

Jenny Frazer SIRA Submission Outline

Hi everyone,

For those who don't know me, I'm Jenny Frazer and I moved onto the Island with my husband Scott about 18 months ago. To some people, I'm probably still a newbie who hasn't been here long enough to know what's going on, but having grown up in Papua New Guinea, I know what it's like to live in a small community, and I feel that everyone is entitled to have a voice, no matter how long they've lived in a place. I've tried really hard to become involved in this community, from working as a deckhand on the school ferry; to coordinating Women on Water get-togethers; and, organising Red Shield Appeals with a team of Island and Bay volunteers.

I could say that I hope my life experience, as well as my skills as an urban planner and community engagement practitioner give me some credibility, but ultimately I feel that it's being able to communicate, and more importantly to listen, that are as important as any academic credentials. I'm not saying that I'm an expert or that I'm trying to reinvent the wheel, but hopefully I can bring a fresh pair of eyes and some renewed enthusiasm to some tired issues.

So why did I decide to make a submission to SIRA? After attending an AGM soon after I arrived and being asked to join the Committee, I realised that I needed to live here for a while to get to know people and see how the place ticked. Even when the car park survey was distributed last year, I still didn't feel that I had been here long enough to really understand the history of the issues or the needs of the community-both past and present. It really wasn't until Scott & I went to the last SIRA meeting 6 weeks ago, that we realised that recommendations were being made on our behalf, that didn't necessarily reflect how we felt. The most frustrating part though, was sitting through the meeting knowing that we weren't allowed to comment.

One of the most basic principles of community engagement is to find out what your community is thinking, so I decided to ask people how they felt and realised pretty quickly, that I wasn't the only one who felt shut out from a process that I felt could be more inclusive-particularly in a small community like ours where we rub shoulders all the time. The sad thing though, is that many of the people I spoke to felt jaded and disillusioned, not only about certain decisions being made on their behalf, but also that they were branded 'the usual whingers' if they spoke out. That said, it wasn't all of the Committee, all of the time, that people felt weren't listening to them, but to a significant number of those to whom I spoke, SIRA appeared to have assumed a 'them and us' position in many respects.

I realise that the SIRA Committee is made up of people who unselfishly contribute their time on a voluntary basis and I would like to acknowledge the considerable contribution made by various SIRA committees over the years. Although certain issues do appear to be recurrent, I am hoping that my suggestions to improve general community engagement will be construed as positive and constructive.

I feel it would be helpful at this point to bring your attention to the SIRA/SIRAC Community Engagement Charter (a copy of which has been provided for you). Over the course of the meeting, I would ask that you familiarise yourselves with what has been promised in its aims and ask yourselves whether you feel that these aims are being met? As a community, it is worth noting that there is also a reciprocal responsibility upon us, to become aware of the issues that concern us and get involved. Apathy is the green light for decisions that don't truly reflect how we feel.

Once I had decided that I would like to make a submission, I was referred to the Visitor's Policy on the SIRA website and my heart sank. As a community-member, I found it very unwelcoming to be referred to as a 'visitor', and wondered how this had come about. Upon reading it, I discovered that apart from coming and observing, the only ways open to me to express my view at Committee meetings, were either by submitting a question on

notice the Friday before a meeting, or by requesting to make a submission at least 10 days prior-with various strings attached.

For a community organisation representing a relatively small population, this seemed unusually formal and immediately suggested an approach that distanced itself from the community it had been elected to represent. So I started to think about some creative, flexible and informal ways to engage with the community, (although I realised that many of these had been discussed in the past and had even been in practice under earlier SIRA administrations). I then asked myself, how could SIRA improve its engagement with a diverse community of varying needs and wants?

