

Executive Director
Local Government and Economic Policy
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124

Submission provided through the online portal:
<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/draftplans/exhibition/agriculture-changes>

16th April 2021

Dear Executive Director,

**Re. Submission - AGRITOURISM AND SMALL-SCALE AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT:
Proposed amendments to support farm businesses and regional economies**

Destination Sydney Surrounds South (DSSS) is one of six Destination Networks across regional NSW, established by the NSW Government to support its objective of growing the NSW regional visitor economy. We proactively engage stakeholders to identify, prioritise and facilitate opportunities for regional visitor economy growth. DSSS collaborates with industry, Local Government and State Government to deliver projects that drive visitation, increase visitor expenditure and support dispersal across our region.

The Sydney Surrounds South region encompasses 11,000 square kilometres and is home to over 525,000 people across the six local government areas of Kiama, Shellharbour, Shoalhaven, Wingecarribee (the Southern Highlands), Wollondilly and Wollongong.

Agritourism - Our Objective

There are three key areas of interest to DSSS with respect to agritourism:

- **DIVERSIFICATION** - To assist farmers to meet their own needs and stay in business. Farmers are a key component of many aspects of the visitor economy and play a vital role to our industry, including food tourism, agricultural outlooks and genuine experiences. Without diversification of opportunities, there are risks that rural properties will increasingly be 'locked-up' for personal use, disadvantaging both tourism and agriculture.
- **REINFORCEMENT** - With known market and industry demand for agritourism and genuine experiences, there are key opportunities to be enabled. Enabling these can assist in growing the extent and value of the agricultural offering whilst reinforcing activities and experiences that are core to sustainable growth of tourism. A genuine win-win situation.
- **INNOVATION** - To enable entrepreneurial spirit, multi-generation opportunities within a farming context and growth of business enterprise. There are many opportunities to meet modern farming needs and utilise other non-urban land (not necessarily just farms) in ways that assist to reinforce the importance and appreciation of agriculture. These opportunities can sit alongside existing farming enterprise without discernible impacts on agricultural production.

These key areas of interest are a recurring theme through DSSS's work and this submission. We have also included a number of case studies from our region that provide real life context to the current situation. These are referenced throughout this submission.

Overview

DSSS is extremely pleased to see that the Department recognises the need for changes around the definitions and workability of how tourism can and does interact with agriculture.

For many years, activities such as “cellar door premises” have successfully occurred in rural areas, on working farms and with generally high levels of community acceptance and public enjoyment. We look forward to the proposed changes opening up similar opportunities for a broader range of activities that can facilitate opportunities for agricultural producers, engage the appreciation and importance of agriculture for visitors to regional NSW, and to benefit the regional towns and economies where these occur. A clear example of this is *Darkes Glenburnie Orchard*, which offers many of the activities associated with ‘cellar door premises’, but as a grower of apples, peaches, nectarines and persimmons instead of grapes, currently operates without approval (see Case Study 4).

Background

DSSS has recognised the opportunities in this area for many years. An opportunity identified in the [DSSS Destination Management Plan](#) was for “Activity development: nature-based, agritourism and adventure”. However, subsequent research and detailed review of this opportunity has shown that the current planning framework is a significant barrier. Existing land use terms and their application to non-urban land means that many opportunities are not possible, or only possible on a temporary use basis. This has created extreme high costs associated with rezoning and/or recurring approval processes – subsequently increasing risk, discouraging investment and innovation across this sector, and resulting in decisions that are increasingly about local politics rather than industry need or planning merit.

At the same time, there are continued risks of non-urban land being utilised for personal use, disadvantaging both agricultural activity and tourism. This undermines the extent, diversity and value of agricultural activity and introduces permanent residents from non-farming backgrounds to rural areas, creating even greater risks of land-use conflict. By enabling economic diversification and innovation within the farming context there is increasing opportunity to reinforce agricultural activity and tourism as key economic drivers into the future.

Key areas of support

DSSS believes that there are highly beneficial outcomes to achieve the areas of interest from the proposed changes – these are supported, in principle, by DSSS. These include:

- **NEW DEFINITIONS** - Provision of new definitions for ‘farm gate activities’ and ‘farm events’ will enable the types of tourism activities and products that are popular within the market, correlate with the aims of many destination / tourism strategies, and which support a diverse agricultural offering. The introduction of these new terms is critical.

