

# TUROSS HEAD PROGRESS ASSOCIATION NEWS



DECEMBER 2024

## NEXT MEMBER INFORMATION MEETING

The next member information meeting will be held at **2pm on Tuesday 4 February 2025 at Kyla Hall**. This will be the first members meeting for 2025.

## CANDIDATES FORUM 2025

Planning is underway for a Candidates Forum to be held at Kyla Hall in the lead up to the federal election. Once the election is called and candidates are confirmed, the THPA will contact candidates to book a date and time. Members and guests will be invited to hear from candidates about priorities and plans for Tuross Head and surrounding areas. We will be in the Eden-Monaro electorate at the next federal election. The election is expected to be held no later than 17 May 2025.

## SUPPORT TUROSS HEAD: JOIN THE THPA

The THPA has proudly advocated for Tuross Head since 1947. Membership is open to residents and property owners in Tuross Head and currently costs less than a cup of coffee (\$5/year). To join go to [www.thpa.com.au/membership](http://www.thpa.com.au/membership).

## THPA RAISES PRIORITY ISSUES WITH FEDERAL MINISTER KRISTY MCBAIN

At the request of the THPA committee, Kristy McBain, the Federal Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories and member for Eden-Monaro, visited Tuross Head on Tuesday 3 December to listen to critical issues affecting our community.

Kristy chatted with locals at the Tuross Boatshed before meeting with the THPA committee, followed by a conversation with members, where issues such as equitable healthcare funding and services, local radiotherapy services, bushfire mitigation, emergency evacuation shelters, community access to boating and fishing locations, driftwood debris on our beaches, public transport and the potential rezoning or sale of community land were raised. The committee shared the unique demographic of Tuross Head, noting the significantly older population requires additional healthcare and infrastructure and that our population swells to around 6000 during the summer holidays. A common theme across many of the points raised was the lack of engagement by council or state and federal governments to address the indifference or neglect of Tuross Head over many years.

### Equitable healthcare funding and services

In line with the [media release issued by the THPA on 26 November](#) Arn Sprogis, Chair of the THPA Health Subcommittee, framed the healthcare discussion around three key principles: community and patient centred healthcare; equity of funding and services; and federal government investment. Based on a [National Rural Health Alliance report from June 2023](#), the rural health deficit is \$6.55 billion annually or \$850 per person per annum for more than 7 million people in rural Australia. For Tuross Head, it is around \$2.7 million per year which could provide three full time equivalent resident GPs and three nurses plus some primary care services. Currently, the Tuross Head medical practice employs one part time GP that is only available at limited times. The THPA pushed for an urgent injection of funds to support more GPs, nurses and primary

care practices and suggested a potential \$20 million proof of concept to address the shortfall in services could be considered for Tuross Head and Moruya. Kristy referred to a recent meeting with 25 GPs across the Bega Valley where they raised the potential for more nurses to relieve the strain on some of the services provided by GPs, the

importance of block funding and how the rural component of Medicare services is driving more health workers to rural and regional areas.

Several members also shared personal stories of the burden of having to travel and live away from home while receiving life-saving radiotherapy. Kristy was asked about the Commonwealth's commitment to provide more equitable access to radiotherapy services and was reminded of the critical need for local radiotherapy services at the new Moruya Hospital. She was asked to confirm arrangements and funding at the Commonwealth level for local radiotherapy services on the far south coast and timelines for these services. Kristy stated it is her job to push Health Ministers on these issues and that she and Fiona Phillips have had several discussions with the Health Minister, Mark Butler. She also noted the October 2022 election commitment that provides \$8 million for local radiotherapy services remains. Kristy committed to pushing NSW Health on radiotherapy services.

