

Tomaree needs better signs

BY MICHAEL HARTSHORN

A LEADING ecology academic, who has called for the former Tomaree Lodge site to include a world-class Ecology Centre, says better signage is needed to meet the needs of visitors to the summit and new coastal walks.

Dr Reginal Roberts was one of several volunteers at the Tomaree Headland Heritage Group's helpdesk at the site and got first hand of the difficulties experienced by visitors.

"In terms of signs on the approaches to Tomaree Headland and at its base, I am sorry to say that Tomaree Headland does not make visitors feel especially welcome," he said.

Dr Roberts, an 89-year-old former CSIRO principal research scientist, who has studied, lectured and researched across the globe, said the large number of visitors the helpdesk assisted, showed there was a thirst for knowledge about the region and a desire to experience it's beauty.

He has jointed Tomaree Hedland Heritage Group



Tourists at the base of Tomaree Headland walk and Dr Reginald Roberts (inset).

push for improved signage and a help desk at the site and written letters to various government department heads and MPs to address the issue.

"As a resident of Port Stephens, I was dismayed at the lack of adequate signage for visitors to our facilities and natural wonders, especially on the road approaches and the location of entrances to the Tomaree Summit Walk

Why is there not signage in

keeping with this incredible Headland area, its trails, and road access to its 6.7-million-dollar Tomaree Coastal Walk?

"Even the entrance to the popular five-minute walk over a sandhill to Zenith Beach is hidden by parked cars; all these matters have led to many complaints by frustrated tourists.

"One morning recently I witnessed huge numbers of visitors starting their visit to Tomaree Headland - a high proportion could not see where the walks start.

"Let alone: 'Where is a toilet?', 'Where do we pay to park?', and 'How long will we need for the hike to the Summit and back?', which were all questions we were asked at our temporary help desk.

"We need large and informative signs, above head-height, parked vehicles and turning traffic, well placed for all to see, as numerous frustrated visitors have pointed out."

Dr Roberts said the region is unique because of its many beautiful ecological habitats and other attributes which are close to population cen-

tres and a major airport giving it immense potential to attract many more national and international visitors, students, and researchers to our unique and diverse region.

"The educational opportunities for tens of thousands are immense. This region is unique in all of Australia for its tremendous variety of habitats that are within easy reach," he said.

"There is an extremely rich variety of aquatic and terrestrial life in different habitat, from the ocean and seashore to river estuaries, to the innumerable habitats of Port Stephens, Lake Macquarie, and the Hunter, to the Barrington Tops with its mix of sub-tropical and temperate rainforests.

"An Ecology Centre here would provide a staging post for students, researchers, and eco-tourism and add an important additional layer of scientific information and access to the region. The centre should be able to provide a list of key walks and drives accessing the vast range of specific habitats for fauna and flora."