

EUROBODALLA SHIRE COUNCIL

PUBLIC FORUM

All members of the community who have registered have been advised that they have a **maximum of five minutes** to put their case.

Ordinary Meeting of Council on 12 September 2017

Name	Subject/Comments
Public Forum – 10.00am	
Lei Parker	GM17/032 Adoption of Media Policy
Trish Hellier	IR17/053 Batemans Bay Bridge Preferred Option: Council Submission to Roads and Maritime Services

Councillors,

My name is Lei Parker. I am the editor and director of South Coast Beagle Pty Ltd which is an ASIC registered media company.

I am here to day to speak to GMR17/032 DRAFT MEDIA POLICY

The first thing that is evident of the Media Policy is that there are considerable changes and **that there is no evidence of any councillors pen to the modifications.**

It claims to exist to guide a relationship between Council and media, communicate Council affairs, Set a framework and promote positive coverage of Council affairs that is fair, accurate and reliable.

That seems to be in line with previous versions however this one has had a makeover.

Firstly it re-defines what Council's Media Service **is or more pointedly what it isn't.**

It then re-defines what a Media Organisation is:

*Organisations that are **either accredited with or regulated by a recognised media industry peak body,***

OR that acts in accordance with the MEAA Code of Ethics for journalists and/or the Australian Press Council's Standards of Practice and Advisory Guidelines.

Realising that they could NOT force membership to these bodies they added an **OR.**

The Beagle does act in accordance with the Ethics, Standards of Practice and Guidelines mentioned as a matter of course to comply with requirements of it's Professional Indemnity responsibilities

Of interest is the inclusion of:

In consultation with Councillors, the General Manager may cease or refuse to provide Council's media service to individuals or organisations that **DO NOT act in accordance**.....

Council were recently challenged by The Beagle on why they exclusively made available to Fairfax weekly environment articles written by Council staff in Council hours for exclusive publication in Fairfax Friday and weekend newspapers.

Under the Media Policy, it wanted to be provided these same articles without bias and was advised that it would NOT be provided with the articles as they were exclusive for Fairfax.

The Beagle enquired why these articles were not freely available on Council's website and was advised that the publication of the articles was conditional on being exclusive to Fairfax.

The Beagle asked for the weekly Council Noticeboard to be provided for publication and was advised that the Noticeboard was advertising and, as such, fell outside of the Media Policy and would not be provided.

The Beagle advised that the Noticeboard provided to Fairfax was NOT on Council's website and therefore the only way the community could see it was to buy a newspaper.

The Beagle was advised that the information on the Noticeboard could be found at various locations around the Council website if someone wished to.

The Beagle reminded Council that the Noticeboard, as published in the local newspaper, had once been freely available on Council's website.

It was found that the conduct of two senior Council staff in refusing the Beagle's request, was a breach of clause 4.2 of Council's *Media Policy*, since it resulted in the *South Coast Beagle* not being treated in the same manner as Fairfax and there could arguably have been a perceived bias in

favour of Fairfax publications.

The Ecology reports and all other Council media are now provided to all news outlets, including the *Beagle*. Council has also reinstated the Noticeboard on its website.

Two submissions have been received.

Submission One: **was strongly in support of changes** and specifically noted **unreserved support** for the seven changes. It is not known if the submission came from an accredited media organisation or from a member of the public.

Submission Two, which included analysis, interpretation and opinion of elements within the policy for the benefit of Councillors was from The Beagle, a registered media company.

In my submission, I queried the expansion of the **Ethics, Principles, Standards and Guidelines requirements**.

Councils answer “it may not be a good use of council resources to respond to **an unnecessary level of querulous or vexatious media queries**.

On August 22nd The Beagle formally lodged a media request regarding the Batemans Bay Bowling Club parcel of land in regards to Sea Level Rise.

It also requested a response to the riparian zones referred to by Catalina Country Club in their 2015 - 2016 Annual Report which suggested the land was burdened restricting development within 40 metres of the high water line resulting in a 30 percent reduction in available land .

There has been no response. Has someone in Council determined that the questions are querulous (complaining in a rather petulant or whining manner) or vexatious (causing or tending to cause annoyance, frustration, or worry.)

