

For Immediate Release

Wednesday 2 December 2009



MEDIA RELEASE

Consultation period extended for proposed outdoor smoke-free policy

Greater Taree City Council has extended the consultation period for a proposed policy that would introduce smoke-free outdoor areas throughout the local government area.

The period to enable people to have their say on the proposed policy was to have closed last Friday, 27 November and will now be extended to Friday 19 February 2010 to facilitate increased community awareness and to engage greater community involvement in the development of public policy.

Greater Taree City Council General Manager, Gerard José said that the consultation period is being extended to enable members of the community more time to have their say on this important policy direction. "Given that it's a very busy time at present for many people with Christmas and the Summer holiday period almost upon us, we believe that people should be provided with more time and additional ways in which to respond."

Mr José said that Council would be using the new online forum tool, Bang the Table to encourage members of the community to have their say on the policy which proposes to establish a smoke-free environment policy for Council facilities, sporting grounds, children's playgrounds, alfresco dining areas, beaches, parks and reserves, at all council run or sponsored events, public carparks, covered bus stops and taxi ranks.

"We will have the forum pages for this online discussion up and running prior to Christmas. We will also be strategically targeting those locations that will be most impacted by this policy. We want as many people as possible, both smokers and non-smokers, to be able to view the draft policy and to respond to it. Consultation has commenced through Council's Manning Social Development Committee and the Manning Valley Liquor Consultative Committee and members of those and other community based advisory and support groups are also encouraged to respond."

Council considered a report on the proposed policy at its meeting on the 21 October which outlined that as of May this year, some 58 councils in NSW (38%) have a smoke-free policy in certain Council owned or controlled areas, including almost two thirds (65%) of metropolitan councils and more than a quarter (28%) of regional councils.

The purpose of the proposed policy is to allow Council to consider the introduction of smoke-free outdoor area, taking into account the negative health aspects of second hand tobacco smoke, as well as the adverse social and environmental impacts smoking in crowded areas may also have on the community.

The draft policy is currently available to view on Council's website www.gtcc.nsw.gov.au and following the links from your council/items on public exhibition or collecting a copy from the Community Development and Health counter at Greater Taree City Council's website. Copies of the draft policy are also available at all Council libraries.

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