- **BROADENING FARM STAYS** - Broadening of the definition of 'farm stay accommodation' will enable investment and returns for farmers that are commensurate with the effort to establish such enterprises. This effort and return for the current highly restrictive farm stay opportunities is not worthwhile for many. Opportunities for greater number of buildings/bedrooms is supported, alongside opportunities for small scale caravan and camping that addresses this balance.
- **FIT-FOR-PURPOSE PLANNING PATHWAYS** - Provision of new planning approval pathways enables small scale, low impact activities to be tested and explored by landholders. This can occur before more intensive approval processes, which are higher cost and higher risk, are undertaken. This is fundamental to enabling the market to respond to demands in a staged and progressive way. It is therefore critical that the development application pathway be as open as possible, to ensure effective merit-based assessments can occur on a site-by-site basis. Any restrictions enabled through a local clause should therefore avoid the types of fixed measures that are apparent and generally accepted for exempt and complying development.

These directions are all broadly supported, and the thrust of these directions should not be forgotten as the process evolves.

Key issues and desired outcomes

The following issues, suggested modifications and clarifications are identified by use type to highlight where improvement to the proposals is desired.

ALL USE TYPES

Operational management - There are opportunities to employ industry codes or similar, as a mechanism for managing operational risks and enforcement – as have been applied to Short Term Rental Accommodation for example. Penalising all operators, as often results through land-use planning framework, for the very small numbers of operators that cause or result in conflict is not realistic. DSSS and others would be able to deliver training and management guidance to further reinforce the need for careful and considered management approaches that minimise risks of conflict.

Inclusion of the E3 zone – There are a number of instances where the E3 – Environmental Management zone has been used across extensive localities that are predominantly rural and include rural uses – for example, in the Wingecarribee Shire which is part of the DSSS region. This zone has been used as a form of landscape protection where forms of 'agriculture', particularly 'extensive agriculture', are permitted (sometimes without consent). Given the use of the E3 zone for this purpose, it is important that the application of 'farm stay accommodation', 'farm gate activities' and 'farm events' are all included as 'permitted with consent' in the E3 zone wherever 'extensive agriculture' is not prohibited. A prime example of this situation is the *Mauger's Paddock to Plate Tours* operated by John and Vicki Mauger in Robertson – refer to Case Study 1.

FARM STAY ACCOMMODATION

Alternative accommodation types – Provision should be made for alternative accommodation types for uses associated with the definition of 'farm stay accommodation'. For example, tiny homes,

glamping tents and the like, provide unique experiences at a reduced cost to the provider and market. This means that opportunities can be provided at a range of price points / levels without the high costs of full dwellings or manufactured homes being developed. This capability should be permitted in both the complying development and development application pathways.

Setbacks – There are a number of setback requirements that are identified in exempt and complying development pathways. Whilst the need for these in general terms is understood and supported, where there are high impact uses in the area, some of these setback requirements are unlikely to be workable even where there is little or no risk of land use conflicts. Examples are highlighted below:

- With respect to setbacks from ‘adjoining established or proposed’ uses, it is appropriate for these to be larger for high impacts uses as identified. However, it is unclear why a 250m ‘from the boundary with the other use’ (EIE page 11 & 12) is required as in the vast majority of instances, there is no intensive use or land use risk? A lesser setback to a ‘neighbouring landholding’ of 50m may be more appropriate (i.e. the setback identified for ‘farm gate activities’ (EIE page 18/19) or ‘farm events’ (EIE page 22/23) from the property boundary).
- Similarly, side setbacks are identified at 200m for new buildings/manufactured homes (EIE page 12) under complying development, which would be more appropriate as a consistent 50m setback in line with the point above.
- With respect to setbacks from a waterway, rather than a blanket 100m setback, (which is well above the DPI – Office of Water ‘*Guidelines for riparian corridors on waterfront land*’ which provides a basis for setbacks of between 10m and 40m depending on the stream classification), and if a set number is required, a 40m setback would be appropriate in accordance with this industry standard.

Proximity – The ‘use, location and size’ requirements (complying development – EIE page 12) identifies that erection of a new building/manufactured home for ‘farm stay accommodation’ use must be within 300m of ‘the existing dwelling’. This is an arbitrary distance and requirement. Whilst most facilities would meet this setback anyway, it should not be a requirement as it restricts the spread of facilities on larger properties, and which may be in the interest of users and land holders. No proximity requirements should be included as this is highly dependent on individual site requirements.

Height – The ‘use, location and size’ requirements (complying development – EIE page 12) indicate that erection of a new building for farm stay accommodation must have a maximum height of 6m. This provides for small two-storey development, but does not provide for any innovation or the feeling of space which may be desired. Should two-storey development be supported, the height limit should be 8.5m in line with industry standards as used extensive through the codes SEPP.

