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## 5.0 THE LANDSCAPE OF THE EAST EDGE SCENIC PROTECTION LANDS

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Figure 5.0.1. The landscape of the East Edge Scenic Protection Lands is dominated by its rural-bushland edge qualities rather than by spectacular topographic features.

Figure 5.0.2. The East Edge Scenic Protection Lands are situated along the alignment of the main ridge dividing the urban areas of the Campbelltown valley from the bush landscape of the Georges River Reservation further to the east. From Blair Athol.

Figure 5.0.3. The EESPLs form the ridgeline of views across the main Campbelltown valley (from Campbelltown Road)..

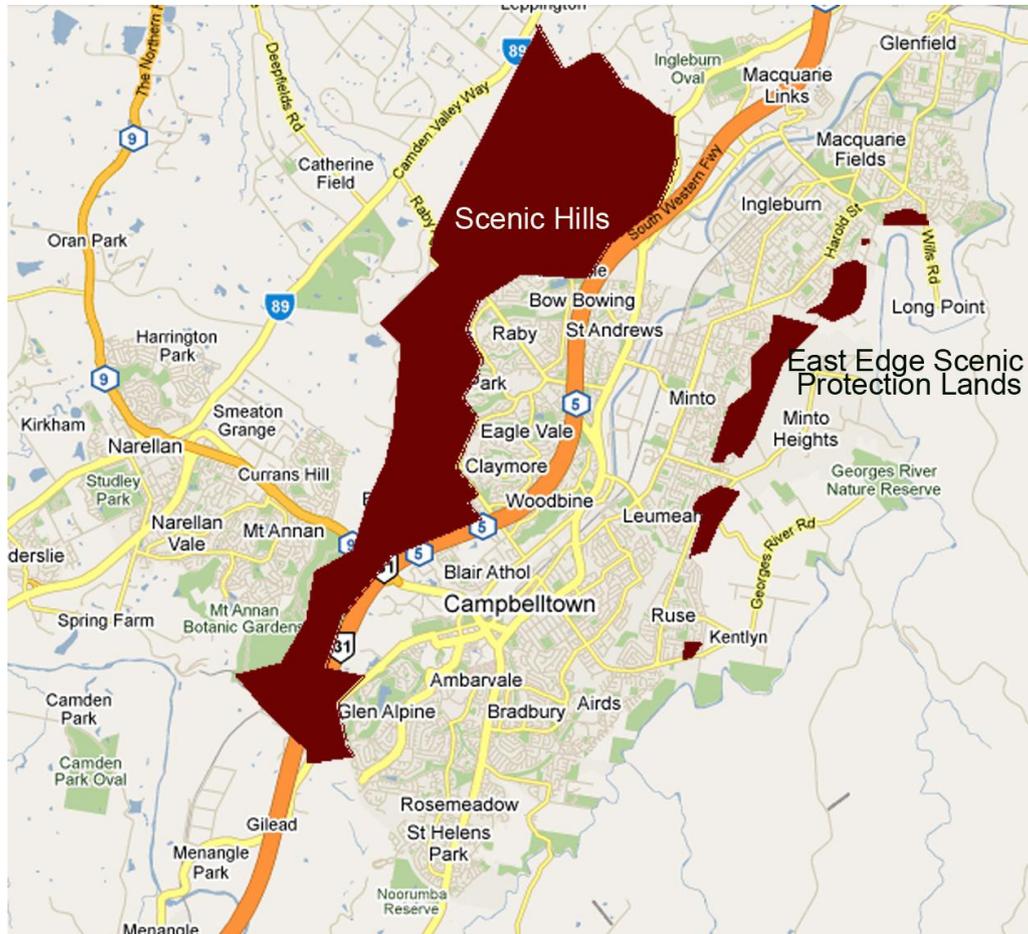


Figure 5.0.4. The EESPLs lie in the north-eastern part of the Campbelltown LGA between the urbanised area of the main valley and the Georges River Parkway.

