

5 October 2023

MEDIA RELEASE
WHERE TO NEXT FOR TOMAREE LODGE, SHOAL BAY?

Statement by Peter Clough, President of the Tomaree Headland and Heritage Group Inc.

A recent meeting of THHG Members requested that the following representations be made to Minister Kate Washington:

- **Because the Tomaree Lodge site has been vacant for well over two years there are heightened concerns that there is no direction as to its future in sight. Why the delay, given that the Government conducted community consultation almost a year ago? Will the outcomes from that Consultation be made available to the community, and when?**
- **There are strong concerns relating to site risks/vulnerability as well as to current extremely high security and maintenance costs.**
- **That consideration be given to allowing progressive occupancy, which will demonstrate that the Government is committed to moving forward as quickly as possible. Members noted that there was already a precedent for an onsite Commercial activity (Oyster Hatchery). A Museum, Ecology Centre, Educational facility, Visitor Information Service, Café are potential early opportunities that will not compromise the integrity of long-term planning for the site**
- **Selected community organisations should be allowed to have access to the site buildings and also the Conservation Management Plan**
- **Transition to another Government Department is not seen as an option, particularly as the Government is committed to transition the site to Port Stephens for community use.**
- **How can the community assist to move this project forward?**

Also, despite our efforts to obtain funding in the recent State Budget to transition the Tomaree Lodge site, there has been no allocation. The site has now been sitting idle for two and half years. Inactivity is resulting in a huge financial cost to the taxpayer, which we understand is close to \$1m per annum and placing the site at high risk to squatter occupation, fires and vandalism, particularly graffiti, which has been evident lately.

The Government continues to provide a commitment to transition the site to Port Stephens for community use, which we fully support. In the meantime, there have been numerous entities expressing interest in locating to the site, particularly in areas of education and tourism.

The community is seeking direction and action for the site's transition to the Port Stephens community.

Peter Clough
President
0414 798 1 95