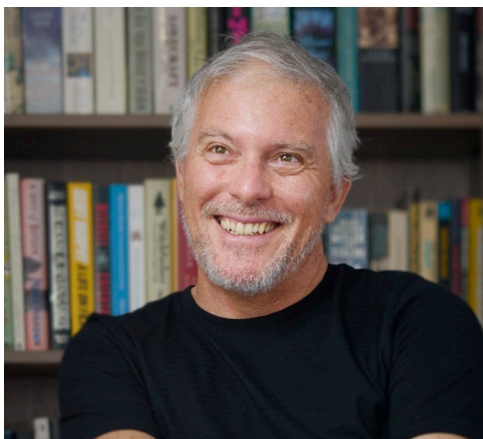


# Changing Faces

## *The Peninsula*



### Changing Faces (left to right)

Tony Winch	Community Group leader
Julie Clay	Peninsula Floorball Manager
Tomoko Oka	Japanese calligraphy artist
Carlie Ballard	Ethical fashion / creative leader
Alan Corv	CC Bike Users Group
Ricky Simoes	Community markets
Glenn Fraser	Storyteller / filmmaker / writer

Seven stories about the changing face of The Peninsula from community members that have seen, been or are part of the change





# Introduction

People make a place.

The Peninsula on the Central Coast has a distinctively complex and colourful history.

Once a haven for the genteel sun loving holiday maker craving a relaxed coastal retreat, now a burgeoning enclave of suburbs with an inner-city vibe, The Peninsula is enticing to a new generation of entrepreneurs full of hope and dreams.

A new wharf in Woy Woy, shared bike paths for all and bush regeneration along the stunning coastline and waterways has helped see a swift turnover of real estate and business and these suburbs are being reimagined by a generation of motivated creative types and now Ettalong, Umina, Woy Woy and surrounding suburbs are once again highly desirable destinations, not only for their relationship to the coastline and waterways but now for, as a collective, their capacity to reflect a truly welcoming community that prides itself on art, culture, connection and belonging.

# NEIGHBOURHOODS



**Images:** Matt Briggs

**Words:** Meghan Loneragan

**Exhibition:** Velia's Galleria, Cnr Ocean View Rd & Ferry Rd Ettalong Beach







# TONY WINCH

## Umina Community Group

*'if you want to meet some lovely people then volunteer'*

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To me, the Peninsula is a unique area. Ettalong, Umina, Woy Woy and the surrounds. One with golden sands and an idyllic lifestyle. One where the more you reach into it, the more it gives you in return.

I grew up in Sydney visiting places like Pearl Beach and the Hawkesbury River in my teens. From there with my wife Alison, we went on to run a successful IT Consulting business based in Sydney. In 2000 we started looking for a weekender to get some R&R away from work. Being the all-around IT nerd, I wrote a list of all the things we wanted and computed all the options, Ettalong, Umina Beach and The Peninsula just kept popping up first on the list, and so by 2003, we had our weekender near the water.

I suppose you could say computers brought me here. From that day on, I just fell more and more in love with the area and the people, and it became where I feel I belong. I'm sometimes asked why the Central Coast and in a foolish way my answer is "who would not want to live here".

The lifestyle is casual and warm with a great diversity of people. Like in a country town, a small gesture of a nod or 'hello' is returned by a smile or will see you enriched by a story of why the bus may be running late today.

As time has gone on, we've become more involved in the local community and in 2014 in conjunction with the new neighbours we had met, we established Umina Community Group, wanting to give Umina a voice.

There is a saying that 'if you want to meet some lovely people then volunteer' and the Community Group has allowed me to meet and experience some truly wonderful people on the coast and appreciate how deep the passion for the Coast is in them, and me as well.

I see this every day, particularly in Umina. And the Umina Community Group is a testament to this, with volunteers spending hundreds of hours to work on projects that benefit the local community—from dune regeneration, park restoration and development of green spaces, through to improvements to our roads and safety.

Recently we received a grant for \$8.25 million dollars to upgrade the Umina Precinct Park, an amazing result, with community and local government working together to help deliver better recreational facilities for our wonderful community.

To me, the Peninsula is a more positive place and better connected than it was several years ago, with an ever-growing sense of its own unique characteristics and identity.

The recent changes to our lifestyle from the pandemic have fueled these changes at a greater pace, with more families released from the burden of work travel time, and the impact this has had on the fabric of our community.

Having a train station at Woy Woy to the city since the 1880's has been a boom for our community and has led to a large population on The Peninsula but has also seen many people unable to become fully engaged in our local area due to the long hours of the daily commute.

This also means people have more opportunities to enjoy the beauty of the area.

