



by Michael Parris  
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## NEWS

**EDUCATION** Port Stephens campus possible?

# University commits to working on Tomaree Lodge site's future

**Michael Parris**

VICE-CHANCELLOR Alex Zelinsky says the University of Newcastle is "committed to working with all stakeholders" on the future of the Tomaree Lodge site at Port Stephens.

The *Newcastle Herald* has been told the university has shown interest in operating a campus on the picturesque site, possibly accommodating marine science and hospitality students.

"We understand the importance of the Tomaree Lodge site to the Port Stephens community and are committed to working with all stakeholders as the future of the site evolves," Professor Zelinsky said in a brief response to questions from the *Herald*.

Sources have told the *Herald* that university representatives have visited the Tomaree site several times this year but the university's interest may extend only to advising government agencies on its future.

The NSW government is reviewing possible uses for the former disability care centre at the base of Tomaree headland.

Tomaree Headland Heritage Group, which represents a host of business and community groups in Port Stephens, said the "transition to community use seems to have stalled".

The group resolved unanimously at its annual general meeting last week to call on the government to "advise the community

on the status of the transition of the Tomaree Lodge site to Port Stephens for community use, including the outcomes from the community consultation process conducted almost 12 months ago".

THHG has proposed transforming the former disability care centre into an education and tourism precinct. It has recently embraced a proposal from retired CSIRO insect scientist Reginald Roberts to open an ecology centre at the site describing the Hunter environment from coastline to rainforest.

Port Stephens MP Kate Washington, whose disability inclusion ministerial portfolio encompasses the future of Tomaree Lodge, said she had briefed the heritage group "many times" on the site's progress.

"The Minns Labor government is undertaking an additional assessment to determine the physical, ecological and heritage constraints of the site, because the former government's community consultation process did not take these critical aspects into account," she said.

"I believe meaningful community consultation is the key to achieving the best possible outcome for this remarkable site.

"That's why I've committed to publicly releasing all reports and assessments and working closely with all local stakeholders prior to any decision being made by the government."