### 5.0.1 INTRODUCTION

The East Edge Scenic Protection Lands (EESPLs) consist of six precincts located along the main ridge between the suburbs of Macquarie Fields and Ruse. This ridge separates the Campbelltown valley from the Georges River plateau to the east. This plateau is noticeably flatter than the rolling hills of the shale-based Scenic Hills and is marked by the deeply incised valleys of the Georges River and its tributaries as they wind towards the coast.

The EESPLs play an important role in providing a transition between the urban areas to the west and the scenically and ecologically significant Georges River landscape to the east.

The character of the EESPLs is very different to that of the Scenic Hills, and the area is recognised for its natural bushland and ecological values rather than spectacular views or rich cultural history. The landforms within the EESPLs are gentle and although good external views are available from many places towards the Scenic Hills in the west, the internal views are generally linear rather than panoramic and notable for their natural and semi-rural character, with houses and small farms being nestled in clearings in the bush. Roads are mostly soft-edged and lined by mature native trees which direct many of the internal views and add significantly to the scenic qualities of the EESPLs.

The topography to the west of the EESPLs falls in parallel folds towards Bow Bowling and Bunbury Curran Creeks. These folds create a series of ridges that obstruct many views into the East Edge Scenic Protection Lands from the lower points in the main Campbelltown valley. Good reciprocal views are available however between the EESPLs and the Scenic Hills to the west, with the ridges of the two study areas forming and providing a sense of enclosure to the main valley. The landscapes of the two sides are however distinctly different and provide a contrast that contributes to the sense of scenic diversity within the Campbelltown LGA.

The EESPLs only become a prominent element in views from more distant vantage points such as the Scenic Hills. The quality of the view towards this ridgeline is particularly important in defining the character of the precinct. One of the primary markers of the area in distant views from the Scenic Hills is provided by the chain of water storage reservoirs that punctuate the ridgeline and provide spatial reference to each locality. Two of these reservoirs; Ingleburn and Minto; are within Landscape Units and the Leumeah Reservoir abuts another.

A significant exception to the soft, vegetated character of the ridgeline is found above Minto, where the hillside has been cleared of an earlier layer of urban development and vegetation and is currently being redeveloped as the Minto Renewal Project. The ridge adjacent to this EESPL (E-LU4) is also cleared of vegetation and the hillside currently reads as a barren scar interrupting the visual continuity of the ridgeline. The impacts of this redevelopment on the scenic qualities of the EESPLs is discussed in more detail below.

Although the EESPLs study areas are currently visually and physically contiguous with the natural landscape to the east, they are limited in their geographical extent by the reservation for the proposed George River Parkway. This road has been planned to provide alternative access to the Menangle Park and Appin areas from the north-east. Most of the corridor has been acquired and although no date has yet been identified for construction it is understood that it will proceed. The introduction of this major multi-lane limited access road along the edge of the area will have significant visual and ecological impacts on the EESPLs by creating a hard barrier between the Landscape Units and the bushland beyond. It is critical that the protection of the scenic and natural qualities of the EESPLs continues to be addressed in the detailed planning for this road.

Navan Officer's report describing the Aboriginal cultural landscapes of Campbelltown<sup>30</sup> suggests that the EESPLs were valuable to the groups who occupied this area, and in

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<sup>30</sup> Navin Officer, Campbelltown LGA Aboriginal Heritage Study, Unpublished report for Campbelltown City Council, September 2002.

particular the Georges River valleys. Little detail is known however about the occupation and uses made of this landscape or of significant sites to the traditional landowners.

There are no major Colonial or later 19<sup>th</sup> Century houses along, or just below the ridgeline, where they could have been considered likely to capture the panoramic views to the west over the Scenic Hills. Several reasons can be identified, the primary one being the extent of William Redfern's Campbellfield Estate. The core 800 acres of the property was granted in 1811, and Redfern bought many of the surrounding properties between Ingleburn and Leumeah and between Bunbury Curran Creek in the valley and the Georges River to the east until at its greatest it occupied 5850 acres<sup>31</sup> - covering the whole of the area now known as Ingleburn, Minto and East Minto and extending as far south as Smiths Creek. Redfern's house was located within the original grant area. It is situated on the lower part of the property on a small knoll close to the more fertile floodplains. Its slightly elevated position afforded, and continues to enjoy, sweeping views over the Scenic Hills and to other early properties such as Varroville, St Andrews and Robin Hood Farm. The Campbellfield Estate remained substantially intact until the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when the first successful subdivisions led to a cluster of lots along the ridgeline<sup>32</sup> – although the aerial photographs of the 1950s reveal that many lots remained undeveloped until recent years.

