

## What is a community forum?

Shoalhaven City Council has set out its policy on community forums in a document called *Guidelines for the Conduct of Community Forums*. Copies can be obtained from Council offices.

This pamphlet is based on those Council *Guidelines*, summarising and adapting them for our local use. Tomerong Community Forum adopted this document as its guiding document in 2004.

Local forums – which the Council calls *Principal Consultative Bodies* – are formally recognised by Council and are intended as ‘a means for residents and ratepayers to advise Council of the community’s needs and aspirations’.

A forum is not limited in what it can do, as a local gathering. The Council doesn’t limit us. Where we are limited is in that we may advise Council on a wide array of matters, but it is Council which has the authority under law to make decisions on local government issues.

What we make of our Tomerong Community Forum and whether and how we use this gathering to advance our community is in our hands.

You are entitled to participate in a community forum if you are a resident or a ratepayer. No one who is a resident or ratepayer can be denied participation.

The Community Forum meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month, at 7pm in the School of Arts Hall.

There is a notice board and rack where Community Forum papers are available at the Tomerong Post Office door.

There is a suggestion box in the Post Office.

### Tomerong Community Forum

C/o Post Office,

**Tomerong NSW 2540**

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**Publicity Officer**

**Ev Pettigrew 4443 4499**

***Correspondence Secretary***

***Linda Clarke 4443 5149***

**Treasurer**

**Gerard Proust 4443 6537**

***Council Liaison***

***Dennis Argall 4443 4499***

## Tomerong Community Forum

## How does Tomerong Community Forum work?

# Our objectives

- To encourage people in Tomerong to become involved in shaping and nurturing our community.
- To give us good habits of working together so we are a welcoming and cooperative community.
- To give everyone a chance to express a view and accept differences of perspective.
- To develop ideas of how to enhance the physical assets of the village, so it remains a village and becomes a more vibrant community – and a great place for individuals and families to be.
- To support the development and growth of local community organisations.
- To develop planning concepts and designs which might in future assist Council produce a Development Control Plan for Tomerong, but which in the meantime can, be seen by potential developers as a basis for maximising the quality of development from the perspective of whole village rather than individual lots.
- To assist Council in assessing development proposals by submitting comments on them based on wide consultation.
- To tell Council about what we think our village is and should be and ask for landscaping, road works, parks and gardens development and maintenance, tree planting etc.
- To embark on our own projects for physical development and care of our village environment and seek Council assistance with resources for that.

# Our ‘procedures’

**We have a facilitator (for each meeting), not a president.** We can all learn by taking on new roles, we can all ensure that everyone gets a fair say.

**Talk about issues, not divided by motions:** The Council wants Forums to operate without too much procedural formality, to address issues rather than motions. “In this way,” say the Council’s *Guidelines*, “people are not automatically divided into supporting or opposing a given statement. Differing points of view or suggestions can be discussed and then after sufficient discussion a person may suggest a recommendation which reflects the collective opinion of the forum. This recommendation may draw upon several points discussed.” [says the Council]

**Specific decisions not to crush opponents:** Where courses of action are being considered, a specific decision may be needed, but the Forum should not be used as a vehicle for a ‘majority’ to have its way over any significant opposition.

**Advice to Council on issues may include differing views:**

Where the discussion is about matters to be put to the Council on say, development proposals, it may be more important for the Community Forum to look for words which include expression of differing views, rather than seek one point of view.

**‘Forums protected as much as possible from external influence’:**

The Council is concerned that the views expressed by forums be ‘representative of the free thoughts of the community’. For example, Council members may attend, but they have their place of influence in Council meetings and their obligation at a Forum meeting is to *listen* to local views.

# Fiddly bits

1: The Community Forum will at its Annual General Meeting elect:

**A correspondence secretary** who will be responsible for management of papers in and out, not for all writing.

**A minutes secretary** who will keep and promptly circulate records of meetings.

**A treasurer**, who will keep books and manage funds; approvals for payment will be by the majority voting at any meeting.

**A council liaison officer**, who will generally coordinate dealing with council.

**A publicity officer**, to enhance village awareness of Community Forum activities.

2: At each meeting of the Community Forum a **facilitator** will be appointed for the next meeting. The facilitator will work closely with the minutes secretary.

3: The **Agenda** for meetings should include:

- (i) Acceptance of the agenda.
- (ii) An attendance list, including addresses to confirm qualification to participate; apologies.
- (iii) Acceptance of minutes of previous meeting and consideration of business arising from the minutes.
- (iv) Correspondence, including to and from Council
- (v) Finance report, including accounts for payment.
- (vi) Reports from working groups or committees, etc.
- (vi) Other business.
- (vii) Time and place of next meeting; appointment of next facilitator.

4: **A notice board and suggestion box** are maintained at the Tomerong Store (for which we express appreciation).

5: **A notice of a meeting** placed on the notice board at the store shall be deemed to be notice of a meeting. Every effort should be made to give at least one week’s notice of any meeting. For an Annual General Meeting one week’s notice is obligatory.