



## **Old Bega Hospital (R.180050) Reserve Trust**

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The Hon Paul Toole MP  
Minister for Lands and Forestry  
GPO Box 5341  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Minister

The Old Bega Hospital is a Crown Reserve protecting the historical values of the Old Bega Hospital and reserving the buildings and site for community purposes.

The main building on the site dates from 1888. It has two principal wards and many ancillary rooms. There are also several outbuildings. The buildings were restored for community use in 1988. A fire gutted the main building in 2004 and it has been derelict ever since. Other buildings on the site continue to be homes for the Bega Valley Weavers, the Bega Valley Potters, and community radio station EdgeFM. Bega Men's Shed has recently moved onto the site as well. Prior to the fire about 40 community groups used the site.

The Old Bega Hospital Reserve Trust has been seeking funding to restore the main building to return it to the community and conserve its remaining heritage values. Avenues explored include community fund raising, tax deductible donations, the Public Reserves Management Fund, Club Grants, Community Building Partnerships, the Regional Assistance Fund, the National Stronger Regions Fund, the Building Stronger Regions Fund and the Building Better Communities Fund. While the Trust has had some success and the proposal enjoys wide community and political support, the amounts available from any single source have been insufficient to even make a start on reconstruction.

The principal funding strategy the Trust has sought to implement recently is:

- \$500,000 from the Regional Assistance Fund. That funding has been secured (for the time being), but it is subject to the building proceeding as a single stage because it is a condition of the grant that funds will not be released unless the Trust has secured the remainder of the funding required to complete the whole project
- \$1m from the Public Reserves Management Fund (PRMF), less any amounts that can be raised from other sources such as Club Grants
- \$1.5m matching funding from Commonwealth sources, once the other funding is secured.

The Trust applied for \$1m from the PRMF in 2016. No funding was allocated. Reasons given for that decision included that the project was not shovel ready, and that grant funding of that amount was not available from the PRMF. The guidelines for the current round of the PRMF state 'successful applications to the PRMF in recent years have ranged from \$500 to \$2,000,000'. Subsequent discussions with Crown Lands staff suggest that in practice it is likely that PRMF funding will be limited to tens of thousands of dollars per

proposal, and the several hundreds of thousands that restoration of the Old Bega Hospital requires would not be likely to be granted in a single funding round. The Trust was encouraged to consider staged funding.

The Trust is of course happy to consider staged funding and construction. However, its existing core funding is the offer of \$500,000 from the Regional Assistance Fund, which is conditional on all at once reconstruction. The reasons for that are sound - to ensure that we don't end up with an expensive partly reconstructed building still of no use to anyone, and to ensure economy in construction. For the Trust, though, it is Catch 22: we can't get the Regional Assistance funding if we proceed in stages, and we can only get PRMF funds if we do. And without both, we are in no position to apply to the Commonwealth for matching funds.

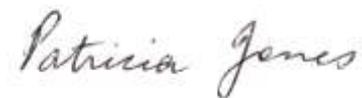
In the meantime, the Trust has applied successfully to the Office of Environment and Heritage for \$100,000 as a Heritage Activation Grant. That will enable the Trust to employ an architect and others to ensure that the project is shovel ready, and thereby meet a primary requirement of most State and Commonwealth grant schemes. The Trust's difficulty at this stage is that it does not know whether it is preparing for staged construction or not, and if so, what scale of staging to reflect future funding. What is clear is that OEH will not be able to repeat its funding offer in order to keep plans and costings up to date if construction funding is delayed. Nor do we expect that Mr Barilaro will keep open indefinitely the offer of \$500,000.

The Trust sees no way to engineer a solution out of the funding impasse in which it finds itself. The Trust therefore seeks your assistance to bring together the various arms of government to find a funding solution.

The Trust would welcome you to inspect the building so that you can appreciate its value and potential first hand.

In anticipation of a successful result, which is long overdue, the Trust will seek firm expressions of interest from potential community tenants, and will proceed to engage architects to prepare plans using the OEH funding.

We have copied this letter to Member for Bega, the Hon Andrew Constance, the Member for Eden-Monaro, the Hon Dr Mike Kelly, the Minister for Regional NSW, the Hon John Barilaro, the Minister for Heritage, the Hon Gabrielle Upton, and the Shadow Minister for Lands, the Hon Mick Veitch.



Pat Jones  
Chair

24 February 2017

cc:

The Hon Andrew Constance MP  
Member for Bega  
122 Carp Street  
BEGA NSW 2550

The Hon Dr Mike Kelly AM MP  
Member for Eden Monaro  
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BEGA NSW 2550

The Hon John Barilaro MP  
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