Another large grant of 1300 acres originally abutted Campbellfield to the south, the boundary being near the alignment of Ben Lomond Road today. Made to Thomas Rose (who also had large holdings at Mount Gilead to the south of Campbelltown); it also extended from the valley floor to the main ridge. By 1843 much of this grant had been incorporated into Campbellfield and acted as a similar barrier to speculative development until released for subdivision in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>33</sup>.

The northern-most tip of the EESPLs (Landscape Unit 1) is located within the smaller grants of 200 acres made to Robert Howe, the second Government Printer and one of the founders of the Sydney Morning Herald and to Thomas Atkins; and a 405 acre grant to Thomas Wills. Little is known of the use of these properties prior to their inclusion in the Campbellfield Estate by 1843.

An additional reason for the lack of major pastoral activity in the EESPLs, even when first subdivided into farmlets, is the relatively poor nutritional quality of the sandstone-based soils on this side of the valley and its limited access to water, particularly when compared against the richer soils in the Scenic Hills landscape. Redfern is known to have manured his holdings to improve soil quality and was recognised for the quality and quantity of his produce, both wheat and livestock.<sup>34</sup>

Little physical evidence has survived of the first layer of subdivision of the EESPLs into smaller farm allotments, particularly closer to the ridgelines, although the network of main

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<sup>31</sup> Knapp. 1843. Plan of the Campbell-field Estate near Campbell Town for sale by Mr Stubbs on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 1843. Copy held by Mitchell Library (State Library of NSW).

<sup>32</sup> 1930 Historic Subdivision Plan, Parish Map Preservation Project. Image ID 14046502. NSW Department of Lands.

<sup>33</sup> Richardson & Wrench, and Whitelocke, Nelson P. & Gibbs, Shallard & Co. & Atchison & Schleicher. [188-?] *Campbellfields Estate, 1st Subdivision, Township of Minto, Great Southern Railway [cartographic material] : for auction sale on the ground on Saturday 6th October at 2 sharp / Richardson & Wrench, Auctioneers ; Whitelocke, Draftsman, 3 Scotts Champs. Pitt St.* Copy held by National Library of Australia.

<sup>34</sup> Jones, Arthur. 1999. The Farm of Mr. Redfern. Grist Mills – the Journal of Campbelltown and Airs Historical Society Inc. Vol12 No.2; June 1999.

roads has remained substantially intact since this time. The areas contain only two listed heritage items; Eagleview Farm on Eagleview Road (near the Minto Reservoir) and the sandstone cottage and its outbuildings on Mercedes Road. A 19<sup>th</sup> Century house known as Kynghmont was located where the park of the same name is located today on the western side of Eagleview Road near Jersey Parade (outside the study area) but only the trees have survived to mark the location today.

The alignment of the early road network is significant and plays an important role in the ongoing accessibility of the EESPLs to the wider community. The major local roads connecting the EESPLs with the valley, such as Minto, Ben Lomond<sup>35</sup>, Westmoreland and Leumeah Roads, were formed by the earliest rural subdivisions of Campbellfield and may have reflected earlier paddock layouts. Whatever their origin, their alignment was intentional: each was oriented to a major element in the Scenic Hills landscape opposite, providing good vistas and a highly accessible sense of place to be enjoyed by the whole community and not just a few land owners.

The major north-south roads such as Eagleview/Amundsen, Guernsey/Thompson and Bensley Roads follow the alignment of the main north-south ridges of the EESPLs landscape, and a series of good views to the Scenic Hills are also available from these roads. Additional opportunities for framed views are also able to be gained from the intersections of these north-south roads and the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century local suburban streets, such as those falling to the west from Longhurst Road. Particularly good quality views are available where the foreground is open space: and these spatial connections also emphasise the priority placed on the creation of visual and physical links in the planning principles of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The character of the landscape of the EESPLs is that of the urban/bushland interface, with each predominating in parts. The western boundaries are edged by residential development, in places 'larger lot'; but more usually standard suburban densities. The urban renewal project near Minto will significantly alter the setting of this landscape Unit.

