



TRRA Inc GENERAL MEETING

**Monday, 8th August 2022 at 7.00 pm
will be held via Zoom**

The decision in favour of a *Zoom format* has been taken having regard for recent Covid outbreaks and our responsibility to minimise the possibility of infection of attendees or contacts.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88386431209?pwd=Rk40Q0Zha2NBL2Q2ZFFQdjIKNnNPQT09>

Meeting ID: 883 8643 1209

Passcode: 618783

AGENDA

- a. **Apologies**
- b. **Minutes of the previous meeting** (Posted on TRRA Website)
- c. **Business Arising**
- d. **Correspondence In and Out**
- e. **Business Arising from Correspondence**
- f. **Treasurer's Report**
- g. **Reports**
 - i. Parking in the Tomaree Peninsula
 - ii. Port Stephens "funded future" and possible rates rises
 - iii. Retirement villages
- h. **Planning.** TRRA Current Issues - DAs of Interest
- i. **General Business**

NEWSLETTER

'Our Funded Future' - Council's Finances and proposed Way Forward including options for Rates Increases

On 8 July Members of the TRRA Committee attended one of our 'Catch up with the Mayor and Council Executive'. The Mayor was engaged on high level negotiations arising from the serious flooding across the LGA but the Acting General Manager, Tim Crosdale and several of his senior Executive officers were present. The major agenda item was a presentation from Tim Hazell (PSC, Financial Services Manager) on Council's financial sustainability and their plans to deal with this situation including a Special Rates Variation (SRV).

Tim reported on recent advice provided by two academics who had been commissioned by Council to examine its financial sustainability. While Council had managed to achieve a close to break-even result over the past couple of years, the experts' prognosis was for unsustainable deficits in the future. On the

revenue side, Covid and other market factors had seen profits from Holiday Parks and the Newcastle Airport greatly reduced. On the other hand, costs have been soaring for items such as fuel, electricity, equipment, insurance, building materials and more recently interest on loans. Major storm and flooding events have also had negative budget impacts. Prices across the board are expected to continue to increase in line with the inflation rate of 6%, while Council's rates are currently pegged at an annual maximum increase of 2.5%. These underlying factors are largely due to national and worldwide trends, although Council has taken steps to economise on spending and to achieve greater operational efficiency.

It was pointed out that the level of rates in Port Stephens was significantly lower than the other Councils in the Lower Hunter.

In these circumstances Council needed to develop options to ensure future financial sustainability.

These options included reduced levels of service and infrastructure provision, asset sales, increased fees and charges, and an increase in rates. Mr Hazell included details of these measures and the resulting impact on the bottom-line going forward. TRRA representatives appreciated the comprehensive and frank nature of his presentation.

Council tabled its plans for public consultation which appeared to be well conceived.

TRRA members are encouraged to take advantage of these offers to "have your say" as detailed on Council's website. Right click the following portstephens.nsw.gov.au/our-funded-future

Dates and times for drop-in face to face sessions are listed (click "have your say" box)

TRRA's POSITION

Mr Hazell had indicated a willingness to be a guest speaker at or General Meeting on 8 August. However, due to the deadlines for responding to “Have Your Say” consultations and our decision to hold this meeting by zoom, we decided against this offer. Instead, the executive considers that the public engagement material as distributed is sufficient for members to study and reach their own conclusions. The Issue of Council's financial sustainability will be on the agenda for 8 August and TRRA will consider any comments at the meeting in forming its opinion on the options on offer.

Once Council refines its strategy following the public engagement, there will be a further opportunity for TRRA to make a formal submission. If Council decides on a Special Rate Variation it must lodge its application to IPART by February 2023. IPART itself will also take submissions from the public.

The TRRA executive is at this point in time reluctant to form any firm views on this matter until it has an opportunity to study the results of the ‘Have Your Say’ process and its members’ comments.

On the basis of the advice of the experts and of senior Council officers, the TRRA 's executive acknowledges that there is a serious threat to Council's financial sustainability and in the absence of major cuts in services, options for increasing revenues will need to be considered. In 2018 when Council sought a SRV, TRRA opposed it largely due to the magnitude of the proposed increase and its excessive cumulative impact over 7 years.

SMART Parking

The Council at its 26 July 2022 meeting considered an agenda Item on this matter which was subject to the following Recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION IS THAT COUNCIL:

- 1) *Note the continued rollout of SMART Parking at:
Shoal Bay
The expansion of the Nelson Bay area including:
 - o Fly Point
 - o Little Beach
 - o Laman Street*

- 2) *Commence investigation and community consultation at Birubi Headland, Anna Bay, Fingal Bay and One Mile around the installation of SMART Parking.*

- 3) *Develop infrastructure program for investment of SMART Parking funds at Birubi Headland, Anna Bay, Fingal Bay and One Mile after community consultation and investigation.*

- 4) *Continue to provide free SMART Parking in Port Stephens for residents, rate payers and employees of local businesses. Time based restrictions to apply.*

- 5) *Manage funding by holding revenue generated from SMART Parking in an internally restricted reserve.*

- 6) *Invest the funds raised from SMART Parking back into SMART Parking precincts.*

The Minutes of this Meeting are not yet available.

