

Proposed Eco-Tourist Facility

28 Paradise Drive, Smiths Lake, NSW

1. Introduction

This Statement of Environmental Effects accompanies a Development Application seeking approval for the construction and operation of an eco-tourist facility in, Smiths Lake, New South Wales. The proposed development has been designed to reflect the natural and ecological values of the site, providing environmentally responsible, low-impact tourism experiences that support ecological stewardship and promote visitor wellbeing. Additionally, the facility will contribute to increasing local employment opportunities and stimulate trade for local businesses, benefiting the surrounding community.

2. Site Description

The subject site is located at 28 Paradise Drive, Smiths Lake, within a predominantly rural and environmentally sensitive area characterised by native vegetation, coastal ecosystems, and proximity to waterways such as Smiths Lake and the nearby ocean foreshore. The site contains native bushland, gentle topography, and scenic vistas, providing an ideal setting for a nature-based, sustainable tourism development that will also support local economic activity.

3. Project Overview

The proposal involves the construction of a small-scale eco-tourist facility comprising a number of self-contained eco-cabins, open-air areas for yoga and wellness activities, with access to nearby waterways and walking trails nearby for recreational use. The facility is intended as a retreat that promotes nature-based wellness, low-impact recreation, and environmental education, with a strong focus on supporting local businesses and employment.

Key elements include:

- Off-grid, solar-powered eco-cabins constructed with sustainable recycled and locally sourced materials.
- Minimal-impact pathways.
- Communal and private open-air spaces for yoga and meditation.
- Private yoga lessons in cabins and outdoors.
- Gardening and cooking educational offerings.
- Environmentally managed access to water-based activities such as kayaking, paddleboarding, scuba diving,

snorkelling, and seasonal whale watching.

- Infrastructure designed to avoid environmental disruption and reduce reliance on external utilities.

The facility will create jobs in various sectors, including hospitality, cleaners, chefs, landscaping, maintenance, tour guiding, and wellness services, providing new employment opportunities to local residents.

4. Environmental Protection and Design Sensitivity

The project prioritises ecological protection through sensitive site planning and minimal physical disturbance. All built structures and circulation pathways are sited to avoid native vegetation, watercourses, and known habitat areas. Where vegetation must be removed, offset planting and restoration using indigenous species will be implemented.

Design strategies include:

- Use of recycled and repurposed materials.
- Minimal walkways to protect root systems and ground flora.
- Natural tones and low-profile structures to reduce visual prominence.
- Landscaping with native plants to enhance habitat value and visual cohesion.

These environmentally sensitive design strategies will protect the site's natural beauty, sustainable construction and landscaping is a top priority.

5. Nature-Based Wellness and Recreation

The facility's offerings focus on quiet, immersive, and restorative activities, including:

- Guided birdwatching and bush walks.
- Open-air yoga and meditation sessions.
- Private yoga and meditation sessions and visitors private accommodation.
- Massage, sauna, ice bath and health spa style activities.
- Non-motorised water-based recreation such as kayaking and paddleboarding.
- Scuba diving experiences in designated marine areas.
- Seasonal whale watching, in coordination with local conservation guidelines.

These activities will foster personal wellness, encourage ecological appreciation, and positively impact the local economy by attracting visitors who will contribute to local trade, such as dining, retail, and other services.

6. Visual Impact Management

To ensure visual integration with the natural landscape, the development adopts the following visual mitigation measures:

- Low-profile building forms and materials in muted, earthy tones.
- Strategic siting of cabins and facilities to avoid ridge lines and strategic planting of hedges on boundaries for the privacy of neighbours.
- Screening using retained and supplementary native vegetation.

These measures will preserve the area's scenic qualities, benefiting the local community by preserving the natural aesthetics that attract visitors.

7. Infrastructure and Utilities

All essential services will be provided through low-impact, self-sufficient systems:

- Solar photovoltaic systems will provide renewable energy for the entire site; the owner has already installed a 40 kW solar system, large enough to power the proposed development.
- Rainwater tanks will ensure sustainable water use.
- Infrastructure routing (e.g., for communications and service lines) will follow existing disturbed paths or be installed via trenchless methods to protect root zones and habitats.

These environmentally sustainable infrastructure systems will encourage the use of local services and suppliers, providing economic opportunities for businesses offering renewable energy, plumbing, and construction services.

8. Traffic, Parking and Access

The proposed eco-tourist facility is located on a quiet access road that experiences low traffic volumes, ensuring minimal disruption to existing traffic conditions. The site has excellent accessibility, with direct, safe

access from Paradise Drive and clear internal circulation paths that support the low-impact nature of the development.

A centralised, on-site car park will provide 12 permanent parking spaces, ensuring adequate parking for guests and staff without encroaching on surrounding natural areas. Additionally, an existing carport structure will offer a further 4 undercover spaces, plus 8 spaces at the existing Residents for operators and staff bringing the total capacity to 24 spaces. These provisions exceed typical demand for a small-scale eco-tourism facility and ensure that there will be no overflow onto public roads.

To further minimise traffic generation and promote sustainability, the facility will operate a courtesy shuttle bus for guests. This service will support group pick up and drop off from Newcastle and Sydney, guided tours, local activity transfers, and evening transport to nearby venues, significantly reducing the number of private vehicles entering and exiting the site. The courtesy bus will also help reduce parking requirements during peak periods, promote group participation in local activities, and improve safety for guests and the local community.

These traffic and access measures are designed to:

- Limit environmental and noise impacts on neighbouring properties.
- Ensure compliance with access safety standards.
- Support the development's broader sustainability goals.

9. Compatibility with Local Land Use and Planning Controls

The development falls within the R5 Large Lot Rural Residential zone and is compatible with the surrounding low-density, rural, and environmental zoning. It supports regional tourism objectives and contributes to the local economy through environmentally sustainable means. Its low intensity and strong environmental focus align with local planning instruments, including any applicable Local Environmental Plans (LEPs), Development Control Plans (DCPs), and the NSW Government's Ecotourism Guidelines.

10. Environmental Management Strategy

A detailed Environmental Management Plan (EMP) will be prepared to guide all phases of the project-design, construction, and operation. The EMP will include:

- Measures to protect existing flora, fauna, and ecological processes.

- Strategies for managing construction impacts such as erosion, noise, and waste.
- Restoration of any disturbed areas using locally native vegetation.
- Monitoring programs to track environmental performance and adapt as necessary. -

Performance targets for renewable energy generation, water efficiency, and waste reduction.

This will further engage local service providers and contractors, creating additional employment and business opportunities within the region.

11. Positive Environmental and Economic Outcomes

The proposed development is expected to deliver significant long-term environmental, social, and economic benefits, including:

- Protection and celebration of natural assets through eco-sensitive tourism.
- Education and engagement of visitors in environmental stewardship.
- Contribution to the conservation economy in the region.
- Demonstration of sustainable tourism practices that have the potential to inform broader regional planning. -

Creation of employment opportunities across multiple sectors, from hospitality to outdoor recreation, benefiting the local community.

12. Conclusion

The proposed eco-tourist facility at 28 Paradise Drive, Smiths Lake, has been designed with a strong commitment to environmental integrity, community benefit, and sustainability. Through sensitive site planning, sustainable design, and a robust environmental management framework, the development will enhance the ecological and scenic values of the area while providing unique and enriching visitor experiences. Additionally, it will stimulate local employment and trade, supporting the broader community's economic growth.

This SEE demonstrates that the development is consistent with the planning objectives of Mid Coast Council and relevant state policies. Approval is therefore respectfully sought for this low-impact, environmentally responsible tourism venture that will also contribute positively to the local economy.