For the small effort to walk up to a lookout, you are given a very large dose of relaxation therapy as you ponder the national parks and waterways in all directions.

And for those who are more curious, there's a rich history to discover and learn from—whether it be why we had an airstrip in Umina, the foibles of the characters who established the early shipbuilding in the area, the fact that from Woy Woy to Umina is all sand that started forming 10,000 years ago, as well as the historic First Nations rock art that exists across the landscape.





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# JULIE CLAY

## Peninsula Floorball Club

*'it's all about fellowship, generosity, support, inspiration, and kindness'*

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I was lured here from Avalon by family and the promise of a quieter close-knit community in which to raise my son and this region has more than delivered.

That word community gets bandied around a great deal but it's something that feels quite tangible here.

For me, it's all about fellowship, generosity, support, inspiration, and kindness. I know that sounds like a lot but it's something I see daily in the small simple actions of the shopkeepers, school students, and members of our beautiful community.

It's part of the reason I have reveled in managing the Peninsula Floorball Club, an initiative that wouldn't exist without the passion and commitment of our local volunteers.

Floorball, as a game, is all about coming together in the spirit of enjoying the game. It's not aggressive, requires no expensive investment, and its egalitarian—so you could say it matches the energy of this area perfectly. Our members play for different reasons but ultimately the common thread throughout, the reason we all play, we all connect, is to belong. It's sociable and it's healthy, it's a lot of fun and many great friends are made playing the game or watching from the sidelines. I just love it and I'm proud of what we are doing as a club.

The members of our club put in endless hours to produce, not only exciting games but community engagement opportunities for the next generation of locals.

I already see this next generation is already injecting so much intensely positive vitality and vibrancy into the region.

The demographics are becoming more diverse, which brings exciting new views and perspectives into the sporting, entertainment and local life of the area.

Traditionally Ettalong and Umina Beaches were just a holiday destination with its connection to Palm Beach. Back in the day Woy Woy train station was the only way in for Sydneysiders looking for a beach holiday. Now many people call this place home and that's just wonderful.

There's also a deep respect for the land and waterways, as well as the local indigenous people, something that's rare to find in other regions.

It's also in the intangible feeling you get as a local. Just like a game of floorball, I feel like things are moving fast here, but never in a way that's overwhelming.

It's just ever developing and the air feels electric with shared common goals, a sense of care, belonging, appreciation of health and overall lifestyle.







# TOMOKO OKA

## Artist

*'I love that, here, community is everything'*

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I think one of the reasons we create art is that it is a connection, to people, to our past and our ideas—so it's been wonderful connecting with the community on the Central Coast especially in Ettalong and Umina.

Living here is a relaxing and laid-back experience, especially compared to Sydney and Kobe, where I grew up.

After moving to Australia in 2011, I lived in Sydney with my husband for a while, but he happened to find a job on the Central Coast. Since then we've enjoyed becoming part of this special community.

My time here has been a really productive artistic time for me and there's so much to inspire here. I often find time to walk in the beautiful National Parks and beaches along the coast, and a lot of what I see there finds its way into my abstract art—the randomness of tangled branches, different shapes from various plants, things like that.

We often go to the beach to swim or surf after work or on weekends, and we love going bushwalking in the cooler months. There are so many great walking tracks and Spion Kop is one of our favourites. I know there are beautiful beaches everywhere on the Coast but I feel a special connection to this region. It's where I belong.

I love that, here, community is everything.

There's Seed library (in the Woy Woy library), and the community garden has produce swap days where you can swap your excess harvests with people. I also love the home stalls on the Peninsula on Saturdays. As well as the Italian, Armenian, Thai, Indian, Lebanese, and other multicultural shops and restaurants.

For me, it's about sharing what you have, and I've found myself practicing more calligraphy and abstract art as a way of connecting to my home country, and sharing my traditional Japanese roots with the local community. I have also learnt about the history of this area just by talking to people in our community. It has always been a place for people to enjoy their holidays, fishing and boating and oysters.

I also have a great love for food as well, which I inherited from my mother and grandmother, so I've been able to connect with people as well through some miso and traditional Japanese home-cooking workshop that I run. It's so great to share these traditional home skills with people living here in this beautiful little part of the world.

I'm passionate about the markets and local events, all of which have provided a really great way for me to interact with locals and it's made me feel like I really belong here. And as time has gone on, it certainly seems busier. More people driving around on the weekends, and a few more shops and cafes too. However, it hasn't lost its charm.

I think over the next decade, as more and more people move here from Sydney, we'll see even more vitality and diversity enter the community and I'm excited to watch it unfold.