Floor area – The floor area for buildings, under change of use - complying development, identifies the ‘maximum floor area of the development must be 60 square metres’ (EIE page 11). This is highly restrictive where re-use of an existing lawfully erected building is being proposed. No maximum floor area should be applied in this instance.

FARM GATE ACTIVITIES

Standard hours – Given the potential for farm gate activities to include a restaurant or café, the restriction of operation under exempt development to 7:00pm (Monday to Saturday) and 6:00pm (Sunday and public holiday) (EIE page 16) operational hours would seem very strictive. Whilst not needing to be much later, a 9:00pm restriction is considered to be more realistic.

Setbacks – There are a number of setback requirements that are identified in exempt and complying development pathways. Whilst the need for these in general terms is understood and supported, where there are high impact uses in the area, some of these setback requirements are unlikely to be workable even where there is little or no risk of land use conflicts. Examples are highlighted below:

- With respect to setbacks from ‘adjoining established or proposed’ uses, it is appropriate for these to be larger for high impacts uses as identified. However, it is unclear why a 250m ‘from the boundary with the other use’ (EIE page 16 & 18) is required as in the vast majority of instances, there is no intensive use or land use risk? A lesser setback to a ‘neighbouring landholding’ of 50m may be more appropriate (i.e. the setback identified for ‘farm gate activities’ (EIE page 18/19) or ‘farm events’ (EIE page 22/23) from the property boundary).

Number of guests – Is generally supported for exempt development (50 people), though this may be increased for complying development (suggested to be 75 people). Above this (as a form of sliding scale in assessment terms), a development application would then be required.

FARM EVENTS

Principal use – The proposed definition for ‘farm events’ refers to the “principal use of the land is the production of agricultural goods for commercial purposes”. Whilst the use of the land for production of agricultural goods is supported, there are a number of instances where the current principal use of the land is for other purposes, such as environmental conservation or historically approved event activities (under the ‘temporary use’ clause for example). These can include small rural holdings in isolated areas where appropriate assessment can find a balance between various uses, including, but perhaps not principally, production of agricultural goods. The desired language in the definition may more appropriately aligned with ‘farm gate activities’ which references “where associated with” agricultural production. As an example, Case Study 3 - *Merribee* in Numbaa near Nowra, has operated for 15 years with the main enterprise being tourism and event related activities. The scale of the land (2.71 hectares) means that traditional agricultural is not possible, though several agricultural enterprises (including cut flowers, nursery, and beekeeping) and the agricultural surrounds of the land are critical to the enterprise and setting. If Merribee does not operate as a principally tourism enterprise, it is likely to become a private residence / hobby farm, removing 12-14+ staff currently employed.

Alignment to cellar door premises – Whilst the incorporation of the existing ‘cellar door premises’ definition as a sub-set of the proposed ‘farm gate activities’ definition is supported, the application of the ‘farm gate activities’ definition may also be appropriately applied wherever ‘cellar door premises’ is currently permissible. For example, LEPs for Wingecarribee, Kiama and Shoalhaven all allow ‘cellar door premises’ in the E3 – Environmental Management Zone and this should be replaced on application of the agritourism changes with the broader use term of ‘farm gate

activities'. A similar situation exists for Kiama in that the RU2 – Rural Landscape zone does not allow 'agriculture' but does allow 'cellar door premises'. Without application of 'farm gate activities', opportunities such as The Pines Kiama, a boutique micro-dairy operation as highlighted in Case Study 2, are left without a planning pathway to enable growth of their value-adding business model.

Clarification

For clarity, it is agreed that a 'landholding' is the relevant measurement of agricultural land for the purposes of enabling the extent of uses. For example, we understand and agree that the provision of one dwelling per 15 hectares for 'farm stay accommodation' is across a landholding, not individual lots.

CONCLUSION

There are several key advantages to the proposed planning amendments that are integral to the work of Destination Sydney Surrounds South. Not only do we see these changes benefitting tourism opportunities in regional and rural areas, but we strongly believe that they are needed to sustain a healthy and progressive agricultural sector. Many of the visitors to the area seek these experiences and increasingly come to appreciate and support farming activities. In this way, we see the changes as being mutually beneficial to both the tourism and agricultural sectors.

We congratulate the Department on progressing this initiative and look forward to its introduction in the near future.

Yours sincerely,



Shannan Perry-Hall

General Manager

E: shannan@dnsss.com.au

M: 0418 776 640



CASE STUDY 1: Mauger’s Paddock to Plate Tours & Laurel View Farm Stay

Current Use and Activities

Owned by John and Vicki Mauger, the farm at ‘Laurel View’ was originally run for cattle and sheep, to supply the [Mauger family’s butchery](#). Now in the third generation, the Mauger’s brand has been supplying quality meat to the Southern Highlands for over 50 years, specialising in locally grown, 100% grass-fed beef and lamb.

