

BUSINESS HUNTER

30 June 2025

Engagement Team
City of Newcastle

By email: engage@ncc.nsw.gov.au

SUBMISSION: Proposed Rising Tide event

Business Hunter welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Public Notice for the proposed Rising Tide People's Blockade event utilising Hamilton's Richardson Park from 25 November to 2 December 2025 and Camp Shortland and 28 November to 1 December 2025.

Business Hunter is the peak business group in the Hunter region. We serve more than 4,400 member and affiliate businesses operating across the region, representative of industries spanning all sectors and all sizes of business, from start-ups through to leading regional organisations and corporations, many with national and international profiles.

Business Hunter acknowledges the right of community groups to express their views through legal protest actions, but we have concerns about Rising Tide's willingness to undertake the proposed event in a lawful and safe manner, given past assurances by the group that protests will be conducted in accord with event licence conditions have not been honoured.

Multiple arrests of participants were made at the Rising Tide events in both 2023 and 2024 for charges including entering the shipping channel and interfering with others' use of the waters. These actions show disregard for safety and for the right of commercial operators in the port to undertake their lawful activities without disruption.

Last year's arrests were made despite assurances from event organisers to the Lord Mayor of Newcastle to undertake their protest action with a focus on safety and compliance and encourage participants to remain close to the shore and not enter the shipping channel. The fact arrests were subsequently made indicates the event organisers cannot provide a guarantee of compliance.

Rising Tide's actively encourages "disruptive actions", with its website indicating that civil resistance, including "waves of sustained, escalatory and disruptive actions", is part of its strategy to "win" or achieve its objectives. The website also says the group will "use creativity and civil disobedience to bring attention (to) our campaign and draw in new participants".

This approach means the organisers have no real gauge on the extent of participation and the management tools needed to monitor and control the event. Rising Tide's disruptive approach has been repeatedly demonstrated not only through the protest actions designed to interfere with activity in the Port of Newcastle but also by unlawful blockage of the rail corridor leading to the port. One such illegal action in 2024 caused a range of unanticipated impacts including the cancellation of hundreds of passenger train services, with adverse impact across the community.

BUSINESS HUNTER

Business Hunter is concerned about the impact on community and business of protests of this nature. The Port of Newcastle and the commercial operators who work in and around it are an important part of the regional and state economy, and support many other local businesses through their supply chains. These operators have a right to undertake their legal business activities without disruption.

The Rising Tide protests to date have had a significant impact on shipping operations, causing the delay or cancellation of movements. This is not restricted to coal ships. The cruise ship Silva Nova, with nearly 1400 passengers and crew, cancelled a scheduled visit to Newcastle in 2024 to avoid the Rising Tide protest event. Cruise ship visits are a significant contributor to the local visitor economy – generating \$20 million in 2023/24 – and the cancellation of the Silva Nova visit came at considerable cost to day trip organisers, hospitality and tourism businesses that would otherwise have benefited from increased patronage. The fallout from this highly publicised cancellation has also served to erode industry confidence in Newcastle as a cruise destination at a time when the city is looking to grow its share of that market.

Targeting of Newcastle's port as the focal point of Rising Tide's activities is misdirected and ignores the Port of Newcastle's very public and substantial efforts to grow and develop new revenue streams in a diverse range of industries including renewable energy, container shipping, roll on roll off cargo and agriculture. Many out-of-town participants in Rising Tide actions would have little or no appreciation for the Port's leading role in the region's economic diversification, which is a position Business Hunter strongly supports.

Rising Tide's approach to protest action continues to pose significant safety risks, which to date have been largely mitigated by the professionalism and safety culture of the businesses affected by these actions. These businesses interrupt their operations to ensure the safety of workers, protesters, police and emergency services workers and the public.

Against this background, we do not believe the proposed Rising Tide People's Blockade event should take place in an area that allows access to the harbour. We recommend against the use of community land at Camp Shortland for this purpose.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. Should you wish to engage further on this matter, please contact me at bob.hawes@businesshunter.com or on 02 9466 4665.

Yours sincerely,



Bob Hawes
CEO, Business Hunter