The eastern edge to each area is bushland – formed by the uncleared Georges River Parkway reservation abutting the EESPLs and beyond that, the Georges River Nature Reserve. Prevailing land uses within most areas is a mixture of rural/farmlet; large-lot residential and bushland.

The built elements of the EESPLs are significant but remain secondary to the importance of the scenic and environmental values of the landscape. Although some intensive uses such as poultry farming can be found, the majority of agricultural use is small in scale, such as grazing for a small number of horses/cattle or market-garden activity. These are mostly undertaken in a single paddock attached to a dwelling and whilst validating the clearing of land in the past, these land uses do not read as primary agricultural development. Most residential development falls into one of two sub-types: nestled under a canopy of mature trees, or ranch-style homes on substantially cleared allotments. These provide a variety to the scenic values of the area. Comparison with the aerial photographs taken in 1956 reveal that today's bushland includes a significant amount of re-growth vegetation – with the land in

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<sup>35</sup> Ben Lomond Road may have originally been slightly further to the south than its current alignment to both mark the boundary between Redfern's and Rose's grants and provide access to the small grants further to the east. By 1930 it followed its current alignment.

1956 being largely or wholly cleared of forest. The scenic values of this area are however derived from its contemporary visual qualities and are not lessened by the presence of re-growth instead of original vegetation.

The two hectare lots have proven particularly effective in areas with high numbers of retained mature Woodland trees, where the houses have almost all been able to 'nestle' successfully under the canopy and the bushland landscape prevails. Although this practice has led to good visual outcomes it can have significant implications for bush fire management, an increasingly topical issue at the urban/bush interface.



Figure 5.0.5. The topography of the landscape is defined by the edge of the valleys of the Georges River cut through the sandstone plateau further to the east. This has led to a very different landscape quality to that of the Scenic Hills, with a relatively flat plateau with deeply eroded gullies to the east..

### 5.0.2 RECONCILING THE RETENTION OF HIGH QUALITY WOODLAND/BUSHLAND AREAS AND DEVELOPMENT – ISSUES OF BUSHFIRE PROTECTION

The protection of property at the urban-bushland interface can be a challenge, particularly when the bushland contributes to, or in many cases forms a critical component of; the visual and environmental qualities of the area, as it does in the landscape of the EESPLs.

The EESPLs are defined in part by their heavily vegetated eastern edges, with the road reservation for the proposed Georges River Parkway abutting the extensive bushlands of the Georges River Nature Reserve and the Holsworthy Military Reserve further to the east adding to the area of potentially combustible fuel. Although the bushland is of a highly flammable type and density its location to the east, south-east and south of the Units is comparatively favourable.

It is important however that the planning for the future use of these lands, and in particular the consideration of whether residential densities should be increased, considers potential danger to structures and lives in the EESPLs should a major fire occur. It is also important that the visual and environmental impacts of any widespread clearing of bushland to protect property, whether existing or proposed, be addressed. If the risks are considered unacceptable given the size and nature of the bushland to the east the intensification of human settlement in the EESPLs should not be considered.

Most of the Landscape Units include areas of cleared paddock interwoven with areas of high-ecological value Cumberland Plain Woodland and transitional shale/sandstone bushland that demonstrates fully developed profiles from understorey to canopy. Much of the land within each Landscape Unit however consists of a hybrid model, with cleared understorey and full to partial canopy cover. Each contributes to the ecological and scenic qualities of the Unit and helps to define the eastern edge of the main Campbelltown City valley.

It is noted that the configuration of the landscape Units in close proximity to the major urban areas with a good choice of connecting roads will facilitate both access for fire-fighting services and emergency evacuation, should it be required. The clearing of all vegetation in these units to provide a wider low-burn buffer to the established urban areas further to the west would not be likely to be of significant additional benefit in a genuine fire emergency (likely to be a hot north-westerly wind followed by a strong, dry southerly change). The west-facing down-slope below the ridgeline already provides the most effective protection possible for these developed areas.

