

Tomaree Lodge Progress Update

April 2026



Step into the world of Valerie Taylor



The NSW Government is delivering on its promise to keep Tomaree Lodge in public hands for community use. The very first public exhibition is on site now thanks to the Tomaree Museum Association.

The Tomaree Museum Association presents: Valerie Taylor – An Underwater Life (Regional Tour). The exhibit showcases the extraordinary story of Valerie Taylor AM – globally celebrated underwater storyteller, shark researcher, and conservationist.

The free exhibition will be on display **until 17 April 2026**. Opening hours are **9 a.m. to 3 p.m in the Main Hall**.

Emerging architects hone their craft at Tomaree Lodge

As part of its work to renew the Tomaree Lodge site, DCJ is exploring opportunities with schools and universities for learning, training and professional development activities on the site, helping to build practical and professional skills and support job growth across Port Stephens and the wider Hunter Region.

Students from the University of Newcastle Master of Architecture program have been welcomed on site to explore the art and science of placemaking, urban design and adaptive reuse of disused buildings for community spaces.

Through their work in the Practices of Interconnectivity design program, these advanced students will have the opportunity to apply their technical and creative skills to real-world examples. The significant history of the site serves as a perfect project for students to explore how design can promote community cohesion, access and inclusion. They'll learn how to navigate ethical issues that arise when working on sites with complex social history and significant constraints, and how to redesign existing buildings and spaces into safe, functional and welcoming environments for all users.



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Interpretation framework

Alongside detailed site assessment and planning for infrastructure upgrades across the Tomaree Lodge site that will happen through the year, DCJ has engaged Supersense Studio to develop and Interpretation Framework for Tomaree Lodge.

An Interpretation Framework is a plan about how the significance of a place can be communicated through storytelling, signage, art and information. Developing this framework now means that as we upgrade the site, all of the new signage, information and design elements will be clear, consistent and easy to use, making it easy for visitors to find their way around the site and learn about its important history and natural qualities.

If you are interested in learning more about the Interpretation Framework (including how you can have input into developing it) please email us at TomareeLodge@dcj.nsw.gov.au.

Plant of the Month

Jo from Wet Systems has shared with us the Tomaree Lodge plant of the month:



“*Banksia spinulosa*, commonly known as Hairpin Banksia, is a hardy native shrub found along Australia’s east coast and in the bush at Tomaree Lodge. It has narrow, dark green leaves and striking golden flower spikes tipped with fine curling styles that resemble hairpins.

Flowering mainly from autumn through winter, it is rich in nectar and attracts local wildlife.

Banksia spinulosa has Worimi cultural significance as both a drink made from the flowers soaked in water, and flowering times were also used as seasonal indicators, helping guide knowledge of changing conditions and food availability.”

Is this bench in the right spot?



Over the next few weeks, a series of restored park benches will be popping up on site. These benches are moveable and we are seeking community input for the best spots to place them, before they are fixed into place.

If you see our lovely park benches around, please scan the QR code and fill in the online form to provide feedback and suggestions before the benches are permanently fixed in place. Please feel free to provide feedback via email - make sure to reference which bench number you are referring to:

Tomareelodge@dcj.nsw.gov.au