



Friends of the Old Bega Hospital

Newsletter

November 2013

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

Update

The current committee comprises Richard Bomford, president; Pat Jones, vice president, Claire Lupton, secretary; Geoff Doyle, treasurer; and committee members Liz Seckold, Eric Myers and Diana Nicol.

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

The Friends now have 27 members. The bank accounts have balances of \$279 (general account, including membership subscriptions) and \$249 (donations). In addition, the Old Bega Hospital Fundraising Committee has decided to transfer its balance of funds of approximately \$30,000 to the Friends. Those funds have been raised from the community by the Fundraising Committee through many events and activities since the fire at the Old Bega Hospital in 2004.

Subscriptions to the Newsletter

If you get this newsletter as a paper copy and you have an email address, 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 to the email newsletter at 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 (if you haven't already) so that we continue to send you a paper copy.

Advocacy

NSW Government

The Friends wrote to the Hon Andrew Stoner, the NSW Minister ultimately responsible for Crown lands, on 10 September, to ask that the government, in considering and implementing the conclusions and recommendations of a Crown lands review which it is conducting, reconsider its management of the Old Bega Hospital to assure the future of its heritage and community values.

We noted that despite specific requests by the Reserve Trust and others, the NSW government has been unable to identify funding to restore the building, conserve its

heritage values and put it back into community use. For example, in answer to Parliamentary Question 3626 on 29 July 2008, the then government indicated that funding could not be sourced from the Public Reserves Management Fund, but did not suggest alternative sources of funds.

We said we think it is long past time when funding should be found, and said that if the government is not prepared to restore the main building within the next two years, then we think it should consider disposing of the buildings and site to an entity that would be willing and able to raise the funding required to restore the building and maintain the entire Old Bega Hospital precinct for community purposes. We suggested that a non-government community trust could be established for that purpose, though it might not be financially viable. A community trust may not be able to raise sufficient funds to undertake the restoration works without government contributions. However, a community trust would be able to apply to receive tax deductible donations for both arts and heritage purposes, as well as manage the buildings for wider community purposes. While a community trust might need to continue to call on government to contribute capital works funding, no longer would we see it as solely your government's responsibility - as owner - to protect, restore and maintain the buildings. We are also conscious that a community trust as owner would have to pay commercial insurance premiums and local government rates, costs that the current Reserve Trust does not face. So it is not a straightforward option.

As of 11 November we had not received a response from the Minister. We understand that the Crown lands review, which was due to report in June this year, has still not reported.

Men's Shed

The Old Bega Hospital Reserve Trust trustees have supported over the past few months a proposal by the Men's Shed group to construct a Men's Shed on the Old Bega Hospital site. That has involved drafting a licence to allow the Men's Shed to occupy part of the site, negotiations on rent, selection of a suitable site, and submission of a development application. At this stage the process is ongoing.

Local Government

The agenda for Bega Valley Shire Council's meeting on 6 November 2013 (http://www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au/infocouncil/Open/2013/11/OC_06112013_AGN_AT_WEB.HTM) included an item, 8.1, *Old Bega Hospital Site Princes Highway, Bega - Proposed Amendment to the Land Zone Map under Bega Valley Local Environmental Plan 2013 to zone the land RE 2 Private Recreation*. The reason for a rezoning proposal was that the existing zoning was Special Purpose 1, but no Special Purpose had been noted on the zoning maps. Under the Local Environment Plan, the only development which could be approved by Council for the land was either the Special Purpose (i.e. none) or 'roads'. Which meant that the development application for the Men's Shed could not be approved under the current zoning. Council considered nominating a Special Purpose, but decided that was too cumbersome, given the wide range of possible uses for the site. Instead, it proposed to rezone the site for private recreation, RE2. What it appeared Council was not considering, was the alternative available to it of rezoning to Public Recreation, RE1.

We sought advice from Council staff, and they agreed that RE1 was a suitable zoning, but noted that it didn't allow quite the range of uses that private recreation allowed. Specifically, it did not allow for a cafe or restaurant (as opposed to a 'kiosk') and did not allow for overnight tourist accommodation. We said that the Friends would much prefer zoning to public recreation, notwithstanding the more limited range of uses. We also addressed the Council meeting, again noting our strong preference for public recreation rather than private recreation, consistent with our view that the Old Bega Hospital should be restored for community purposes - not restored as a private facility, no longer available to the community generally.

In committee, the original proposed motion was moved by Crs McBain and Mawhinney: that Council prepare a Planning Proposal to amend the zoning Lot 296 DP 728021, Princes Highway, Bega under Bega Valley Local Environmental Plan 2013 from SP1 "Special Activities" to RE2 "Private Recreation", and that the Planning Proposal be forwarded to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure for Gateway Panel determination. The motion was put and carried. Councillor Hughes initially foreshadowed that he would move an alternative motion to rezone the land to RE1, public recreation, but when the committee report was moved for adoption by Council proper (agenda item 13), he too voted in favour of the RE2 proposal. (The minutes of the meeting are at http://www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au/infocouncil/Open/2013/11/OC_06112013_MIN_WEB.HTM.)

The next step is that at some time the proposal will be referred to the 'Gateway process'. That is outlined at <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/gateway-process>. If the proposal is accepted into the process, it will be exhibited for 14 or 28 days for public comment. A person making a submission may request a public hearing be held. The relevant planning authority then considers public submissions and the proposal is varied as necessary. Parliamentary Counsel prepares a draft local environmental plan — the legal instrument and with the Minister's approval the plan becomes law.

Our understanding is that meetings have been held between Bega Cheese, the Council and the NSW government regarding the Old Bega Hospital. We do not know what has been discussed, but have heard that it may involve moving the Bega visitor information centre and the Bega Cheese heritage centre to the Old Bega Hospital site. We intend to approach Bega Cheese to see if we can find out its intentions.

Plan of Management?

The Crown Lands Act provides that plans of management can be prepared for Crown reserves, such as the Old Bega Hospital Reserve. Plans can only be prepared if directed by the Minister or with the Minister's permission. The Friends have started to put on paper ideas for the future of the Old Bega Hospital, that might be included in a future plan of management. We are looking at the possibility of the site becoming a hub for community groups and as an arts precinct for the Bega valley. It might include new purpose built buildings as well as restoration of the old buildings, with the restored main Hospital building becoming a shared facility for shopfronts, offices and office facilities, cafe, meeting and event rooms, and exhibitions and perhaps a cafe. There might well be scope for a visitor information centre. If you'd like to be involved in the process, let us know!

From the Hospital Board meeting in 1940.

Town water has been connected to the hospital.

Matron reported that 65 patients had been admitted since the last meeting and 97 treated.

Among the donations received were plants from Mrs R Cochrane, old linen and books from Mrs D Britten, magazines from Mrs Carson from Candelo, bonbons and toys from Mrs Underhill senior, a pair of crutches from G Ubrihien, books from Mrs J P Rheinberger and tins of fruit from the Misses M and D T Gowing.

Also donated were doyleys, serviettes, pyjamas, flowers, lettuce, socks, handkerchiefs, cakes and beans.

At the Hospital board meeting the question of the cows used for hospital milk was brought up.

Mr Filmer wanted them out as they took up the wardsmen's time, ate the plants in the rockery, their droppings encouraged flies and generally they created a mess.

Mr H M Blomfield suggested subdividing the grazing area into small paddocks to keep the cows.

Website

The website, 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 Old Bega Hospital, please let us know. Contact information is on the Contact Us page.