Heritage agreement to protect Morpeth House

Planning Minister Tony Kelly announced the NSW Government has entered into a Heritage Agreement with the owner of the St John’s College site at Morpeth.

Mr Kelly said, while visiting the site, that the agreement will ensure the long-term maintenance of the historically significant property and see important restoration works undertaken immediately.

“Under the agreement around $1.25 million worth of restoration works would be funded by the owner, who has approval to redevelop the site,” Mr Kelly said.

The Heritage Agreement requires the owner to:

- undertake restoration works to Closebourne House and Morpeth House linked with early stages of the proposed development; and
- ensure continued maintenance of Closebourne House and Morpeth House, including their setting and landscape elements, in perpetuity.

“This property is not only of great local significance, but is also of relevance to the State as a whole – as reflected by its listing on the State Heritage Register,” Mr Kelly said.

“The site played a central role in the establishment of European settlement in the Hunter Valley and in the founding and evolution of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle.

“It has also had an ongoing role in the training of clergy as well as in education in the region.

“And of course the buildings themselves have stood as an iconic visual landmark overlooking the town since its construction in 1820s.

“As such, the property retains considerable cultural significance for its historic, aesthetic, social and technical values, and the Heritage Agreement the Government has signed will ensure this remains the case for generations to come.”

“Under the owner’s existing planning approval, a staged redevelopment of the site is allowed for a mix of uses including a nursing home, retirement village, residential housing, retail shops and other ancillary facilities.

“As part of the overall approval process, the NSW Heritage Council gave careful consideration to the plans for this important property and indicated its support for the redevelopment as long as:

- the long-term maintenance and survival of the cultural significance of the property and its significant heritage items is ensured; and
- certain structures on the property with heritage significance are appropriately conserved, adapted and reused.

“Although the heritage buildings are generally in reasonable condition, they require a substantial amount of work to ensure they continue to be maintained at an appropriate level,” Mr Kelly said.
“As a result, the Heritage Council approved a Master Plan which allows the proposal to go ahead on part of the site, subject to a Heritage Agreement being entered into.

“Importantly, the Heritage Agreement is also linked to the land title so the commitments will carry through to any new owners should the property be sold in the future.”

Mr Kelly said that under the owner’s existing concept plan approval for the site, more detailed development applications will still need to be lodged and approved for individual aspects of the proposal before construction can commence.

The development proposal consists of 327 new dwellings including seniors living, residential development, a high care nursing home and a day respite centre, made up of:

**Standard Residential**
- Farmlets – 21 dwellings.
- Residential – 43 dwellings.

**Seniors Living Accommodation**
- Villas – 179 dwellings.
- Two-storey accommodation – 71 dwellings.
- Robinson House adaptive redevelopment – 10 dwellings.
- Oval retirement units – 3 dwellings.

**High Care Nursing Home**

Number of beds to be confirmed

The Heritage Agreement can be viewed at [www.heritage.nsw.gov.au](http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au)