

12 August 2025

Erin Murphy  
Team Leader – Regional Assessments  
NSW Department of Planning, Housing & Infrastructure  
Level 31, 4 Parramatta Square  
PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

Dear Erin

RE: REQUEST FOR REVISED SEARS – ESCARPMENT RESORT AVONDALE (SSD-69465207)

We write to you on behalf of the proponent, Avondale Escarpment Pty Ltd, to request amendments to the Planning Secretary’s issued environmental assessment requirements (SEARs) for the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) pertaining to the proposed Concept proposal for an eco-tourist facility known as the Escarpment Resort Avondale SSD-69465207.

Avondale Escarpment Pty Ltd have now acquired the adjacent **Lot 1 DP 121139** and accordingly it is proposed to amend the proposal to include this allotment as part of the project, as well as some minor additional works within this new allotment comprising 6 new villas, conversion of the existing farmhouse into a provedore, stores and GM accommodation, and a new adjacent car park.

A scoping report was submitted as part of the original request for SEARs which was supported by the following documentation, and the SEARs were subsequently issued on 2 May 2024.

| Document                            | Consultant                       |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Scoping Summary Table               | Sutherland & Associates Planning |
| Concept Masterplan Package          | Turner architects                |
| Preliminary Biodiversity Assessment | Eco Planning                     |
| Aboriginal due diligence advice     | Biosis                           |
| Community Participation Plan        | Urbanised                        |
| QS Cost Report                      | Altus Group                      |
| Water & Wastewater Management       | CJ Arms                          |
| Electrical Services Infrastructure  | Cova                             |

The SEARs were subsequently amended on 16 October 2024 to delete required detail which was only relevant to a detailed application.

### Revised Site Description

The site is approximately 17km south-west of the Wollongong CBD. The subject site is approximately 317ha in area and located at the base of the Illawarra escarpment.

The site comprises 8 allotments and is legally referred to as follows:

| Lot | DP      |
|-----|---------|
| 101 | 1247603 |
| 1   | 120957  |
| 1   | 386238  |
| 1   | 415430  |
| X   | 416731  |
| B   | 106828  |
| 1   | 655151  |
| 1   | 121139  |

The site address is Avondale Road, Huntley and is referred to as the 'Avondale Escarpment Lands' and is accessed via two road entries, being Avondale Road to the east, and Avondale Colliery Road to the south-east.

The site has a history of logging and agricultural uses, but more recently was occupied by the Huntley Colliery from 1946 to 1989 which was originally a small hand worked mine from the outcrop in the Tongarra seam and later became a major coal mine with a peak of 488 employees and which by 1966 was the first coal mine in Australia to exceed a million tonnes a year. These past uses have significantly influenced the current land form in parts of the site and these are the areas which have been identified as suitable for new tourist facilities.

The site currently contains an abandoned former coal mining site with dilapidated mining buildings, remnant mining structures and hardstand areas and a network of bitumen sealed roads and dirt tracks formerly utilised by both the Huntley and Avondale Coal mines.

There has been significant intervention to the site resulting in widespread degradation of the land and a lack of rehabilitation to the site following cessation of the mining activities. There are mining debris throughout large parts of the site, as well as widespread weed infestation, and the site is currently unmanaged. The two existing buildings on the original site, a workshop shed and administration building, have been subjected to significant vandalism and weather deterioration.

The new allotment Lot 1 in DP 121139 contains land formally used for grazing purposes as well as some minor structures including a farmhouse.

Notwithstanding, the profound adverse impacts to the site from former mining operations, other areas of the site represent significant ecological values that can be retained, potentially improved and those values extended to other areas of the Site. An ecological assessment of the Site has been undertaken by Lucas McKinnon, an ecologist having long familiarity with the Site. In summary, Mr McKinnon has stated that the Site "holds significant ecological assets" including:

*(i) threatened ecological communities recognised under both the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) and the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (NSW);*

*(ii) threatened plants, identified as such under either or both of the Commonwealth and State legislation;*

(iii) the habitat for threatened bird species, including migratory birds, again recognised under either or both of the Commonwealth and State legislation; and

(iv) the habitat of threatened bat species also recognised under either or both the Commonwealth and State legislation.

The site is a listed heritage item, and specifically an archaeological site, pursuant to Schedule 5 of the Wollongong Local Environmental Plan (WLEP) 2009. The site is also identified as “Natural resource sensitivity—biodiversity” pursuant to Clause 7.2 of the WLEP 2009. The majority of the site is zoned C2 Environmental Conservation, whilst a smaller part of the site along the entrance road and to the north of the entrance road, is zoned C3 Environmental Management.

The entire site is identified as being wholly bush fire prone land notwithstanding the cleared areas.

The surrounding area is predominantly rural or bushland in character. Steep slopes and high levels of vegetation cover are evident across the immediate surrounding locality.