### **Bushfire mitigation and emergency evacuation shelters**

Gary Smith, Chair of the Fire Safety Subcommittee and President, Tom Webster, reinforced the seriousness of the lack of engagement and response by council to requests over several years to thin out vegetation and create a fire break along parts of Hector McWilliam and Trafalgar roads. Gary explained that the council considers we are a low fire risk but when Tuross Head was under threat during the 2019 bushfires they suddenly cleared a small part of the requested area. Gary informed Kristy the THPA has taken the unprecedented stance of engaging a lawyer to write to the council highlighting the significant risk and potential negligence that continued inaction poses to the town. Gary further noted that THPA has engaged an independent fire assessor to prepare a report on our fire risk. Kristy asked about Tuross Head's Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) rating, reinforcing that BAL ratings are generally understood to be a sound indicator of fire risk. Gary and Tom raised the importance of places for the community to shelter in times of emergency and council's refusal to support Kyla Hall and Club Tuross as emergency shelters. Kristy stated each town should have a designated shelter area and raised the idea of establishing Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSPs). She noted most community halls in the Bega Valley have been rated as NSPs by the Rural Fire Service. Kristy also flagged the value of using electronic notice boards to convey information and instructions during an emergency and that councils can apply for grants to support these activities.

### **Boating and fishing**

Max Castle, Chair of the Boating and Fishing Subcommittee, noted boating and fishing generate around \$50 million for the state government, are an important drawcard for visitors to our community and a much-valued injection of funds to our local economy. Max raised the lack of funding for marine structures and facilities for regional recreation areas with only \$24 million out of \$150 million re-invested. Max flagged there is only one place to launch a boat on Tuross Lake which results in major issues. Max emphasised the ongoing frustration of locals in accessing recreational fishing and boating areas due to blocked roads at Coopers Island and Kristy committed to looking at the issue and coming back to the committee.

### **Community lands and public transport**

Tom outlined concerns that community land near the highway, bequeathed by Hector McWilliam to the community in perpetuity but which is council owned, could be sold off and flagged this would be a major issue for the community if it were to eventuate. Tom stated that two companies have expressed interest in providing a public bus service from Tuross Head to Moruya and surrounding areas, and reinforced that due to our ageing population some residents cannot drive and there are no easy alternatives to get to medical and other appointments. Tom highlighted the Country Women's Association in Tilba is pursuing a bus service and Kristy referred to On Demand Transport that operates between 9am and 3pm via an App for people to access transport and committed to exploring if this could be replicated in our Shire. Tom also noted major driftwood

debris on main beach, the lack of response from council on the issue and impact debris has on visitors to the town during the peak summer season. Kristy asked about working with Landcare on this issue and stated there may be innovative ways to address the problem.

At the members meeting, Kristy also listened to and responded to questions on rezoning of community land, the Moruya bypass, Narooma Bridge and noted the importance of robust planning to ensure that state and local governments factor in the total cost and time for major infrastructure projects. Thank you to everyone who helped prepare for Kristy’s visit and our end of year catchup. Special thanks Moruya Pantry and Max Castle for the raffle donations and to the volunteers who set up Christmas decorations at the highway and the welcome sign. Merry Christmas and get ready, 2025 is going to be busy!



L to R: Evelyn Ashcroft, Tom Webster, Darryl Pretty, Max Castle, Kristy McBain, Arn Sprogis, Gary Smith, Kim Ulrick and Jenny Irvine

Right: Kristy McBain addresses THPA members/  
Below: Santa’s helpers - THPA member volunteers setting up Christmas decorations at the highway.



**THPA News: Editor, Kim Ulrick**  
*This newsletter aims to give members an inside view of THPA current activity, its progress, why it matters and how members can guide THPA in its work.*

## COMMITTEE PROFILE TOM WEBSTER, PRESIDENT



To say Tom Webster has had an interesting working life is an understatement. Tom was a national serviceman in the Army Reserve serving in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and a full time Weapons Instructor with the Army, a licenced professional shooter, and a Police Inspector and Local Court Magistrate in PNG.

Tom has an extensive background in fire safety and property management. He was specially trained by civilian and military fire services in the ACT, Victoria and NSW and has a degree in Mechanical Engineering specialising in Fire Safety. Tom held senior fire safety and emergency officer positions in the public service and was an Overseas Property Manager for the Department of Administrative Services for 14 years.

After retiring, Tom bought a 3,300 acre property in the East Monaro and become a fine wool sheep and beef cattle grazier. Tom’s property burnt out in a huge bushfire 2013 and he retired to Tuross Head in 2014. During the 2019/20 firestorm, Tom prepared a submission for the NSW Government drawing on his knowledge and his personal experience from 2013. Tom is a strong advocate for bushfire mitigation and a dedicated emergency evacuation shelter for Tuross Head.

Tom has also written three historical action/adventure fiction novels. The largest is 183,000 words across two volumes and is currently being assessed by professional editors.