



24 September 2020

The General Manager
Port Stephens Council

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Smart Parking - Fees and Charges Amendment

Council file reference PSC2019-05143-001

On exhibition between 28 August and 24 September has been a revised schedule of 'Smart Parking Fees and Charges'

The Schedule on exhibition is presented without any explanation of the changes or context. This makes a mockery of public consultation – the public should be given at least the same explanatory material as was provided to Councillors on 25 August. We are able to comment substantively only because we have been following the issue – others seeing the item in the Public Exhibition section of Council's website would have no idea what changes were being made or why.

There is no information explaining that there are in fact no changes proposed to the actual parking fees themselves, which remain the same as now. Rather the changes relate to time limits (and the introduction of free parking permits for residents etc).

The effect of the changes are however meaningless in the absence of maps showing where the zones with different time limits are located. These maps do exist – in the minutes of the Local Traffic Committee June 2020 meeting, and could easily have been placed on exhibition with the Schedule to inform consultation.

We have been advised that no maps were included, nor reference made to Nelson Bay, because the changes to the Schedule were generic and will apply across the LGA. However, this argument is contradicted by including 'Smart' Parking in the title, as it is only proposed to introduce 'smart parking' technology selectively, and initially only in Nelson Bay. These changes are clearly directly related to the Nelson Bay parking changes and should have been presented as such.



We acknowledge that Council has now prepared an extensive program of public information on the proposed smart parking scheme for Nelson Bay Town Centre and Foreshore, which will involve a 'pop-up shop' in the town centre and associated materials. While welcome, this information will come too late to inform submissions on the Schedule of Fees and Charges.

TRRA has no specific comment on the content of the revised Schedule, but this is only because we are not invited to also comment on the location of the zones in which the fees and time limits will apply. To the best of our knowledge, there has been no prior direct consultation on the zones with the community, including specifically the many businesses which will be directly effected by the introduction of, or changes to, parking fees. In some cases, new or revised parking limits and fees may be critical to the survival of some local businesses, and it seems extraordinary that a greater effort has not been made to communicate with them to date.

We understand that the revised time limits and zones will be introduced progressively over the next few months.

We submit that:

- Staff attending the 'pop-up shop' in the town centre between now and the end of year be charged specifically with seeking feedback on the fees, time limits and zones, and
- Council makes a commitment to review these variables in light of feedback received.

We have no objection to this submission being published in full and unredacted.

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