The construction of the Parkway will also create a hard (and accessible) separation to assist in fire fighting and general management of any threat.

The substantial areas of cleared land already present in most of the Units provide a good separation to a high proportion of the existing houses – many clearings being greater than the 10-20m recommended by the Rural Fire Service. Increasing the number of houses will be likely however to also increase the demand for further clearing to achieve a low-flammability buffer area to each new property; with consequent loss of the semi-bushland aesthetic quality of the landscape. It should be noted however that in the case of a catastrophic fire emergency the whole of the bushland landscape would be at risk from the bushland to the east regardless of whether vegetation in the Unit is cleared or not, and the

wisdom of allowing further development in this area should be given careful and expert attention by a properly qualified fire behaviour expert before any decision to change land use patterns or increase densities is made.

With regard to the houses 'nestled' under the canopy, they are not likely to comply with the Rural Fire Service's recommendations for residential buildings in bushfire-prone areas without the clearing of many trees and are likely therefore to need to commit to and implement alternative solutions, such as water-drenching systems, before any development is approved.

If mechanical methods are considered inadequate to control the likely risk of loss to life or property, further development should not be permitted in the Unit.

Removal of environmentally significant vegetation to reduce fuel loads will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the likely impact of the clearing on the ecological and visual values of the property and its contribution to those of the Unit as well as the potential for alternative solutions.

### 5.0.3 IMPACT OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PARKWAY ON THE VISUAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITIES OF THE EESPLS

If the Parkway is constructed the likely impacts on the aesthetic and ecological values of the EESPLs are potentially significant. The loss of the backdrop of trees along the alignment of the road reservation will have a significant impact on the setting and quality of internal views in each of the Units. Even if this impact is limited to the loss of a small amount of canopy it will change the 'enclosed' quality of the Units by:

- introducing a cleared barrier between the Unit and the bushland of the Georges River reservation;
- loss of physical connection to Georges River Nature Reserve;
- potential erosion of aesthetic quality of vegetated backdrop to views from the west;
- potential changes to water runoff and natural drainage patterns;
- potential impact on species and habitat viability due to both obstruction to species travel and the dangers to wildlife inherent in a road likely to carry high vehicle volumes and speeds; and
- visual and amenity impacts of the multi-lane road.

The clearing and construction of the Parkway (potentially four lanes plus clearing either side) will however create a substantial fire-break between the EESPLs and the Georges River bushland to the east as well as allow ready access to the bushland if required in case of fire emergency.

Notwithstanding this, the detailed alignment and design of the Parkway should be resolved to ensure minimal adverse impact on the visual and environmental qualities of the Unit. The alignment of the carriageway should be as far to the east as possible to facilitate the conservation of the vegetation on the boundary of the Unit to a viable and visually effective depth.

It may also be necessary to include wildlife tunnel crossings or other methods to ensure the ongoing survival of the ecosystems within the Units. Detailed studies should be undertaken to determine whether these or other measures are appropriate.

Where the land within the Unit is cleared and the backdrop to the internal view is provided by the trees within the Parkway reservation, the construction of the roadway is likely to have a significant impact on its visual and amenity qualities. Examples of this can be found in E-LU3 and E-LU4, where the local topography will make the road and its traffic a prominent element in what is currently a peaceful semi-rural landscape. The construction of acoustic barriers will be of considerable visual impact unless screened. It is recommended that a replacement vegetative screen be initiated along the boundary to the Parkway reservation wherever the existing level of vegetation will not be likely to achieve the desired screening.

#### 5.0.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE NATURAL CONSERVATION VALUES ASSESSMENT OF THE EESPLS

This Report has used the findings of the Natural Conservation Values Assessment of the Edge Scenic Protection Lands (with Addendum) prepared by Conacher Travers in 2004 to assess any relationship between the ecological/environmental qualities of the EESPL and the visual and scenic values of the Landscape Units.