The opportunity presented itself earlier last week, when I attended a SIRA Community Engagement Working Group get-together, attended by 3 SIRA committee members, Judy Readman, Jon Maxim and Betsi Beem, (who chaired the meeting), as well as 9 diverse community-members. There, I witnessed community engagement in action and was encouraged to see goodwill and robust, but respectful dialogue, validating many of the suggestions that I am proposing to make in my submission today, including:

- Renaming and reviewing the Visitor's Policy, so that community members feel more welcomed;
- Agendas provided for upcoming meetings;
- Minutes of previous meetings provided in a more timely fashion;
- Informal 15 minute Q & A sessions at the end of Committee meetings for people to ask questions;
- More informal get-togethers between SIRAC members and the community to break the negative 'them and us' perception, eg. BBQs in the park/beer and pizza night in the Fireshed etc;
- Changes to the SIRA membership structure, to distinguish between those who have joined solely for water access. Many people feel that membership numbers have often been quoted to indicate support for SIRA and its decisions, where that may not necessarily have been the case;

- Liaising with other local residents associations (both off and onshore) to see how they do things, to incorporate Best Practice examples;
- Increased feedback to let the community know what is happening, through regular communication updates on the SIRA website/newsletters/notices at the wharves etc;
- Addressing negative community perception about SIRA, through the adoption of an enforceable code of conduct for committee-members, to include personal communications of any kind;
- Increased transparency of communications and documentation between SIRAC members, Council and any other authority or organisation, particularly related to major issues which affect the Scotland Island Community, and finally and MOST IMPORTANT,
- Conducting a comprehensive community survey, to determine the level of satisfaction with SIRA community engagement/decision-making processes, as well as to find out what changes, if any, people would like to see introduced, with the results to be independently collated.

I would like to ask that SIRAC members consider and respond to these suggestions thoughtfully and respectfully, by the next meeting.

I would now like to turn to the development of broader Community engagement strategies for SIRA to build capacity and to enhance community confidence (of both off and onshore communities) with regard to the CPPOM and CP Car park options including:

- Discussion with the community regarding a review of the CPPOM, particularly with regard to the new Planning legislation to be introduced later this year;
- Commitment from SIRA to ongoing respectful dialogue with ALL other affected stakeholders, including Church Point Friends (who are comprised of senior office-bearers of the 3 other affected off and onshore residents associations);

- Increased transparency of communications and documentation between SIRA, Council and any other authorities or organisation, related to the CPPOM, CP carpark, or any other issue where decisions are being made on behalf of the Island community;
- Consideration by SIRA to refrain from making any further recommendations/decisions, related to the CP carpark, until the outcome of the Pasadena DA is known and considered simultaneously with appropriate demand management strategies; and, finally and MOST IMPORTANT;
- Consideration by SIRA to present ALL options for the CP carpark SIMULTANEOUSLY to the community, together with construction and user costs, to enable the community to make a fully informed recommendation through SIRA as our elected representatives to Council, BEFORE any final decision is reached.

At the end of the day, particularly where this issue is concerned, the 'community' in its broadest sense is comprised of 'both on and offshore communities, commercial interests, visitors, workers, State Government, Council, other authorities and others'. Long after the dust has settled, we will all still need to live together, so in the interests of getting the best possible outcome to represent a variety of needs and wants, we need to make sure that we don't end up with the BEST WORST solution-just because we're fed up with the long and vexed history of this issue.

Many things, including the community, have changed over the years and much has been learned as a result. Now at least we have more detailed concept plans rather than schematics, with an independent assessment of the various designs and costings, (including costing for a partial deck on the existing car park) all contained in one report. As well, the dynamics between on and offshore community groups has changed with a desire from onshore groups for increased dialogue with SIRA. I might add that I have no vested interest in the outcome as I rarely park at CP-nonetheless, I do have a social conscience.

At a time when the State government is hovering with suggestions of amalgamation, Pittwater Council and SIRA have a real opportunity to demonstrate fiscal responsibility as well as social and environmental sensitivity, while promoting a collaborative approach to ALL other key stakeholders.

How in good conscience SIRA can recommend a \$5.4 million option for a possible net gain of 30 car spaces, with a significant proportion of the cost to be borne by the offshore community, when we are as yet unaware of the Pasadena outcome, is a fair and reasonable question and one that shouldn't deem me as one of 'the usual whingers'.

To put a twist to a rather condescending quote from Bill's 'A Little Story with Pictures'-there are indeed those in the community with the cognitive inclination for complexity ...who can think with both their heads and their hearts. I would request that SIRAC members consider and respond to my submission before the next scheduled Design meeting with Council.

Thank you.