

# TOORAK ROAD

## SOUTH YARRA

BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

15/10/22

Dear Councillors

Crs Jami Klisaris, Melina Sehr, Matthew Koce & Polly Morgan

I am writing this letter as a public document as:

- President of the Toorak Road South Yarra Business Association
- A Stonnington Rate payer
- A Business owner on the street for over 40 years and special rate payer
- A member of the public

Over the past 4 years TRSY (Toorak Road South Yarra) has experienced more upheavals, constructions, road closures, building of the South Yarra Station Tram Stop, removing tram stops and parking spaces on a permanent and temporary basis, Bus replacement for trains, Changes to side street movements, Metro Tunnel works and its implications on businesses, COVID lock downs, Businesses trying to pivot and “keep operating”, this is just a few of the environmental issues the Business Association has been involved with. I can say categorically without a funded Association, who would have communicated, supported, offered different methods of making changes, made connections with all stakeholders introduced activities to keep customers visiting the area ? I leave this with you?

**TRSY businesses are now asking “why has been no consultation on the issue you are instigating - of not renewing the Special Rate and Charge that funds the activities of the Business Associations ? “ these are businesses funds not Councils general rates.**

We have sent many emails to you as elected Representatives of the community putting forward our position on behalf of over 400 businesses, not one of you have replied to my emails. Not even a thank you !

I have put calls into Cr Mathew Koce a North ward Councillor, who I understood supported businesses and the Rate payers? No reply

We have not been able to get any information from yourselves or been offered a Right of Reply/reasons for your decisions

We always understood that we would be treated with respect, mutual courtesy, and transparency as ratepayers and stakeholders in this issue. We have not been afforded this courtesy which your own Mutual Respect Charter clearly outlines.

The Deloitte survey clearly advised that the current SRS with modifications is fit for purpose. If the City of Melbourne, Port Phillip, Tourism Council, other local Councils and various expert consultants in the marketplace, ie Peter McNabb have also supported this comment and Council has spent large amounts of General Ratepayers funds on the Report, (between \$120,000 - \$300,000 we have been led to understand) why are you voting against the recommendations you called for????

Why in this climate of immense business challenges, would you make such a drastic change to a scheme that all indications say is fit for purpose, however needs some modifications? A scheme

that many Councils and organisations look to as being a workable and effective scheme. Don't you want to be a leader of successful Business Associations /Place Making & Precincts, after all the funds do not come from Councils General rates.

Are you aware of the market penetration each Association has made which in turn has a positive affect on the Stonnington brand?

During COVID the Business Associations had to band together and work intimately and extremely hard with the local community to maintain business viability, awareness, and service levels. We have morphed into a tighter local community with Residents taking a much greater ownership of their local area and this is proving to be a positive for business. The business lens is now very different to a Council Lens.

It would seem at this stage you have turned the issue into a political football with some Councillors taking sides and unable to see or be willing to understand what is best for business. This is how it is coming across from your Council meetings.

You may not think we are effective or delivering value and it's easy to abolish the SRS and make some people happy, who we wonder... maybe this is something you can discuss with the Associations. The only people that can truly rate the impact are all the stakeholders, who pay the Rate.

Your own website has this public document, **Mutual Respect Charter** which sets out a shared responsibly and was designed by yourselves:

Why is it then you are refusing to:

- abide by it
- reply to communications,
- engage and explain in an open and transparent manner on the decisions you have made?

Once again, I look forward to your reply and demonstrating a level of courtesy and respect towards those of us who do not understand your position when it comes to a business precinct, a funded business association and our livelihoods.

Regards

Ian Sharp

Cc Cr Kate Hely, Cr Marcia Griffin, Cr Nicky Batagol, Cr Alex Lew, Cr Mike Scott

EDM TRSY Stakeholders