Conacher Travers' Assessment surveyed vegetation and wildlife species and frequencies in each of the Units and identified habitats of low, medium and high ecological value, including areas of Cumberland Plain Woodland and Shale/Sandstone Transition Forest; each of which includes species of National/State conservation significance. It recommended that the sub-precincts identified as demonstrating high or medium habitat value be protected from any further development; and also that an appropriate buffer or transitional area will be required around these areas to protect ecological viability and diversity, including the provision of links between the habitats and the main vegetated areas to the east.

Not surprisingly, a high correspondence was found between these significant habitats and the areas within each Unit that demonstrate high visual and aesthetic/environmental qualities – due mainly to the prevalence of mature Woodland/bushland trees and the visual interest and complexity that they can provide to a landscape such as the EESPLs.

The Conacher Travers Assessment and this Study are therefore generally consistent in their findings and recommendations about which areas demonstrate such a high ecological and visual quality that any intensification of land use or clearing of vegetation will have serious adverse impacts on the environment and should not be considered. An appropriate buffer or separation will also be necessary to ensure the ongoing viability of the vegetation and any significant species.

It should be noted though that the conservation of these areas of ecological and visual value will potentially result in implications for bushfire asset protection as discussed above.

### 5.0.5 ISSUES RELEVANT TO ANY INCREASE IN DENSITIES IN A BUSHLAND SETTING

The existing character of the EESPLs landscape is not one of 'large lot residential'; but rather, low-impact rural in a bushland setting. The EESPLs provide a strong visual, physical and ecological transition between the suburban development of Campbelltown to the west and the bushland of the Georges River to the east. It is important that the visual qualities of the Units as predominantly natural landscapes are retained, although some increase in density may be acceptable in certain circumstances.

Any further increase in density, and in particular the introduction of development of unsympathetic scale, form, materials or location will have the potential to affect this character and thus the visual and landscape qualities of the area. It is important therefore that any new development be subject to detailed urban and landscape design controls.

The most important element of development in the EESPLs is that it allows the existing qualities of the landscape to survive without compromise. Any new development should retain all existing contributory vegetation together with a buffer area free of development to ensure its ongoing ecological viability and have minimal visual impact on the landscape. Structures should be modest in scale and materials and sited respectfully to 'sit lightly' in the landscape. In most cases any significant increase in density will also require careful screening and generous setbacks from the public domain or accessible viewing place. This approach is appropriate in the EESPLs because of the nature of the views in and over the area. A Model describing some of the ways in which this could be achieved is contained in Appendix 1.

The nett densities that could be achieved will be less than if a standard subdivision pattern were to be adopted; but is necessary if the visual and environmental qualities of the EESPLs is to be maintained.

Some additional issues relevant to development in the EESPLs are:

- Contemporary standard home designs are not likely to contribute sympathetically to the landscape of the semi-rural/bushland edge, nor can large-footprint 'Hollywood -style' houses with formal landscaping.
- Any development should be assessed on its merits. Attention to the use of sympathetic scale, form, proportions and materials should be a priority.
- The paddock areas should remain clear of development and rural in character; and additional structures that obstruct the open quality of views from the public domain to the bushland beyond should be prevented.
- The changing expectations of landowners and occupiers can result in demand for more intensive development including seemingly minor elements such as the introduction of large garages, gazebos, 'statement' fencing and security gates. Each of these has the potential to introduce a distractive element into views towards or over the area. Outbuildings and ancillary structures such as fences and gates can have a significant adverse impact on the aesthetic quality of a bushland/rural landscape and it is important that they be designed and built to be visually recessive. For example, traditional wire strand fences are often the most appropriate option for boundary fences. Solid walls and 'statement' entry gates are

by their nature eye-catching elements and are not appropriate in the context of the EESPLs.

- New planting in the EESPLs should respect the natural qualities of the landscape and use native species endemic to the area – Cumberland Woodland/Transitional Forest species, with a focus on eucalypts. Cocos Island Palms or similar species in particular should be actively discouraged– they provide no support to the natural ecosystems in the area and are visually discordant elements in the landscape.

### 5.0.6 RECOMMENDATIONS RELEVANT TO ALL EESPL UNITS

The following recommendations apply to all Units on the EESPL. They should be read in conjunction with the specific recommendations for each Unit in the relevant section.

