



TRRA Inc GENERAL MEETING

**Zoom meeting
Monday 16 August, 2021 – 7.00 pm
Minutes**

Attendance: 21

Apologies: None

Minutes of the previous meeting (Posted on TRRA Website)

1. Moved Bill Salter, seconded Geoff Washington that the Minutes be accepted. Agreed by consensus.

Matters Arising

2. None.

Correspondence

3. Besides the regular comments on agenda items sent to Councillors ahead of Council meetings, TRRA had written again to the Mayor on the jet ski issue and there had been correspondence relating to misogynistic comments about a Councillor posted on the TRRA Facebook page. Both of these matters were covered later in the agenda.

Treasurer's Report

4. The Treasurer presented. Moved Denis Pittorino, seconded Nigel Waters that the report be accepted. Agreed by consensus.

Guest Speakers

5. Mel Turner and Robert Reeve (President and Vice-President respectively, Business Port Stephens (BPS)) addressed the meeting on the subject of the impact of Covid restrictions on local businesses and how local residents could help. They emphasized the cash flow issues facing many businesses and were encouraged by examples of businesses helping other businesses, for example by buying gift vouchers that could be used later, and even by simple acts of sending messages of support. BPS was supporting members by getting information to them on government support and by Board members keeping in touch with other members. They acknowledged the work of Leah Anderson and Peter Clough in dramatically increasing the membership base; they were currently focusing on establishing additional business precincts.
6. One participant mentioned that the Port Stephens Eats Facebook page provided good information on which restaurants were offering takeaway meals during the lockdown. BPS will seek publicity (local print and social media and others) on the urgent need for local support to businesses. The Chairman offered free advertising through Marine Rescue Port Stephens on its 'Port Chatter', while another member undertook to put a notice on the U3A noticeboard. On the question of rental relief for businesses, it was agreed that TRRA would write to the State Government in support.

Reports

7. *Planning for your Place.* Nigel Waters summarised the Council initiative and thoughts about the way it might be implemented. He encouraged members to volunteer to participate.
8. *Shoal Bay Improvements to the Public Domain.* Nigel Waters reported on the current controversies around the changes at Shoal Bay. While appreciation of the shade shelters was subjective, his main concern was with the inadequate advance consultation, especially since the initial plans had not shown how the structures would look. Other members agreed that Council did not know how to conduct community consultation. There was also concern about the amenities block, which was less functional and appealing than examples elsewhere. Councillor Arnott reported that he had secured support for Council to review the design for amenities blocks but this would just take the form of a briefing.
9. *Major Projects and Storm Damage Restoration.* Nigel Waters said that Council had secured State Government funding for the new bridge to replace the failed culvert on Foreshore Drive and was still seeking funding to repair landslips elsewhere and work to improve drainage at Lagoons Estate. It was regrettable that they had not consulted local organizations with environmental expertise or published the new design: TRRA would continue to pursue the matter.
10. *Public Access at Council Meetings.* Nigel Waters reported on the changes approved by Council, to limit speakers to 5 minutes during Public Access and to forbid questioning. He acknowledged the efforts of Councillors Abbott and Arnott to try to protect this democratic right. Councillor Arnott thought that it would not be possible to overturn the decision until a new Council was elected.

11. *Jet Ski Control Measures.* The President summarized the history of this issue. Following a dismissive reply by the Mayor to TRRA's concerns, TRRA had written to him again with concrete suggestions for action that Council could take. This was discussed at the recent meeting with the Mayor and senior Council staff. It was reported that the Marine Parks Advisory Committee was investigating this as a State-wide issue, while Council would in the longer term be developing a Waterways Strategy which might address it.
12. *Gateway Update.* The President reported that, since there was no interest on the part of the Mayor or most Councillors in improving the approach to the Tomaree Peninsula, this should become an election issue. Robyn Williams was compiling a photo dossier showing the poor state of the Gateway. The Williamstown SAP Plan would be a possible entry point for improvements but the community had not been consulted in developing the draft.
13. *IPCC Report.* The President encouraged participants to join the key community groups on environmental issues, EcoNetwork and Climate Action Port Stephens. Council was failing to take a lead on environmental concerns, other than some "greenwashing" and improvements to waste management. They were not even filling key staff positions and were making it easier to remove trees. One member reported that the threat to the access road to Fingal Bay was real and urgent. Participants agreed that climate change represented an existential threat to our community and should be made a major issue at the Council elections.
14. *Changes to Facebook presence.* The President noted that, while Facebook was a valuable tool for mobilising community views, it was difficult to manage. There had recently been some misogynistic comments by others on a post on the TRRA Facebook page "Tomaree Voice" which had not been noticed soon enough, before they became the subject of complaints in the media and to the TRRA Committee. He acknowledged that the comments in question should have been taken down earlier. It had been decided, in view of this experience, that regrettably the "Tomaree Voice" would no longer accept comments. He understood that it would be possible to create a new type of Facebook page that could be better managed, allowing for approval in advance of comments, but the Committee did not have the necessary expertise. He called for volunteers, or suggestions for possible volunteers, to manage the TRRA Facebook presence.
15. *Website and email administration.* The President also called for volunteers willing and able to post items on our web page and keep it up to date. Work was needed to ensure administration of TRRA email accounts, domain name and service providers, as well as Dropbox and multiple hardware/operating systems/email applications.

Other Planning Issues

16. John James reported on a number of planning issues:
 - a Seniors housing at 118 Soldiers Point Road had been approved by planners under delegated authority, despite setting a precedent for 7 storey development in the area. Only 2 Councillors (Arnott and Nell) had supported call-up.

- b A revised proposal for the Bay Resort, Anna Bay had been withdrawn by the applicant following a conciliation conference in July. It is likely to come back.
- c 10 Tomaree Road, Shoal Bay: approval for the apartments (a rescission motion was lost on the mayor's casting vote) sets a precedent for exceeding height limits there, just at the time that work is starting on the Shoal Bay Place Plan.
- d Anna Bay Helipad/Heliport proposal has attracted more than 80 submissions and has been called up before Council. The applicants have not yet consulted the Defence Department despite the site being within the zone limits for Williamtown airport.
- e Other issues mentioned included the Boardwalk Lifestyle Resort in Anna Bay, now proposed by Ingenia; 109 Foreshore Drive, which had been confirmed by Council as being "operational", meaning that it could be sold at any time; a revised proposal for the new Aldi site and a proposal for a camping ground, amenities building and swimming pool at Murray's Brewery, Bob's Farm. The latter seemed to safeguard existing mature trees and would be a welcome tourist attraction.

The meeting concluded at 9.00 pm.

Next meeting: 11 October 2021, provisionally.

Bill Salter

19 August 2021