My submission also “referenced examples of past media matters”

Policy aim: promote positive coverage of Council affairs that is fair, accurate and reliable.

The Beagle recently refuted a Council Media Release (Friday May 12th, 2017) that claimed

“Council has been judged the top council in Australia for customer service general enquiries in a quarterly national benchmarking report.”

In the opinion of *The Beagle* editor the media release was neither accurate or reliable.

The Beagle published the media release as provided however stated that, in the opinion of the editor, it was deceptive. At the bottom of the media release *The Beagle* advised readers:

That statement is blatantly false unless set with a context. Eurobodalla Council has been judged as being placed first amongst a group of 60 councils as measured by one company. Did they measure all their client councils - we don't know. Did they measure all the councils in Australia? NO. There are 537 local government councils throughout Australia. So, clearly, it is not true to state that our council has been "judged the top in Australia".

Council communication staff DID NOT comply with *the Australian Press Council's Standards that they now demand of the media they intend to interact with.*

Note that the Media Policy aims to promote positive coverage, ensure communication **is newsworthy**, build Council's reputation and reduce risk

That is commonly called SPIN.

Council have just been severely castigated by the Office of Local Government for several breaches of the Local Government Act. Surely that

is newsworthy?

The report dismisses our **non-related matters...**

In whose opinion is the inclusion of **request access to Isolated Video Feed** in the policy NOT A RELATED MATTER?

Example: https://youtu.be/WdcUgQh7_Ow

Having a Media Policy is all well and good however Council has a major problem in reaching its audience and, once having reached them, engaging with them.

Unfortunately, after this Media Policy is adopted Council will still have a poor reputation for effective community communication. That poor reputation is driven more by the **decisions of what not to say** rather than what to say. This remains a cultural issue.

Good morning Mayor Innes, Councillors, General Manager, Staff, Gallery, and those comfortable Live Streaming .

My name is Patricia Hellier from North Batemans Bay I would like to address Item No. IR 17/ 053 SUBMISSION ON RMS BATEMANS BAY BRIDGE.

I live north of the Batemans Bay Bridge and I cross the bridge at least once a day and some times more often. At a Council meeting earlier this year I said that when we purchased our property we were fully aware of the raising of the bridge and the approximate times this occurred and if we had appointments we timed them accordingly.

I was present on the two occasions when Hon Andrew Constance MP made the announcement for funding for the new bridge.

I did apply for the RMS's STRATEGIC OPTION ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP, unfortunately the RMS apparently only chose two people to represent the community and I like many others who applied was not accepted.

A few weeks ago I attend two of the three information sessions conducted by the RMS. I arrived at the Batemans Bay Community Centre at the given time of 4pm for the first session and there were two other people there before me. I immediately raised with a employee of the RMS that in one of their adds they had a session advertised at the Batemans Bay Primary School on the Saturday 19th August the same day and time that they had advertised a session at the Community Centre this was immediately recognised as a mistake by the RMS.

Within a half an hour there was a good cross section of people, many familiar faces, I was pointedly asked by one person and this was not Mr Peter Bernard is "Liz here, is the GM here, is Warren here" and at last weeks meeting we heard the Mayor state that the Councillors had their own meeting with the RMS. There was one very loud irate man who raised a number of questions with the RMS Project Manager and others that had a varied views and concerns on this project, I left at 5.45pm. The second session I attended was at the Village Centre on a very cold windy afternoon and it was hard to gage the interest from the community.

We all acknowledge that forward planning is extremely important and I realise that discussions about a new bridge or an alternate route past Batemans Bay has been on the books for a number of years. I am fully aware of the traffic issue at Christmas, Easter and Long Weekend etc. around this particular area and in the shire generally with the influx of tourist, BUT we who live in this shire are the lucky ones, we are not sitting in long traffic queues seven days a week like many living in larger cities and while I hear many locals complain about the wait realistically we are spoiled .