Prior to the 26 July meeting, TRRA wrote to all Councillors and the General Manager raising a number of concerns summarised below:

TRRA suggests that these rollouts in Nelson Bay together with those proposed for Shoal Bay, Birubi Headland, Anna Bay, Fingal Bay and One Mile constitute a very substantial expansion of the SMART Parking Scheme across many of the major attractions in the Tomaree Destination Area.

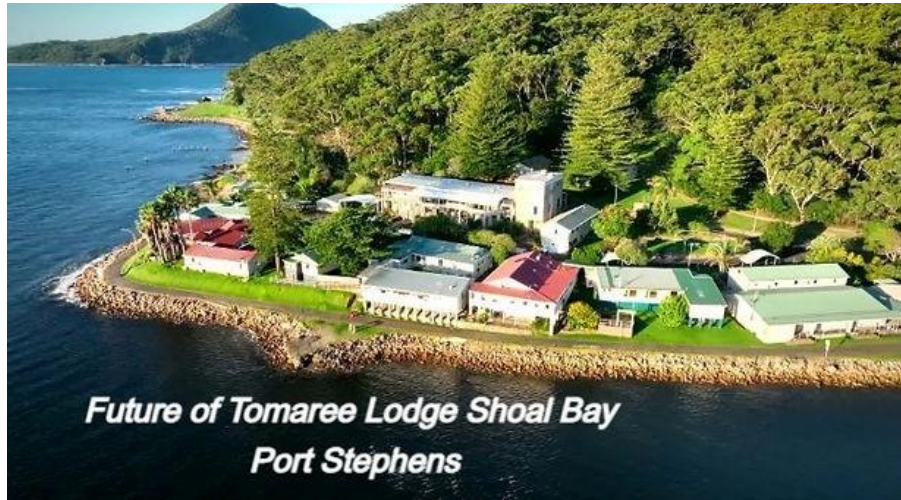
Accordingly, it is our view that this Report should include (or have attached) a financial analysis / business plan which provides details of the overall costs to Council for each site and projected revenues which can be expected from these locations. The report should also include details of the results achieved in the Nelson Bay Smart parking Initiative. A key consideration should also be the potential for such a comprehensive scheme as is now proposed to become a deterrent for visitors to our Port Stephens destination area generally.

In addition, comments were offered strongly opposing two detailed proposed extensions in the Nelson Bay list, i.e

- the portion of Victoria Parade from the Fly Point Dive site to Little Beach being designated for Smart Parking. (Road already taken up by one-way vehicle lane and shared pathway)
- 48A Stockton Street and surrounding Road Verge (AKA Worimi Park). This is the heavily wooded land at the Gateway to Nelson Bay north of Stockton Street adjoining the Anglican Church. (Public Domain Plan identified this as being a key parkland Gateway to N Bay).

Council has offered to have a staff member join our Zoom meeting to provide further information.

Tomaree Headland Heritage Group (THHG)



The Heritage Group continues to engage with the relevant NSW Departments and the responsible Ministers to maintain this iconic the site of the Tomaree Lodge in public ownership and to secure a suitable management arrangement, preferably a trust with membership from local stakeholders, heritage experts and the Council.

With financial assistance from Port Stephens Council, consultants have been commissioned to prepare a Strategic Concept Plan for the adaptive reuse of the site and its buildings. Work on this plan is well advanced.

A recent Newcastle Herald article on the THHG and its activities may be accessed on pages 1,6 and 7 [HERE](#) .

TRRA Planning Report July 2022

TRRA has made two submissions to Port Stephens Council in the last month:

- On a revised **‘Planning matters to be reported to Council’ Policy**, arguing for more transparency, and supporting a change from 3 to 2 Councillors needed to ‘call-up’ matters for decision by Council in public rather than by staff behind closed doors.

- On a new **Communications and Engagement Strategy**, again making a case for greater transparency, including better public notice of more Development Applications and Planning Proposals (for re-zoning etc.)

We have also drafted a submission into Council's revised **Code of Meeting Practice**, supporting changes suggested by Councillors Anderson and Arnott to increase transparency and accountability. Changes include:

- Webcasting Public Access sessions that precede some Council meetings, where the presenter consents.
- A few extra-days' notice of Council agendas, which will allow for more analysis and consultation.
- Recording of all votes in Council, so that the community can see which way their elected representatives have voted.

The revised concept plan for the Bannisters redevelopment has been approved, and we await a DA which will allow comment on the detail. There is no news of an appeal against Council's refusal of the 9-storey apartment proposal for 17-19 Yacaaba Street, and we have no date yet for the same developer's plans for 11-15 Church Street (the crane site) to come to Council for decision.

**Geoff Washington
Media Officer (Acting)
July 2022**



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You have expressed an interest in receiving updates from TRRA

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