



## **PRESIDENTS REPORT – TRRA INC – 2021/22**

### **Introduction**

TRRA Inc. continued to represent fearlessly the interests of the Tomaree community over the past year in physical and on-line meetings with Council staff and councillors other local interest groups, and members of the community.

Each council meeting agenda and its papers have been reviewed and relevant comments submitted, often in great detail and reflecting a very professional level of research, care and attention to detail. Where praise for Council action has been due, we have given it and where better solutions are evident, we have advocated them vigorously on paper and at public access.

Not surprisingly, providing this level of representation requires a significant commitment of resources by our committee and other interested TRRA members. As President, I wish to express my appreciation for these contributions, particularly those made by Nigel Waters and John James.

I would like to cite briefly some of the major issues in which we have been involved and then draw some conclusions from their outcomes.

### **TRRA's Submissions on Developments, Policies and Plans**

TRRA has made submissions on and in many cases met with council staff or made presentations at public access on the following DAs and initiatives in the last 12 months. The list is far from exhaustive, but it gives you some idea of the breadth and depth of what has been tackled this year:

#### ***Development Proposals***

- Proposed Heliport at Anna Bay
- Units at 8 Central Ave Salamander Bay
- 62 Unit Apartment Building at 118A Soldiers Point Road
- 19 Yacaaba St apartment building
- 11-15 Church St apartment building

- Lavis Lane
- 58 Sandy Point Road
- 1 Yacaaba Street apartments. ...
- Tourist Resort, Anna Bay.
- Soldiers Point Marina commercial extension.
- Latitude One Major extension of 170 dwellings

### ***Policies and Plans***

- Community Engagement Policy
- Planning Policy
- Code of meeting Practice Policy
- Williamstown SAP Master Plan
- Place Plans.
- The Design and Place SEPP.
- Proliferation of Lifestyle Villages
- Expansion of smart parking in the Tomaree Peninsula.
- Gateway to the Tomaree Peninsula
- The 'Funding Our Future' rate, fees and charges rise proposal.
- Continuation of our support for the reclassification 109 Foreshore Drive to "community" status, to ensure that this important foreshore reserve is preserved.
- TRRA has also made submissions to the NSW Department of Planning on three important documents:
  - The Draft Hunter Regional Plan 2041, which sets the planning framework for the region
  - A new approach to rezonings in NSW
  - Design and Place – a complex suite of reforms to the planning system

Time doesn't permit me (you'll be glad to hear) to touch on each of these even briefly. Anyway, those who attend our regular general meetings will be well aware of these issues and their outcomes – although some are still current.

## **Meet The Candidates Forum for 2021 Council Elections**

A major event for TRA was the conduct of the Meet the Candidates Forum for the Council Elections in October last year. We managed to hold a combined face-to-face and on-line forum that was very successful in providing exposure for principal candidates and offering members an opportunity to question them.

## **Changes from Last Year**

At last year's AGM, I summarised a number of general concerns our association had following experienced over the preceding year in our dealings with Council. These related to:

- Little effective leadership on climate change and environmental issues including the protection of endangered wildlife,
- An increasing propensity for less transparency in process,
- Token community consultation on major developments and policy and an unwillingness to listen to criticism, and
- Little appetite for enforcing planning standards and limits.

As these were all serious issues bearing on the democratic process in the functioning of local government, I think it is important for me to make some comment on changes we have experienced in these areas over the last year.

I am pleased to report that there seems to have been some substantial improvement in a number of areas:

- The new Council seems to be taking a greater leadership role in the matter of climate change, although it is still early days.
- Improvements in meeting practice have provided better transparency, and
- The recent consultation on the Funding Our Future has shown a far better approach to community consultation. It is a pity, however, that the public response has been so poor.

TRRA, is nevertheless still very concerned about the enforcement of planning limits and the readiness to grant variations to these limits without plausible reasons. The 11-15 Church St proposals is just one recent case in point.

## **TRRA Communication Initiatives**

A big part of our role is facilitating the communication from ratepayers and residents (giving them a voice) and communicating to them the issues of the day and what we are doing about them

Our general meetings are a large part of that, even though this last year we have, like many organisations, had to conduct most of our meetings on-line. Hopefully we can conduct most of our meeting in the future face-to-face.

**Website.** TRRA continues to host a Website which reports on its activities and comments on major issues. This site also accepts comments from readers which are moderated. I'd like to thank Andre Dussart for stepping into the Webmaster position and providing the much needed expertise to keep this vital medium operating effectively. I would also like to heartily thank Alister Wardell, on behalf of the Committee and members, for the great job he did for years as Andre's predecessor.

**Newsletters.** Thanks to our retiring Media Offer, Geoff Washington, our regular TRRA Newsletters are circulated to members and other interested parties. Thanks for a great job again Geoff.

**Media Relationships** TRRA also has a sound relationship with the local media outlets and has enjoyed improved publicity through its press releases.

**Facebook presence.** We also have a Facebook presence, "Tomaree Voice", that has been a valuable tool for mobilising community views, but we have had to control comments carefully for legal liability reasons. I must thank Nigel Waters again for managing this beast.

## TRRA's Collaboration with Peak Community Groups

TRRA also continues to collaborate with other peak community groups in the Tomaree - including Business Port Stephens, EcoNetwork, Destination Port Stephens, Climate Action Port Stephens. Tomaree Headland Heritage Group and other local groups.

## Our 2021-22 Committee

I would like to acknowledge our hard-working Committee.

- Vice-president, John James, and Planning Sub-Committee Convenor, Nigel Waters, effectively monitor all planning and administrative issues impacting on the Tomaree. The professional standard of their submissions is widely recognised. They have been the true powerhouse of our efforts.
- Our Secretary Bill Salter and Treasurer Denis Pittorino very effectively take care of these vital administrative responsibilities.
- I've already mentioned Geoff Washington's invaluable efforts as Media Officer and similarly Andre's work on the Website..
- Geoff Basser contributed to our overall strategy drawing on his wide-ranging experience and positive can-do approach to tricky issues.
- Robyn Williams for her tireless efforts for fostering our membership numbers and work on the Gateway Project.

- Cath Norman, Hazel Driver and Gil Whitton for their willing support as committee members, and
- Judy Washington who isn't officially on our Committee but does such a consistently great job in preparing the Powerpoints for our meetings.

## Other Support

I would also like to acknowledge the support we have enjoyed from our State Member for Port Stephens, Kate Washington MP. Kate has attended a number of our meetings and has supported our positions in writing on other occasions.

It would also be remiss of me not to recognise the regular presence and support from Cr Leah Anderson at our General meetings and at the quarterly 'Catch-up' meeting I have with Council senior staff. That's been much appreciated Leah.

Finally, I wish to thank our membership for their ongoing support and practical assistance when called upon. Could I only ask you all to mention us to your friends and neighbours and actively encourage their membership of TRRA. The larger our member base, the more legitimate our voice.

Thank you for your attendance and continuing interest.

Ben van der Wijngaart

President, TRRA Inc.

10 October 2022