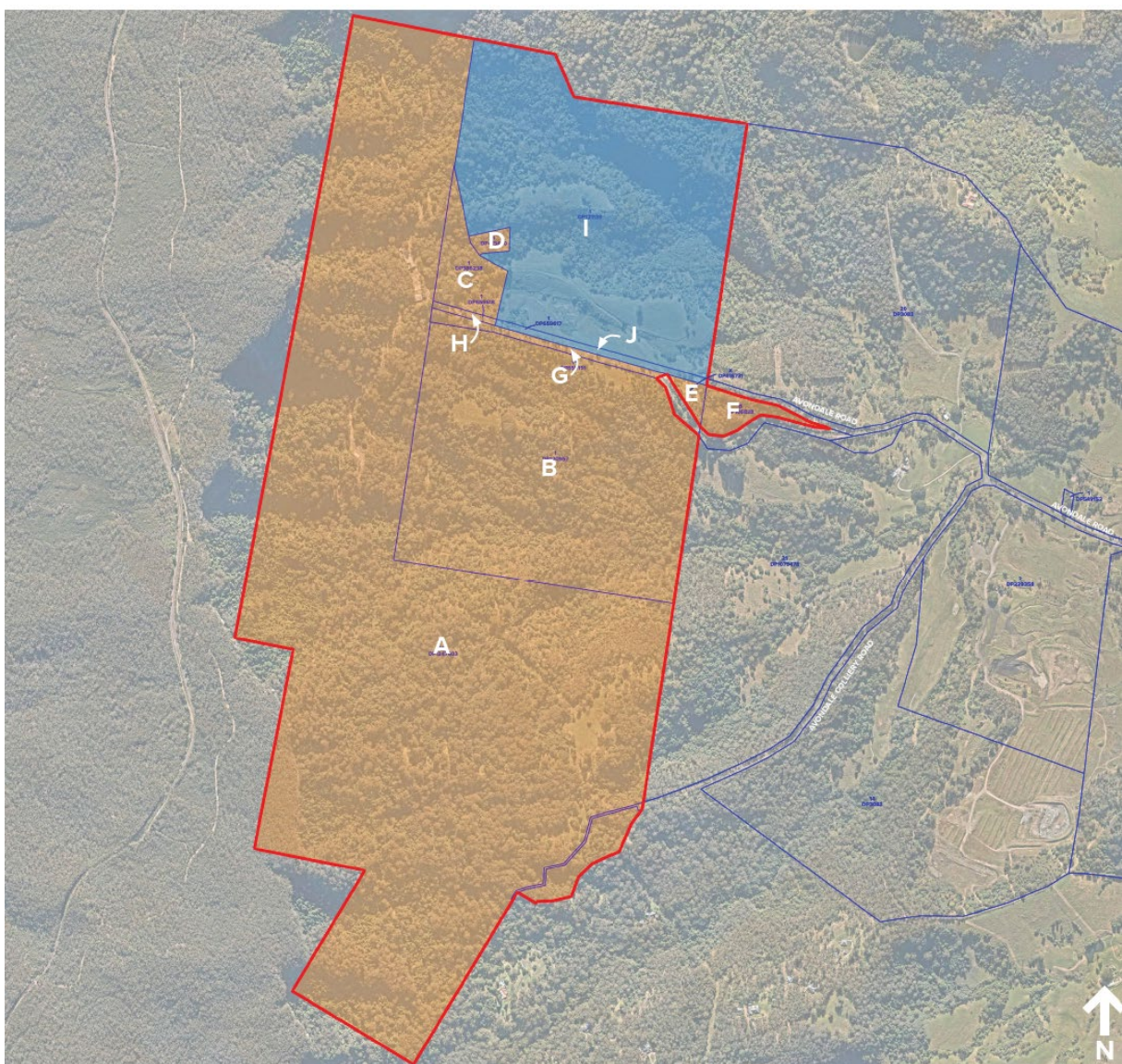


Figure 1:

Subject site (orange area denotes original site and blue denotes additional allotment)



## Revised Project summary

The proposal is a Concept Plan application for environmental protection works, environmental facilities and an eco-tourist facility, collectively referred to as Escarpment Resort Avondale, with a circa \$188m EDC and including the following works, facilities and components as illustrated in the amended architectural package prepared by Turner Architects which accompanies this Scoping Report:

- Environmental restoration works including rubbish and weed removal, site restoration and rehabilitation works, and regeneration of natural habitats.
- Environmental facilities including walking tracks, seating, shelters, board walks and observation decks through the landscape are proposed for the enjoyment of the natural setting by guests
- Site entry and circulation arrangement for guests from Avondale Colliery Road including internal vehicle circulation network, as well as car parking for guests and staff.
- Main hotel building comprising porte cochere, lobby lounge, bar, function rooms, pool and restaurant.
- Accommodation comprising:
  - Villas adjacent to main building including 20 x suites, 15 x 1 bedroom, 5 x 2 bedroom and 1 x 3 bedroom
  - Northern villas 6 x suites
  - 15-20 glamping pavilions on the Avondale side former grazing area, just north of the arrival pavilion
- Adaptive re-use and restoration of steel coal pavilion.
- Guest services buildings including spa and wellness centre, kids club, chapel, and rotunda.
- Ancillary buildings including staff back-of-house, administration, maintenance, food stores, etc.
- Conversion of the existing farmhouse into a provedore, stores and GM accommodation, and a new adjacent car park.

