

# Friends of the Old Bega Hospital Newsletter

June 2013

This is the first newsletter for the Friends of the Old Bega Hospital Inc.

## Update

The Friends were incorporated on 18 January 2013. A public meeting of the Friends on 24 February elected a committee comprising Richard Bomford, president; Pat Jones, vice president, Claire Lupton, secretary; Geoff Doyle, treasurer; and committee members Liz Seckold, Barbara Sekules and Diana Nicol. Barbara has since resigned, and Eric Myers has been coopted onto the committee.

The committee meets at 2pm on the second Tuesday of each month at the Old Bega Hospital.

The Friends now have 26 members. Bank accounts have been established - one for general funds including membership fees, and a second for donations. Other administrative matters attended to include design of a letterhead, obtaining an Australian business number (ABN), and registration and hosting of a website - [www.obh.org.au](http://www.obh.org.au).

## Subscriptions to the Newsletter

If you get this newsletter as a paper copy and you have an email account, PLEASE would you subscribe electronically. Each paper copy has to be printed, folded, enveloped, addressed, stamped and posted and somebody has to volunteer to do it. Emailed newsletters are all sent in one operation, irrespective of how many are sent. You can subscribe and unsubscribe at [www.obh.org.au/Friends/newsletter.htm](http://www.obh.org.au/Friends/newsletter.htm).

If you are a member of the Friends and cannot subscribe electronically, let us know by phone (6492 2570) or post so that we continue to send you a paper copy.

## Advocacy

On the policy and advocacy front, the Friends have prepared and considered a paper on options for registration for tax deductible donations. There are basically two avenues which might be pursued. The first is to get deductible donations for heritage purposes. That would have to be done through the National Trust, and the National Trust has advised that it is not possible for them to conduct a tax deductible campaign if the property is owned by government, which the Hospital is - it is on Crown land. The second avenue would be to register the Friends as a cultural organisation. That requires that its principal purpose be support for the arts. Currently the Hospital buildings and grounds are used for a variety of community purposes, ranging from community radio station Edge FM to a site for a Men's Shed. Arts and crafts are included, in the form of potters, weavers and art classes, but they

are not the principal purpose. So if the Friends are to be able to get tax deductible donations for the Hospital some changes will be needed.

The Friends and the Old Bega Hospital Reserve Trust (the body appointed by the NSW government to manage the Old Bega Hospital day to day) met with the Hon Mike Kelly MP, the federal member for Eden-Monaro, on 15 April to see if the Commonwealth might be able to provide funding to re-roof the main building and get it to a stage where fit-out might begin. The Reserve Trust has been updating information on the likely cost of the work, and the current estimate is of the order of \$800,000. Dr Kelly suggested a number of options for Commonwealth funding, and they are being pursued by the Reserve Trust. But with the election due in September and the apparently parlous state of the Commonwealth budget, it seems unlikely that Commonwealth funding will be forthcoming in the short term.

The NSW government has been asked many times to fund repair of the main building following the fire in May 2004. Its response has been that funding on the scale required is not available in the Public Reserves Management Fund, and it has not suggested other sources of State funding. The government is currently concluding a comprehensive review of Crown land management, so it seems timely for the Friends to write to the NSW Minister, noting that the building is gradually deteriorating and suggesting it is long past time when the government, as owners of the building, should either fund repairs or pursue options that would allow others to do so. One option being considered by the Friends is to get ownership of the Old Bega Hospital transferred to a non-government community trust, which would enable tax deductible donations and perhaps engagement with private or business sponsors. One concern with the government continuing to own the site is that at any time the government might decide to sell it to a developer or to other private interests. Transferring ownership to a community trust could ensure that it remains available to the community.

The Illawarra and South Coast Steam Navigation Co's tourist guide of 1905 stated 'The Bega Hospital is an imposing edifice, with all the modern requirements that science and skill can suggest. It was erected at a cost of \$3000'.
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## Website

The website, [www.obh.org.au](http://www.obh.org.au), is the public face of the Friends of Old Bega Hospital. It has pages to apply for membership, make donations or subscribe to the newsletter. There are also pages with some of the history of the Hospital. Contributions and recollections about people or events in the life of the Hospital would be welcomed and can be added to the website. If you would like to do some research on the history of the site, please let us know. Contact information is on the Contact Us page.