

Terrie Avenue Figtree Planning Proposal

Submission by the Illawarra Escarpment Alliance

5 June 2020

The Illawarra Escarpment Alliance (EscA) is an alliance of community-based organisations and likeminded individuals, established in 2019 to focus collaborative efforts to protect the cultural and environmental values of the Illawarra Escarpment in its entirety.

EscA strongly opposes this proposal, which is considered to be another attempt to extend suburban development into the Escarpment foothills buffer zone. Protecting our natural assets on the Escarpment and foothills is a vital responsibility of Wollongong City Council, as is reflected in the zonings set out in the Wollongong Local Environment Plan (LEP) 2009. EscA considers that attempts to roll back environmental protections provided by the Wollongong LEP 2009 should be rejected by Council.

EscA supports the submission on the Terrie Avenue Figtree Planning Proposal by the National Parks Association of NSW (Illawarra Branch), in saying that this parcel of environmentally zoned land at Terrie Ave in the foothills is performing an essential role as a buffer between urban development and the highly valued land of the Illawarra Escarpment State Conservation Area (IESCA). This buffer area is important as it provides some stability in the geologically fragile escarpment environment, protects the site of the present proposal from the possibility of landslip and also prevents the incursion of weeds and feral species into the Escarpment. The proposal will also result in increased urban runoff to Byarong Creek.

The objective of increasing housing supply generally in the Wollongong LGA is not a strong reason to increase residential density on this site. It is a fallacy to argue that the extra R2 blocks high on the escarpment slopes are needed because they are central to the city and close to the Figtree shops and town centre. The site is not easily accessible to the CBD and is beyond walking distance to the Figtree town centre. Increasing residential density needs to be assessed on a broader LGA scale, not at a site specific level. The large West Dapto suburban expansion more than caters for the demand for low density, car-dependent living.

EscA notes that the site and the surrounding forested areas are classified as high bushfire risk by the Rural Fire Service. Future development proposals will require the removal of a considerable number of native trees and the establishment of asset protection zones to reduce the bushfire risk, further reducing native vegetation. The further clearing of tracts of native forest in the escarpment foothills for urban development must not be permitted.

EscA also supports the concerns raised by nearby residents, which include traffic congestion, encroachment on the escarpment, biodiversity loss, land slip, bushfire risk and increased stormwater runoff. Under the current E4 zoning Council retains some control of how to manage development of the

site responsibly. The proposed R2 Residential zoning will see much higher density development and less Council control over environmental impacts.

The E2, E3 and E4 zones around and in the Illawarra Escarpment and its foothills are essential to protect our unique and much-admired escarpment zone, and should not be available to developers seeking a financial benefit by way of rezoning applications. The E4 zoning of the subject site should be seen as performing an important function between the IESCA and the existing residential areas. EscA urges Council to maintain the integrity of the existing environmental zonings in the LEP and not approve this proposal.

Submitted on behalf of EscA by Felix Bronneberg and Emma Rooksby, EscA members