

Looking ahead and re-thinking for a sustainable town

Pathways 2 Nelson Bay.....Contribution to DiscussionMarch 2010

If we continue to believe that the economy is central to everything we do, then we are continuing to relegate both the natural world, and the economy, to a potential (some would say inevitable) downward spiral.

We can change this into new opportunities. The best place to begin is in our own backyard, in our own towns and villages. How then, can Nelson Bay attain an enduring future with sustainability?

- The town and its foreshore are both located within a small natural bay-side basin which, with its wider supporting surrounds, has a 'sense of place' needing to be fully acknowledged, protected and further enhanced.
- Kurrara Hill in the south is a verdant, sentinel-like point of reference for a northerly aspect and gradient, with elevations to the east and west, down to and culminating on the foreshores of the Bay.
- In this natural context there are obvious constraints to what can and should be constructed within its limited dimensions in order to avoid intimidating, out of scale development.
- Proportionality within the town's natural context, involves building-site dimensions, ratios of footprint to bulk and height, design and architecture, solar access, air-flows, open space, landscaping, and pathways for pedestrian and cycle access, among other considerations.

Ecological footprint...page 8 of the 2009 Port Stephens Draft Futures Strategy:

"A Port Stephens resident requires on average of 8.1 hectares of land to produce the energy, material goods, food and water to maintain current lifestyles....With 62,500 people, the amount of land required to sustain the LGA at current rates of energy, material goods and food consumption would be approximately 500,000 hectares. This is over 5 times the actual area of the LGA".

This is advice to be heeded now, requiring a considered and rational response for a sustainable future. We can start with those matters and issues that are already impacting detrimentally on the town, as in:

- **increasing traffic volumes** and parking congestion dominating the town and now, necessitating as a priority, holistic traffic and parking management as opposed to the simplistic on-site engineering fix.
- **the town's carbon footprint** which can be reduced through efficient land-use, on-site energy generation and efficiencies, water harvesting and efficiencies, better waste and recycling management and improved public transport.
- **a seasonal economy** that has also to be addressed and transformed into an integrated sustainability program for a stabilised and successful local economy.
- **conventional thinking** that tells us the economy is everything and central to all that we do. Is this wise and good policy if it is not integrated with other sustainability criteria: environment, social, cultural and governance?

This is a projection of alternatives and new opportunities without over-ambitious and transformative town projects and works that are unlikely to ever eventuate. Sustainability, with its components and criteria, is a journey we must undertake within the current debate about a new Development Control Plan for the town.

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EcoNetwork's vision projects an eco-oriented culture that addresses the total human condition for a holistic quality of life now and the transfer of intact natural systems to future generations.

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