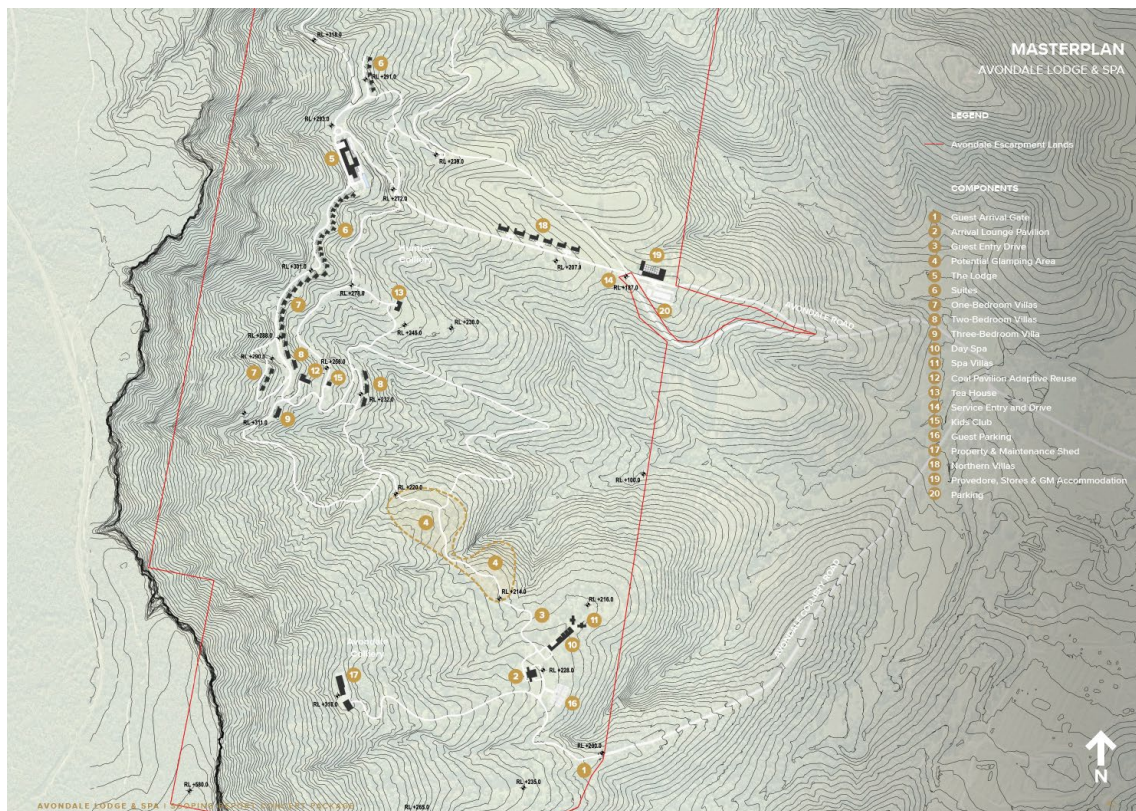


Figure 2:

Amended Escarpment Hotel Avondale masterplan

### Amendments to SEARs

The proposed amendment to the proposed works does not require any change to the development as described within the issued SEARs as the generic nature of the description of the development remains sufficient.

The Location is requested to be amended as follows:

|          |                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Location | Lot 101 DP 1247603, Lot 1 DP 120957, Lot 1 DP 386238, Lot 1 DP 415430, Lot X DP 416731, Lot B DP 106828, <del>and</del> Lot 1 DP 655151, <del>and</del> Lot 1 DP 121139. |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The requested changes of the SEARs does not result in any consequence in relation to the identified Strategic Context outlined in Part 3 of the Scoping Report, or the Statutory Context and jurisdictional considerations outlined in Part 4 of the Scoping Report.

The Scoping Report submitted in support of the SEARs request identified a broad range of impacts to be addressed in the EIS, and the proposed amendments do not give rise to any new impacts for consideration.

### Next Steps

We look forward to your consideration of the proposed amendment to the SEARs identified above.

We trust that the information detailed in this letter and the supporting Updated Scoping Report Concept Package prepared by Turner architects is sufficient to enable the consideration this issue, however, if you need any further detail please contact me on 0410 452 371 or aaron@sutherlandplanning.com.au.

Yours faithfully



Aaron Sutherland

**Sutherland & Associates Planning Pty Ltd**