# CARLIE BALLARD

## Ethical Fashion

*'I feel proud to sit amongst the energy and opportunity this region offers'*

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Easy, abundant, and stunning—that's how I sum up this unique little region to people who don't live here on this amazing coastline.

There's a strong community and proximity to all the nature I could possibly ask for and plenty of projects to help preserve that environment that is so important - the waterways and the bush really help define our lifestyle here.

In that sense, I would definitely say my work as a fashion designer, my silhouettes are influenced by how we live. I try to look further into the history of the area for inspiration as I have a strong following across the country who resonate with my work's values and aesthetics and intrigued by my ikat fabrication process and want to learn more about my influences and inspirations.

From a creative perspective, I feel proud to sit amongst the energy and opportunity this region offers. There is a real sense of belonging.

Artistic expression is what the world needs more of right now, a creative community and connection to place is so important and we are starting to see this area attract like-minded creatives. I believe there is so much inspiration on the Peninsula. Our access to incredible bushland with our National Parks and amazing coastline, It's honestly a lifetime of exploration and a world of inspiration. That energy has always been here, but I think it's only been recently that the creative collective has started to tap into it.

I've known about the region's potential for a long time, of course, having grown up on the northern end of the Central Coast but it wasn't until I moved here that I've realised the landscape, the colours and the shapes we find in unsuspecting places has started to influence not only the way I work but also my sense of self. Living here has given me a community and I'm so much happier just being here.

I was heavily into creating when I was younger and studied Fine Arts at Newcastle University. As soon as I had my degree I travelled the world and eventually ended up living in Sydney. My fiancé and I moved to Umina when our second child was three months old and we, as a family, have never looked back.

I honestly don't remember visiting Ettalong or Umina as a child, it must have felt too far away for my parents back then but ever since moving here I quickly met like-minded people and felt part of a community all striving to create a little piece of creative culture and design right here. That sense of connection is very powerful.

I can't believe how many beautiful spaces and places to meet, eat and mingle have been born in the short four years we have been here! We have made so many friends from frequenting businesses we want to support.

What I love most is that there isn't a large shopping centre here. It truly allows small businesses to thrive and for Ettalong and Umina, especially to have a busy main street which is so important for this area.

Since we arrived in 2017 we have had countless creative friends move here as well. I've said this before, but it feels a little like Surry Hills twenty years ago, before the gentrification and that's exciting.

There is always a new business opening up that we all want to support because you want to make sure they stay. These bars and cafes become part of your routine, your daily conversations and ultimately your inspiration.

We are without a doubt an extension of Sydney now, in so many ways, and Ettalong and Umina are now attracting so many of the Sydney brains trust to continue making this part of the coast and its community even more incredible.







# ALAN CORVY

## Central Coast Bicycle Users Group

*'This sense of camaraderie expands right through the community here'*

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After thirteen years living here on the beautiful Central Coast I know I've made the right choice. I lived in Sydney nearly all my life but when I got closer to retirement I wanted to find somewhere a little less busy to live, but still not too far from Sydney where I was still working. The Peninsula was and still is, perfect.

My girlfriend moved up here, into a little charming place on the Peninsula so I started spending some time here. Ettalong Beach, the National Park and Brisbane Waters were some of my favourite places. After about six months I realised that this was a great place to live so I moved up and we got married—maybe I married my wife and the Coast together!

Here it's all about the beach, waterways, and the bush. This means lots of places to ride bicycles (on shared paths and roads) and plenty of good cafes for social coffee catch ups. It's part of what inspires my work with the Central Coast Bicycle Users Group.

I've ridden a bicycle for transport for many decades, including multi-mode (cycle-train-cycle) to my work in Sydney, and so want to share that passion and some riding skills with others here in my local neighbourhood. So, in 2013 myself and a few other keen cyclists created this group to advocate for improved bicycle facilities, share cycling information and lead bicycle rides around the Coast. Ettalong, Umina and around the bay in Woy Woy.

We started the Tour de Central Coast a few years ago, we had around forty riders of all abilities that first year and it was a great success. We hope to keep building this event for our community as it's a great way to connect with new people and it really creates a sense of belonging – families, friends and locals all come out and cheer us on.

In 2017 we obtained a Council & NSW Government grant to help us purchase two tandem bicycles so that we could take people for bicycle rides, especially those living with a visual disability and I'm really proud to say the CCBUG Rides Assist program was born.

Many of our members live here in Ettalong and Umina and Woy Woy, including me and one of our Rides Assist blind riders, so I like to start many of my rides in Woy Woy, allowing Peninsula riders from all over the Peninsula and surrounding suburbs to join in as we go.

