

12th December 2023

MEDIA RELEASE
Port Stephens Council Resolution
TOMAREE LODGE SHOAL BAY

Statement by Peter Clough, President of the Tomaree Headland Heritage Group Inc. (THHG) following Council's decision to take a lead role in planning the future of Tomaree Lodge.

(See Council resolution at the end of this release)

THHG welcomes the commitment made by Port Stephens Council, which we believe recognises the significance and the iconic status of the Tomaree Lodge and its relationship with the people of Port Stephens as well as the opportunities.

In very broad terms the Community's vision is aligned to education, tourism and cultural activities. Also, from extensive community engagement over many years, it has become very clear that the Tomaree Lodge site must always continue to be accessible to the people. This is a unique and outstanding opportunity.

The Tomaree Lodge is at the foot of the Tomaree Headland in Shoal Bay which currently attracts well over 200,000 people per year according to data gathered by the National Parks during 2018. The introduction of the \$7M Government-funded Tomaree Coastal Walk, a National Parks initiative, has the potential to further increase the appeal of the Tomaree Lodge site. In fact, at the opening of the Coastal Walk in September 2023, the State Premier, Chris Minns indicated that the walk would potentially attract an additional 300,000 visitors to Port Stephens each year.

In recent years many organizations have expressed interest, particularly concerning tourism, education and cultural activities, which strongly aligns with community expectations ascertained from ongoing community engagement and Help Desks at shopping centres and the Tomaree Headland and Tomaree Coastal walk.

Whoever takes on the future responsibility for the Tomaree Lodge site will need to ensure that it becomes financially viable, and we have already undertaken preliminary financial assessment work.

Also, it should be borne in mind that there is already a commercially operated Oyster Hatchery on the site providing leasing revenue to the State Government. Repurposing of the Tomaree Lodge offers many opportunities and complements the recently established Tomaree Coastal Walk. Our organisation also does not believe the site should be transitioned to another Government Department, particularly having regard to the bipartisan 'community use' commitment and the potential for employment and training opportunities for the people of Port Stephens.

Accordingly, we appreciate that Council recognises the importance and iconic significance of this site by now agreeing to playing a leadership role in the transition process and a pathway forward by the creation of a Management Trust comprising Community, Council and Government, and the development of a Master Plan.

The site has now been sitting idle for two and half years at a very large financial burden to the people of NSW budgeted at \$1M per year, while being vulnerable to dilapidation and vandalism.

We look forward to a productive engagement between Port Stephens Council and the NSW State Government and the early commitment to establishing a Management Group and Master Plan funding.

Council resolution passed 12 December 2023.

Council has resolved to:-

1. Take a strategic leadership role by demonstrating to the NSW Government its interest in the future of the Tomaree Lodge
2. Explore operational options and future management options that do not negatively affect Council's finances, with the community, the Tomaree Headland Heritage Group and any other interested groups
3. Commits to playing a role in planning the future of the Tomaree Lodge site being led by the NSW Government, including taking the necessary steps to formally establish a Master Plan
4. Acknowledges that currently up to \$1M is being spent on security and maintenance of the site and request that the NSW Government commits some of this funding be put forward for future planning

Peter Clough

President – Tomaree Headland Heritage Group Inc.

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