The farm and butchery were previously operated as a single business however the two aspects of the business were divided two years ago, to support succession planning. Their son, Mat Mauger, now runs and owns the two butchery stores, one in Burrawang and the other in Moss Vale, with John and Vicki running the farm. Since this time, the couple have experienced operating the farm as a stand-alone entity to be significantly less profitable and have found themselves needing to diversify to supplement their income.

John and Vicki have been operating a [Farm stay Accommodation on the property](#) for almost 12 years, utilising an existing three-bedroom self-contained farmhouse. The accommodation attracts both domestic (intrastate and interstate) visitors as well as international travellers.

In addition to the farm stay accommodation, the Maugers have been running [Paddock to Plate Farm Tours](#) on the property for three years. The experience has had a short pause due to COVID-19. The tours are generally run monthly and includes bus tour groups, educational interest and private groups. Interest and awareness of the tours continues to grow through social media marketing and word of mouth. Visitors are becomingly interested in the origin of their food, not only the health benefits, but also the way it is produced and the impact the farmer leaves on the land – these are all factors covered in the tour.

“There is a real thirst for knowledge on how our foods are produced and the people that work the land.” – John Mauger

Current Situation

Both the farm stay accommodation and farm tours are conducted using buildings and infrastructure that already existed on the property. The couple have repurposed existing sheds to host the Paddock to Plate tours specifically. The two aspects of the Mauger’s on farm activities positively promote the region, attract visitors, encourage increased visitor spend and support direct increased awareness of agriculture – both improved understanding and appreciation of the industry.

Planned Activities and Opportunities

The Southern Highlands is maturing and increasing in popularity as a key destination for visitors, yet there is limited supply of accommodation in the Robertson area. To support the growth of the visitor economy in their region and to provide themselves with a reliable source of income, John and Vicki would like to construct additional new buildings on the property to accommodate more visitors. They are, however, extremely apprehensive about the existing approval process and the associated costs involved in pursuing this opportunity.

The proposed amendments will directly benefit the Mauger’s, in their efforts to diversify their farming operations to support the viability of the property and provide stability for themselves now and future generations after them.

Property Snapshot

Location	Robertson, NSW
Local Government Area (LGA)	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Zoning	E2 Environmental Conservation E3 Environmental Management
Land size	64.08 ha
Other planning considerations (if applicable)	Heritage: Item - Landscape (State) - Wingecarribee Swamp





CASE STUDY 2: The Pines Kiama

Current Use and Activities

Established in 1854, [The Pines](#) is a family owned and operated micro-dairy located in the hills above Kiama. Owners Kel & Mahlah Grey, manage all aspects of the farming and dairy product manufacturing with a concerted emphasis on quality and sustainability.

The couple have converted the dairy from a mainstream ‘milk to market’ dairy with a substantial herd to a ‘value add’ model, operating with a small herd (24 cows in total) and onsite processing of the milk into a select range of high-quality, gelato and cheeses with limited bottled milk and yoghurt delivered to the local area. The Pines has been operating as a micro-dairy for over seven years and is very focused on animal welfare and environmental considerations. This has allowed them to proudly operate a new type of dairy with the emphasis on manufacturing high-quality, award-winning dairy products.

The Pines current business model enables them to avoid the need to participate in the preferred dairy industry sale of milk to large scale processors at very low pricing structures. Milk from the cows is processed into premium dairy products within 15-20 minutes of milking, right alongside the milking area. The couple sell their products wholesale to various retailers around the area, and they operate direct sales to the public through the local market at Kiama. However, with the bushfires and COVID-19 impacting on market trading, this has most recently presented limited growth opportunity.

Current Situation

The Pines have all necessary food processing approvals with the NSW Food Authority for their dairy production. Their local council does not have a Farmgate Policy and due to the current planning framework, the business does not run any on farm offerings as they are unable to obtain approval to operate onsite experiences.

“There is a huge demand for on farm visitation and retail. We receive daily phone calls, emails and social media request to host families, groups, and executives on farm. People want to buy our product directly in a cellar door type experience.” – Mahlah Grey

Planned Activities and Opportunities

The Pines have plan to develop a direct to the public sales farmgate on the dairy property which will not only allow the business to increase margin by selling direct, but it can also be a catalyst to commence a ‘Food Trail’ tourism cluster in the Kiama area as there are other boutique fresh food producers in meat, cheese, olive oil and fresh produce around the area. The Pines farmgate retail operation will be built directly in front of the dairy property’s main homestead overlooking the spectacular coastline of Kiama. The building will be designed to complement the homestead and surrounding dairy farm buildings which date back to 1854 and will therefore become a major tourism drawcard for the area.

