

The Hon Ruth Forrest MLC
Chair, Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts

By email: Simon.Scott@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Ruth

Thank you for your letter requesting a progress update on the Newnham campus land title. With the opening of The Shed at Inveresk in October 2024 marking the final transition of students and staff from the Newnham to the Inveresk campus, we have been continuing to plan for the future of the Newnham campus.

The University will retain an education and research presence at the Newnham campus, as the home base for the Australian Maritime College, Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture and the Centre for Sustainable Architecture in Wood and Australian Forest and Wood Innovations. To support these nation-leading teaching and research institutes, planning for future developments at Newnham have considered how we can draw together the current uses of the site, including maritime and defence education and training, timber and agricultural research, alongside opportunities to host business and industry partnerships. In addition to education and research, the Newnham Masterplan identifies opportunities to create a mixed-use, community precinct which includes new residential homes, community facilities and green recreation spaces to support a vibrant future for Newnham. These plans align with the current Newnham Campus Redevelopment Deed between the University and the Crown.

These developments, particularly proposed residential investments at Newnham, are predicated on the assumption that the University will hold an unencumbered fee simple title to Lot 3 at Newnham, which requires removal of the existing education covenant on this land.

The January 2018 Grant Deed for the Inveresk Campus relocation outlined a method for removing the education covenant on Lot 3 at Newnham, with the Crown responsible for its removal. However, by mid-2022, when this process was enacted four years after being agreed on, the Solicitor-General advised that the process was no longer available. This advice prompted negotiations between the Crown and the University to find an alternative solution for removal of the education covenant.

During these discussions, Crown Law proposed that the University surrender Lot 3 at Newnham to the State, allowing the education covenant to be removed with the approval of both houses of Parliament. However, there was no certainty that this parliamentary process would protect the University's interests in the site. This proposal required the University to take on additional significant risk, which was not present under the original January 2018 Grant

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Deed mechanism, and which had the potential to disrupt existing University operations at Newnham and hinder fulfillment of the Newnham Masterplan.

As a result, the University sought a revised Grant Deed, including determining a new process to minimise risk, and we collaborated with Crown Law and the Office of the Coordinator-General to revise the Grant Deed. Under this arrangement, the University surrenders the land to the Crown and takes a leasehold of the land, anticipating that Parliament will agree to lift the education covenant and return the land to the University. If Parliament does not approve the removal, the leasehold continues for a 50-year term in favour of the University. This approach mitigates some risk, allowing the University to continue its operations at Newnham under a lease agreement. Although this does not eliminate all risks and may complicate further investment and the achievement of the Newnham Masterplan, the University accepted this proposal to enable progress toward creating a vibrant Newnham precinct.

We note you hold a copy of correspondence from Minister Abetz dated 19 September 2024. For completeness we enclose a copy of our response to Minister Abetz dated 6 December 2024, where we confirm our understanding of this agreed process for return of an unconditional fee simple in Lot 3 to the University. Under the deeds referred to in that letter, the Crown has until 30 June 2025 to complete this fee simple process. We understand that the Crown has every intention of meeting this deadline, which will enable further development and progress at the Newnham campus.

We have now successfully worked with the State Government for many years to deliver the Northern Transformation Project at Inveresk. With the Inveresk campus complete, the final two milestone payments to the University under the Inveresk Grant Deed are due. We were pleased to receive recent correspondence from Minister Eric Abetz indicating that these payments will be resolved by the end of March 2025.

We are committed to delivering a vibrant and shared precinct at Newnham for education, research, community and industry use, and we look forward to progressing this further in the second half of 2025, following completion of the fee simple process and removal of the education covenant.

Yours sincerely



Professor Rufus Black
Vice-Chancellor

14 March 2025

Office of the Vice-Chancellor

The Hon Eric Abetz MP
Minister for Business, Industry and Resources
GPO Box 123
Hobart TAS 7001

By email: Minister.Abetz@dpac.tas.gov.au

Dear Minister Abetz

Thank you for your letter noting the Government's continuing support for the University's relocation to Inveresk through the Northern Transformation Project, which we very much appreciate. We were delighted to open The Shed in October 2024, which marks a major milestone in this important project for the University, the region and indeed the island.

With construction of The Shed now complete, all milestones required under the Inveresk relocation Funding Deed have been achieved. We are preparing the milestone documentation for the final instalment and will submit this to the Office of the Coordinator-General before the end of this year.

Thank you for progressing the matters regarding the redevelopment of the Newnham land. We appreciate the Government's work to date on the proposal and the detailed explanation of the proposed process is helpful.

We have now completed settlement of the Deed of Variation of the Inveresk Grant Deed, the Newnham Campus Redevelopment Deed, Deed of Surrender, Lease of the Newnham campus land and hand over of the titles and Transfer of Land.

From your letter, we understand the next step is with the Crown to finalise the Section 64 process to transfer an unconditional fee simple in the Lot 3 title back to the University, subject to the University granting a mortgage and a covenant to the Crown. This will enable opportunities for further investment at the Newnham campus to be realised, creating a vibrant educational and community precinct for Northern Tasmania.

Thank you again for your continued support for the University's relocation to Inveresk and the future of the Newnham campus. The vision of the Northern Transformation Project has been delivered through strong partnerships, and we

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look forward to continuing to work in partnership as we make education more visible and accessible in all parts of Tasmania.

Yours sincerely



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6 December 2024

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