

# PORT STEPHENS Examiner

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Voices to direct the future of Tomaree Lodge

## Committee formed

BY LAURA RUMBEL

THE future of the former Tomaree Lodge is one step closer, with community voices set to direct the historic site's future use.

Out of 25 expressions of interest applications, six Port Stephens residents were selected to form the Tomaree Lodge Community Engage-

ment Committee.

Successful residents Penny Anbeig, Kathie Barnes, Chris Basic, Peter Clough, Sue Olsson and Jaimi Watt will help to deliver on the state government's commitment to ensure the site is retained for community use and public enjoyment.

For some committee members, this is the out-

come that they've been advocating for, for years.

It was June of 2022 when Kathie Barnes first had the vision to turn the Tomaree Lodge site into a multi-use community and cultural precinct and said she decided to put her hand up for the committee because she wanted to be part of the decision making process.

"Both myself and the Tomaree Cultural Development Group committee were thrilled to bits that I had been selected," she said.

When it comes to the future of the former Tomaree Lodge site, Ms Barnes said it's very encouraging to have community voices as part of the decision making process.

"It's going to be a long

journey but it's a start," she said.

Although the committee members may have different visions for the site, they all have one thing in common and that is for the site to be available for community use.

"We want the best outcome for the community," Ms Barnes said.

For Peter Clough, his jour-

ney with the future of the Tomaree Lodge dates back six years.

"It was initiated by the Tomaree Business Chamber, now Business Port Stephens and we put together these groups and consulted the community on what they wanted to see the site used for," he said.

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Peter Clough, Sue Olsson and Kathie Barnes are just three of the residents who make up the six-person committee. Picture by Laura Rumbel.

## Masterplan a step forward

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One thing THHG has been advocating for is the Tomaree Lodge master plan and Mr Clough said to get that started, would be a big step forward. "I put my hand up to be on the committee because I wanted to ensure that progress with the site continued," he said.

"We've been listening to the community for a long time so to have their voices maintained is so important."

A kiosk, an information point, accommodation for school excursions and a training academy for local businesses, have just been

a few of the ideas shared by the community. "There's also a huge amount of interest in the military history here," Mr Clough said.

From an environmental and cultural perspective, Sue Olsson said from the time the site became vacant, she was interested in the site's future use. "From my point of view, the site has a lot of cultural components, including a lot of Worimi occupants on the site," she said.

"There's deep cultural connections that are part of the presentation of the site and part of the potential involvement of what it could

be."

The formal work of the committee will officially begin on November 29, with an on-site inspection and forum.

Minister for Families and Communities and Minister for Disability Inclusion Kate Washington said the committee members offer a diverse range of local expertise and perspectives.

"I look forward to working with the committee and our community to ensure that Tomaree Headland remains an amazing destination for both locals and visitors, for now and in years to come."