



# **TOMAREE RATEPAYERS AND RESIDENTS ASOCIATION Inc. PROPOSAL FOR ACHIEVING ENHANCEMENT OF GATEWAYS TO PORT STEPHENS**

**April 2020**

## **Background**

At a meeting with the Mayor and senior officers of Port Stephens Council held in April 2020, representatives of TRRA advised that the Association had resolved to give high priority to initiatives directed to improving the standard and presentation of the Gateways to Port Stephens. The pressing need for a strategy and concerted action was illustrated by the tabling of a portfolio of photographs of sub-standard and unsightly locations on Nelson Bay Road.

TRRA raised the possibility of discussions with Council to examine a strategy to upgrade the approach to match the outstanding quality of the Tomaree tourist destination.

In the course of discussion of the problems identified by TRRA, Council advised of the comprehensive and substantial planning work which is being undertaken for the future development of the Newcastle Airport precinct and as part of the upgrade of Nelson Bay Road. Council pointed out that it's ability to influence the visual quality along Nelson Bay Road was constrained by the fact that this road reserve was under the direct control of a state Authority, Roads & Maritime Services NSW. However, it was acknowledged that Council was involved in shaping the future development associated with Newcastle airport through its "Williamtown Special Activation Precinct" and had a range of controls which could influence the standards of commercial and rural land users fronting this and other roadways in the LGA.

**At the conclusion of the deliberations on this matter, Council invited TRRA to put forward a proposal on this initiative which could be the basis for detailed discussions with Council staff.**

## **The Gateway Deficiencies**

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. This is well-illustrated by the **attached portfolio of photographs of substandard development and poorly maintained rural landscapes.**

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.