your-say>

Please use the [Interactive map](#) to share your ideas.

TRRA will be encouraging PSC to consider applications for the Tomaree. There are many proposals in the Nelson Bay Public Domain Strategy such as the upgrade of Stockton Street with tree planting. The upgrade of Teramby Road could be another.

TRRA Inc. Proposal for Achieving Enhancement of Gateways to Port Stephens and the Peninsula



TRRA'S Management committee has resolved to give priority to this issue over the current year and raised it with The Mayor in our last quarterly meeting with him and senior Council officers.

TRRA's President wrote to the Mayor on 17 April submitting its proposal, together with a dossier of photographs illustrating the problem. The President also wrote to a number of councils across NSW who have been successful in protecting their gateways asking for advice on how this has been achieved. Responses are now being received and will be discussed with PSC.

A response from Steven Peart, the Council's Strategy and Environment Section Manager, advised that his team is considering our proposal and that a meeting with relevant TRRA members will be arranged.



TRRA's proposal

TRRA contends that the gateways to Port Stephens, particularly the approach roads to the Tomaree Peninsula, do not match the outstanding quality of the tourist destination.

TRRA believes that there should be a strategy to ensure remediation of the existing unsightly features and to improve control on all future developments along the Gateway routes.

Problems which need to be addressed include:

1. Major infrastructure and development sites which are lacking in design quality and which pay insufficient attention to the visual impact on the approach road. The entry to Newcastle Airport is cited as a prime example of a missed opportunity.
2. The need for gateway quality considerations to be included in plans for and approvals of future developments such as the Williamstown Special Activation Precinct (noting Council's 50 % ownership of the airport commercial Airport), sand mines and lifestyle centres fronting approach roads as well as big box retail developments such as the Harvey Norman proposal for Port Stephens Drive.
3. Remedial actions to enhance existing commercial and semi-industrial developments on rural zoned land (many of which rely on "existing use" exemptions) e.g. car wrecking yards and Port Stephens Removals shipping container yard.
4. Approved and illegal advertising signage proliferation with less than optimum formal directional tourist signage.
5. Parking of large road transport vehicles on road verges or disused roads e.g. south of the Airport entry.
6. Numerous scrap heaps of defunct farm machinery, transport vehicles and building waste on farmland which are clearly visible from the roads.
7. Poorly screened utility substations and the Council's Depot in the Tomaree sports precinct
8. Derelict roadside buildings
9. Unattractive road designs such as the recently installed roundabouts which are simply concreted but not landscaped.
10. The absence of a "signature" landscaping scheme on the entry way to tourist hubs such as Nelson Bay e.g. an avenue of attractive trees.

To assist in addressing these issues TRRA has sought advice from number of other Councils which have succeeded in achieving attractive gateways to their towns or tourist destinations on how they have been able to control and or influence the standards of development. The results of these inquiries will be advised to Port Stephens Council in the course of our discussions with the relevant staff.

Initiatives for Discussion with Port Stephens Council Officers

1. Prepare a Port Stephens policy and strategy on the quality and on-going management of its gateways
2. Identify opportunities to influence Commonwealth and State authorities in the design and maintenance of gateways to Port Stephens
3. Develop and promote a vision for the future of Newcastle Airport as a major gateway making full use of the influence available to PSC as a 50% owner of the commercial Airport and as the primary authority for approval of associated developments in the airport precinct
4. Investigate the scope for Council to require increased attention to impacts on gateways of all development proposals with proximity to these gateways

5. Investigate the scope for Council to give higher priority to compliance with development, signage and other environmental controls impacting on gateways
6. Investigate the need for a comprehensive standardised signage system for access to tourist facilities and attractions linked to a Destination Port Stephens tourist information source.
7. Council to commit to inclusion in its works program of enhanced funding for maintenance of gateways and improvements such as landscaping, screening and directional signage
8. Develop a plan of cooperation with the Tomaree Business Chamber and any other relevant business groups to implement these initiatives.

Change of Policy in advertising Council Notices in the Print Media.

TRRA welcome the changes to Council's web page which now has this information detailed under Public Exhibition, although we urge a more prominent 'button' and link on the Home page, similar to the existing 'Projects and Works' link.

We are however disappointed that Council has decided to end routine newspaper advertising of DAs on exhibition (as opposed to DAs determined). There are two main objections:

Firstly, the decision has serious equity and discrimination implications and will lead to an overall loss of transparency. Many residents do not have ready 'online' access or have difficulty navigating websites. Provision of information only online will inevitably reduce the number of people reached effectively and affect different sections of the community differentially. While Council is rightly pursuing digital options to enhance transparency and accountability, there is still a significant 'Digital Divide' in the community that does not allow it to be a complete substitute.

Secondly, Council should continue to support the local media at this particularly difficult time. The community rely on the local media for a full range of information and we would not like to see loss of any of the local newspapers if other local business were to cut their advertising. To avoid favouring a particular business, publication of Council notices could be put out to competitive tender to the two free local newspapers.

We strongly believe that this decision should have been made by all the Councillors, after debate at a Council meeting. We urge Council to reconsider this decision and at the very least have an overlap of print media and web base notices for a period of at least 6 to 12 months.

2. Planning Update

Over the past month there has still been a number of Development Applications submitted to Council, although none of these TRRA has considered significant enough for us to comment directly on.

1. New TAFE Centre Salamander Central

A DA was submitted on the 6th May for the construction of a \$3.7m educational establishment and car park on the vacant lot between the two service stations at Salamander. At this stage, the application has not been advertised and as a result we have not yet been able to view any plans.

2. Harvey Norman Development

Good news that TRRA has been successful in getting all three of our ward councillors to agree to 'call-up' the DA for the Harvey Norman development at Taylors Beach. TRRA commented on this development in our last newsletter in that we objected to the design/layout of the proposal on the basis that it would remove koala habitat, affect low lying wetland and be visually intrusive with a major retaining wall across much of the frontage to Pt Stephens Drive. Under recent changes to the way DAs are processed, For this proposal the planning section had the right to make a determination on the DA and three Councillors are required to ask for a call-up as opposed to only one Councillor in the past. TRRA strongly believe that this significant \$25m development should come before Council for open debate amongst the Councillors and the community the right to comment on Planners recommendations. It should be noted that by calling up the DA, it does not imply the individual Councillors are opposed to the development

3. Tree Moratorium

TRRA assisted Eco-Network in preparing a detailed submission to Council against the decision at its meeting of 10 March to propose another tree moratorium ALLOWING REMOVAL WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL. As we mentioned in our previous newsletter the change will require public exhibition of a change to the DCP. Council's documents suggest that the proposed change will not come before Council prior to being publicly exhibited until July.

Geoff Washington
Media Officer