This sense of camaraderie expands right through the community and living here you truly feel nicely aware of each other and each other's abilities and needs.

The Peninsula also has easy access to food shops and medical facilities, and good train transport to Sydney and Newcastle, so you still feel very connected to everything.

And while things are certainly getting much busier over the last few years, it's only serving to bring fresh ideas and concepts to the region. And more and more people are out riding their bicycles and walking along the shared paths and that's just great for the region and great for our community.







# RICKY SIMOES

## The Markets

*'a community that is eclectic and ever evolving'*

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What I love about this area is its proximity and relationship to nature.

We are close to the most beautiful coastlines and glorious bushland. It only takes a few minutes to be in an area completely void of people and to be surrounded by nature. No matter how busy life can be we are only stones thrown away from bliss.

Match this with a community that is eclectic and ever evolving and it's a recipe for a diverse and enriching culture.

In fact, it's this community energy that inspires the work I do organising markets and events in Ettalong, Umina and Woy Woy.

I'm Portuguese and grew up in South Africa so living here is quite different for me.

When I moved to the Central Coast I was working as a receptionist and after about a year, I was inspired by the area and I could see the need for an outdoor market at Umina. This inspiration took me on a journey to start one and after a number of years led me to become self-employed.

These days you'll find me running Umina Beach Markets, which is a larger general market that caters to locals and tourists and Woy Woy Waterfront Markets, which is a more boutique market dedicated to creative products.

The community here is vital to the markets and they enjoy supporting the stallholders. Most of the stallholders are from the Central Coast and since starting the markets I've seen the community grow and support these events. All the stallholders are small businesses, and everyone is passionate about supporting local. We all have a place, we all belong and we are all supportive which I think makes for a great connection to each other. These past few years have been pretty tough so knowing there is a like-minded community just at your doorstep makes things just that much easier. The friends I've made by doing the markets has really made me realise how lucky I am.

I'm grateful for everyone that attends the markets, from the stallholders to all the people that come for a visit.

Eight years ago Ettalong and Umina seemed to be a very quiet and peaceful place, with the only busy times during school holidays.

Now this region seems to be busy all the time, especially places like West Street, Umina. The demographic has also changed to more families in the area, and I feel that the area is becoming more bustling and energetic.

In time, I feel that the region will become even more trendy and some may see the move from a sleepy town to a bustling burgh as negative but I think this will have such a positive impact.







# GLENN FRASER

Filmmaker

*'Friendly, positive and potential-laden. That's home for me.'*

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I've always known I needed to be around water, having grown up in Clovelly in Sydney. I cherish being around the wilds and the water for my own peace of mind.

The natural world has always been such rich inspiration for me. The way that this little corner of the world continues to harness the best of its natural splendour in a complementary way to serving its people is a model enterprise.

Only through connecting with the wealth of other visual storytellers via social media did I recognise there was a burgeoning community of creatives right here on my doorstep.

Social meetups at local cafés in Ettalong and bars in Umina turned into filmmaking opportunities and soon enough, my partner (filmmaker and actor Amelia Foxton) and I were hosting dinner parties and film nights that introduced respected filmmaking talent from Sydney and fusing them with the Central Coast's own storytellers. This is all about belonging, being part of the community, my community.

Looking to the future, I can see we have enormous opportunities in my field of the arts. There is great promise in the heralded Central Coast Studios and this will be a game-changer for the region. The proximity to hubs like Sydney means that there will be immediate opportunities for locals to train up into crewing and administration positions.

This place also feels like a time capsule when it comes to community. After my time in less forgiving metropolises, like London, it has been wonderful to make my home in a community where the word actually still holds some meaning. The Peninsula is my home now and it's community are my people.

These people still take the time for a chat, share ideas and opinions.

As producer and co-ordinator of the Alive Festival that runs quarterly in Gosford, I'm also passionate about growing the region's ethical, environmental and health-based awareness—something that's been a natural complement to the way that I've run my own film productions in the past.

I love bringing people together and starting a dialogue around what's important to creatives and I'm happy that I'm part of that conversation.

In 2017, I was offered an Associate Lectureship in the School of Creative Industries at my alma mater, the University of Newcastle.

In all the years I'd travelled that highway in my twenties, never once did I venture off the motorway and visit the Coast. Never did I consider that grab of coastline called the Peninsula might end up being my home.

I arrived on the Coast as a convenience, and I'm now loving the life here. Aligned with my partner and our five children here, it's been a boon to find a home that delights via its wild and natural side and yet offers a developing cultural hub that I anticipate will be an even richer place for the next generation to forge its own creative path.





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