- The landscape of the Units provide a strong visual, physical and ecological transition between suburban development and the bushland of the Georges River.
- It is important that the visual qualities of the Unit (as a precinct of small-scale rural land uses and low-impact ancillary residential development quite distinct in scale, form and character from the nearby suburban development) are maintained.
- Retention/replanting of a vegetated edge to the proposed Georges River Parkway will provide a buffer and help to ameliorate the impacts of what will be likely to be high levels of traffic flow on the existing suburban development.
- Continue to limit the density, range of permissible land uses and the built form of new development, to ensure the existing low-density and semi-rural character is retained.
- The areas identified as being of high or medium conservation value are to be excluded from development, together with a buffer of at least 20 metres or greater as described in the Natural Conservation Values Assessment Report (prepared by Conacher Travers in 2004).
- The buffer and links to the areas of significant habitat should be kept free of major structures and hard surfaces.
- New buildings should be erected a sufficient distance from these ecologically significant areas to ensure that the thinning or removal of vegetation is not required for fire asset protection (for example).
- Tall trees are to remain the most prominent visual element in the landscape – including in views towards and over the EESPLs.
- Retain the current visual balance between the open paddock areas and the backdrops of tall trees.
- Retain old-growth vegetation.
- Prevent development that will have an adverse impact on the identified significant natural habitats or views within the EESPLs.
- Ensure that any new development is visually subservient to the landscape. It should be modest in scale, sympathetically located and finished in materials that will have a negligible visual impact. Traditional rural/bushland cottage forms and materials are generally likely to be more appropriate than a standard suburban-style design.

- Fencing should be visually transparent so that it does not distract from streetscape or other views over the EESPLs.
- Any new dwelling or major outbuilding should be sited to comply with the Rural Fire Service's publication "Designing for Bush Fire Protection" (2006). If this cannot be achieved without adverse impact on significant vegetation or habitats; residential or other development which may be susceptible to bushfire should not be permitted in the EESPLs.
- In areas of high visual and ecological sensitivity, such as development under the canopy of mature trees, alternative fire protection solutions such as drenching systems should be sought. Further research on how best to achieve this needs to be undertaken.
- The need to ensure adequate bushfire asset protection zones for new development at a density of more than 1 dwelling per hectare would result in the loss of significant and mature vegetation and compromise the visual and scenic qualities of the area and should not be supported unless noted in the Unit-specific recommendations below.
- The development potential of any Landscape Unit regardless of zone or nominal development potential may be limited by the need to protect property from fire. This means that in parts of the EESPLs no further development will be possible.

### 5.0.7 VISUAL LANDSCAPE UNITS WITHIN THE EAST EDGE SCENIC PROTECTION LANDS

The study area is comprised of six geographically distinct precincts, each of which was then examined in detail and recommendations for the management of its scenic and other environmental values made. Their location is shown below.

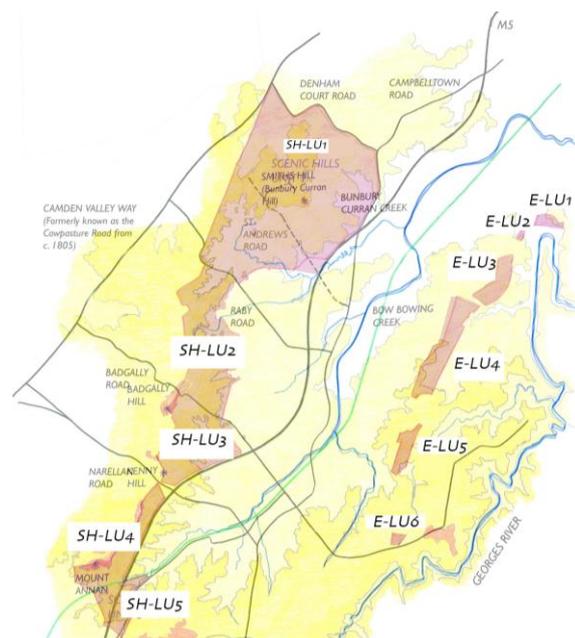


Figure 5.0.6. Location of the EESPL Units.