

Discussion regarding the scope of SIRA communications

SIRA's function is not to generate debate on environmental and social issues that concern not just our own neighbourhood. Its function is to represent residents on issues within our area, which, in our constitution, is quite specifically restricted to Scotland Island.

The other problem is that if we choose to pass on information about one issue and not about other issues, is that it is easy for the general public to assume that SIRA has a position on this issue. This is amplified when we pass on information from one side of a debate and not the other.

I am not saying that SIRA should not have a position on this issue, but we know that in many cases we will have a range of opinions within our community. So, how should we deal with it before we even had a discussion with ourselves and with our members?

Perhaps we should have a test to see:

1. Is the issue Scotland Island specific? If yes, it is definitely something SIRA needs to look at getting involved in.
2. If not Island Specific, is it an issue that affects our community?
3. If it effects our community, we need to look at our objects closely. Also, we should look at the other avenues people have to be involved with it. A debate about larger environmental issues would belong more to environmental groups and political parties, etc.
4. Along with the 3 tests above, we should also ask if the issue is one that will be picked up by one of our working groups. We have the working group charters as a clear guideline to determine if it should be picked up or not. If the answer is no, then I think it is not something we should steer clear from.

SIRA has an email list of more than 400 people on it. People have given us their email addresses with the understanding that we will use it to communicate with them about things within the scope of our association.

This is why I am critical about what we send out. It is our duty as committee to safeguard our association from being used for causes it is not designed for.

There are avenues for people to disperse opinion and to promote a cause. One is the PON, which is independent from SIRA. Then there are the social media and newsletters such as Pittwater Online News, Scotland Island Community Facebook page, etc. which can all be used for this type of communication.

However, our website is a channel that we could consider. When it was designed we specifically did so to make it a community website and not a SIRA one. This is why it is not SIRA branded. I would say that we can allow all kinds of debate and news on it. In fact, I have had the idea that we could have guest moderators who supply news and opinion that is strongly or loosely linked to our community. It could be linked to PON in some way, or it could have its own subscribers who receive emails when new articles are posted.

Cheers,

Hubert van Mierlo