It is with pleasure that I present this, the sixth annual report for the Friends of Willow Court Special Committee of the Derwent Valley Council.

During the past year activities undertaken by the FoWC include the following:

- Preparation of safety guidelines for the WC perimeter wall lime wash project
- Collaboration with the University of Tasmania on the Willow Court Community Engagement project
- Podcast recordings with former employees of Willow Court, and a former Willow Court school teacher
- Research and final development of guided tour scripts
- Design and production of display posters
- The open day in February in conjunctions with Flinders University Archaeology field school students
- Tours (exterior of buildings only) and display during February open day
- Private guided tour for an archaeologist from the UK, and her PhD student
- Private guided tour to group of seniors
- Opened the site for TAFE students to undertake place based experiential learning
- An Expression of Interest with DVC for reuse of Willow Court
- Started enquiries to seek permission to reprint Troubled Asylum
- Hosted a very successful Heritage Month event in collaboration with New Norfolk High, and with guest speakers Prof of Social History Hamish Maxwell-Stewart and Margaret Reynolds who was instrumental in establishing a school at WC
- Submission to Council for a calendar of events that includes guided tours and quarterly events

Calendar of events

By way of background information on FoWC activities on site at Willow Court. It was identified in both the Malcolm McDonald Business Plan and Development Plan 2011, and the Willow Court Conservation Committee Fundraising Plan 2014 that the Friends group establish a calendar of events to revitalise the Willow Court precinct. Attempts over the last three years by the Friends to have Council approve a calendar of events were unsuccessful, as Council insisted we wait until the WC Expressions of Interest was developed, a process that took three years. The Friends were very frustrated with not having regular access to WC, particularly as during this time Council approved requests from two groups to conduct regular after dark tours.

Since April Friends of Willow Court have received considerable support from Council, which is evident with the calendar of events being approved, regular access permitted and endorsement of the Expression of Interest being developed to proposal stage.

The Friends are very grateful to the support shown by Council over the last few months.
Willow Court Expression of Interest

Council has accepted FoWC EoI with a recommendation to develop a structure or group to prepare detailed plans to be included in the 2019/20 budget.

FoWC have made significant progress on developing a group to prepare a detailed plan, and intend to have the plan to Council within a few months.

In developing the plan FoWC have undertaken initial research from which it has been discovered a significant amount of work was undertaken between 2002 and 2010 by Valley Vision, and in 2014 by the Willow Court Conservation Committee to redevelop and reactivate the site, and which all indicate substantial expenditure by DVC to achieve these ends. This substantial amount of work appears to have been mothballed by successive Councils, as no reference to any of it can be found in Council minutes after 2010, and August 2014 respectively

The work referred to include a Visitor Services Project that aimed to establish a world class fee paying, sustainable and vibrant visitor experience with the themes Life Behind the Wall and Art Behind the Wall. The themes were developed and tested by leading tourism and marketing consultants, the process included input from both the Derwent Valley community and the wider Tasmanian and interstate market.

Plans were completed for infrastructure, interpretation, brand, marketing, business, art and object management including a curatorial program, building stabilization and re-use, building fabric, landscape, parking, perimeter wall stabilization and site security.

With so much work already completed at great expense to the community it is envisaged that these plans will inform the proposal being prepared for Council.

During the year the Friends of Willow Court have received considerable support from a number of people and organizations and we would like to acknowledge each them.

They are Dr Helen Norrie, University of Tasmania, Prof. of Social History Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, Margaret Reynolds, Adam Potito, Principal New Norfolk High, Roz Chapman, Derwent Valley Community House, the Historical Information Centre, DVC and Council work crew, TygaFM and Professor of Historical Archaeology Eleanor Casella (letter attached).

In closing I would like to take this opportunity to thank committee members for their ongoing resilience, hard work, and enthusiasm for the projects we have undertaken this year.

Thank you also to Councillor Pearce for his support of the committee throughout the last year.

Again, while we are a small committee we can be proud of what we have achieved for Willow Court in the past year.

Thank you

Anne Salt
Chairperson
2017/18