

Paradise Lost

Strange language English.

If we are unwelcoming to people, not hospitable, we are said to be *inhospitable*. If we cannot be consoled following a significant loss, we are said to be *inconsolable*. Yet, if something is *so* valuable that its worth cannot be estimated in mere dollar terms, we describe that something as *invaluable*. Not to say that it is of no value—the very opposite in fact—something precious, unique, often one-of-a-kind.

‘Everyone will make a quid’, proudly proclaimed one of the proponents of the recently revealed Tomaree Headland Skywire project.

That said it all.

The natural, unspoilt beauty of Tomaree was lost on developers who certainly saw the headland as valuable, but not *invaluable*. Not everyone will ‘make a quid’. Certainly not the bush turkey I saw last Sunday rummaging for worms at the side of the winding pathway to the summit, not the eastern grey kangaroo that startled me one morning or the echidna that blocked my path on a pre-sunrise trek up the iconic sentinel to Port Stephens.

Tomaree—last weekend.

The dark sea stretching to infinity was defeated. Sunrise had won. A ring of cloud above the line where sea meets sky glowed fire red as the sun’s first rays crested the horizon and lit up the brooding storm clouds. The sea boiled, the violent sound of great southern swells throwing themselves against the andesite rocks below, thundered up the hill to the summit. A distant family of kookaburras competed with the surf for my ears’ attention.

I gazed out to sea, amazed at the changing colours of the new day. A screeching sulphur crest flew by. I smiled.

Tomaree—some Skywire dominated dystopian weekend in the future.

The mechanical, relentless drone of the skywire overhead scared all the animals away.

‘No.32 ... No.32 ... No.32. Your burgers, fries, chips and super-sized cokes are ready. Have a nice day.’

The family of kookaburras had been replaced by the ‘big red M’ McDonald’s family in the newly built cafe. Flushing toilets drowned the sound of the sea. A distant family arguing over who should get the few remaining chips competed with the urinals for my ears’ attention.

I gazed out to sea, amazed at what we had lost in search of a quid. The bungee jump was proving popular. A screeching backpacker with a yellow mohawk flew by. I shook my head.