YES we need a plan that will provide for the community for the next 20 years, and while I see that the option being put forward may eliminate a traffic problem on the north side of the bridge I can only see a larger problem with traffic merging onto North Street Batemans Bay, as currently the first exit off the bridge onto Clyde street is to be eliminated in this proposal. It is being suggested that there will be a lift at the southern end of the bridge for the pedestrians I have to wonder how much will the maintenance of this lift cost and how many people will be prepared to enter this lift at night and what about vandalism?

I believe there has to be better options and further studies should be conducted and even as we sit here today the studies on the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage is being conducted at Korner's Park Batemans Bay for this project. If I had to vote I would vote for a deferral until further information becomes available on a number of aspects of this project from the RMS. According to a speaker at last week's Extra Ordinary Council Meeting there has been a "blanket claim lodged" in relation to crown lands and this could impact this proposal by the RMS, surely until this issue is finalised this project should be postponed.

Yesterday I was asked what my preferred option would be and the only one I would consider would be the East Option (the pink/purple line) which is the one closest to the existing bridge structure with an exit onto Clyde Street and I would vote to retain the current bridge for a tourist attraction.

There are many who live just north of the bridge that do not have a car and walk into town for all of their needs, some even walk to work. One lady complained to me as recently she purchased a new unit on Wharf Road and when she bought there she sold her car because she could walk to Bridge Plaza. With the current plan being displayed many have realised that their daily walk will appear to become a marathon hike with an expected exit being North Street instead of Clyde Street and then of course there will be a wind issue for many, and what about the noise level given the height of the bridge and what affect will it have on the retirement village across from Korner's Park, and you may well ask what will happen to the coffee shops, ice creamery, pizza shops etc. along Clyde Street that currently enjoy the foot traffic off the bridge?

12 months ago I was asked by one of the land owners on the Clayton's land on Wharf Road if I had any ideas what they could do with this land that had been deemed not to be built on, I suggested that they should seriously think about establishing a tourist attraction with a playground area and coffee shop on this land and set up an alternative mode of transport across the Clyde River from the north side to the Batemans Bay CBD area and I said tongue in cheek perhaps a revamp and renovation of the old punt system, alternatively perhaps Jet Ski's hire which is a great way to get the adrenaline pumping. I can just see a Jet Ski Parking Bay being established with the old parking metres being bought out of retirement and placed on the foreshore perhaps they could be mistaken for a sculpture or 2 (I say this in jest of course BUT then, maybe not).

We are here today to discuss this item on the Agenda and I would like to draw the Councillors to the following words on the Code of Meeting Practice – 'We are an engaged and connected community – We work together to achieve our goals' – and yet here today we have another item on the Agenda in relation to Media access surely any and ALL Media Access is the way to engage with the community this is called a DEMOCRACY.

WHY am I here today, I have to ask the question, am I wasting my time? Is the exercise of Public Forum becoming pointless as I can assure you that question is well and truly out there? Councillors, ask yourself the question why are we not seeing those many interesting speakers addressing this Council?

I note that this item on the Agenda is dated 1st September 2017 and I have to question has this proposal already been submitted to the RMS without the endorsement of our councillors, I will reiterate "we are an engaged and connected community – we work together to achieve our goals" there has been NO consultation with Council and the Community on this issue.

Not all Councillors present here today to vote, live in the Batemans Bay area, BUT all have been elected to represent the whole shire and given this project is the gateway from the north entrance of the shire therefore it needs serious consideration as it can reflect on the whole shire and this group of Councillors have the opportunity to GET IT RIGHT .

This is the largest proposed project in the area for a number of years, careful consider should be given at this point in time to all aspects of this project therefore intensive community consultation should have been conducted by this council to collect as may varied views and thoughts as possible.

Councillor it would appear that you are here today to vote to endorse this proposal , has this proposal already been submitted? STOP for a moment and THINK, you do not have to vote for this proposal, you have a CHOICE, you have been elected to represent the voters for this shire, look at the alternatives, you don't have to "GO WITH THE FLOW" and if you do you will be the council that will be held liable and if you decide to vote against this proposal you will not be "hung drawn and quartered at the briefing after this meeting" and if the rumoured ramifications are "that you will be locked out of the loop" - WELL SO WHAT!!!! .

Thank you.