

New council little better than old

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PEOPLE who care about Huskisson – which includes many more than those who live in this small village – have every reason to feel continuing disappointment in the majority of Shoalhaven City councillors. The community has made it perfectly clear that it is not anti-development but wants development that suits Huskisson, rather than seeing Huskisson sacrificed to suit the needs of a small number of developers.

The “old” council was famous for ignoring the expressed views of the community and its own policies, while offering a sham consultation process during which it continued to support massive developments.

The “new” council is little better, continuing to cynically ignore the community view while supporting and approving large four storey developments in the main street and on the waterfront. Three examples demonstrate council’s continuing cynicism towards the community.

1. Council recently reversed an original decision to approve a development that did not fit its policies. Yet the reversal of this decision only came about because a draft policy amendment could be produced within three months and this “draft” is guaranteed to support the developer. When you remember that a “draft” policy is subject to public exhibition and community comment it seems quite apparent that the council has no intention of taking community comment seriously.

2. In relation to a four-storey development in the main street it’s clear the community has become worn out in expressing its opposition. And now that the number of letters of support is roughly equal to the number opposed, the council starts to talk about how important these are. It wasn’t long ago that more than 80 submissions from the community opposed to a council plan didn’t count for as much as two in favour.

3. Now we see the community invited to a workshop to consider the area of the waterfront developments. Council is trying to limit the number of people at this workshop, which, is to be facilitated by a consultant who, unbelievably, also works for developers who have had large waterfront developments approved. It’s not possible to work for both sides and this is a clear conflict of interest, which council chooses to ignore. Anywhere else but Shoalhaven and you would think it couldn’t happen.

It’s hard to know where to from here for the community beyond hoping council is struck down by a streak of decency and respect for the community that elected it.

119 signatures supplied