Property Snapshot

Location	Kiama, NSW
Local Government Area (LGA)	Kiama Municipal Council
Zoning	RU2 Rural Landscape
Land size	39.118 ha
Other planning considerations (if applicable)	Heritage: Item - General (Local) - The Pines Homestead





CASE STUDY 3: Merribee

Current Use and Activities

Established in 1850, [Merribee](#) is owned by Richard and Lucy Marshall and together they have run and successfully operated over ten different start-up businesses locally and internationally, for over 35 years.

The couple are innovative, with a focus on entrepreneurial business opportunities that bring economic growth, jobs and involve professional, business-like, and community-minded business administration.

Richard and Lucy purchased Merribee in 2000 and have been continuously investing in capital improvements for the property over the 21 years (over \$2 million to date). Today, Merribee is a thriving agritourism business on seven acres, east of Nowra, with extensive landscaped ornamental gardens, orchard and parkland. The business employs 12-14 staff during the year, plus an additional six to eight staff during their busy summer season, festivals and events. Their three to five year goal is to triple the size of their agritourism business.

Current Situation

Consistent with the new proposed definitions, Merribee currently offers and has full DA approval for activities and uses that are consistent with the farm stay accommodation, farm gate activities and farm events definitions. However, despite their 15 years of successful operation, this approval is as a 'temporary use' and under this current planning framework the business is required to undertake the costly process to renew their approval every four years. This creates significant uncertainty which leads to hesitation to invest in the business and property, as well as significant frustration, to the point where the couple placed the property on the market in recent years. The property did not sell, and fortunately Richard and Lucy have now regained their enthusiasm for their business and found new ways to move ahead.

The property aligns with the proposed definition of agritourism, the business is a family operation with multi-generational involvement in the agricultural/horticultural enterprise. Merribee grow cut flowers, nursery plans and keep bees. They are constantly innovating, looking for ways to diversify and grow, to keep their services and brand fresh and in touch with market demands.

Planned Activities and Opportunities

The proposed amendments will provide a clear pathway to seek longer term approval to operate their business, an option that is not available under the current planning framework. It will give the couple and their family confidence to continue their commitment to the business operations and certainty to continue their investment in the property.

"Merribee as a property and rural enterprise fits right in the sweet spot for the Government's proposed amendments." – Richard Marshall

Property Snapshot

Location	Numbaa, NSW
Local Government Area (LGA)	Shoalhaven City Council
Zoning	RU1 Primary Production
Land size	2.71 ha
Other planning considerations (if applicable)	Flood (LEP): Flood Planning Area





CASE STUDY 4: Darkes Glenbernie Orchard

Current Use and Activities

Owned by the Fahey family and currently in the sixth-generation, [Glenbernie Orchard](#) is a farm that has been operating at Darkes Forest, between Wollongong and Sutherland, since 1939. The business offers farm gate shop, pick your own fruit, farm-based tours. Available for sale at the farm gate shop are their apples, peaches, nectarines and persimmons grown on farm, as well as mead and award-winning apple cider made from honey and apples grown onsite. The farm tours are popular with families and seniors, with visitors keen to have an authentic farm experience. Visitors are attracted from across the Sutherland Shire, surrounding suburbs, and the Illawarra. When borders permit, the business also attracts international visitors, with the biggest markets being China, Korea, Malaysia and India.

The business employs three full time staff and depending on seasonality engage 12-20 casual employees. With greater certainty and opportunities presented by the proposed planning amendments, the business would have capacity to grow and increase their ability to employ additional permanent full-time and part-time staff.

Glenbernie Orchard has been innovative over the past 30 years and has had to pivot considerably due to wholesale fruit production and sale no longer being a viable activity on its own. If it weren't for the retail and tourism activities, in conjunction with the development of value-add products such as apple cider, the farm would no longer exist.

Current Situation

The current activities and operations at Glenbernie Orchard are not dissimilar to that of a vineyard/cellar door, however due to the restrictions of the current planning framework, the business is operating without approval. The on-farm retail shop has been carrying on at varying levels since 1939 and the current operations are conducted with business approvals that existed before the most recent zoning. Recognition of agritourism and the addition of the new definitions proposed through the new amendments will significantly benefit Glenbernie Orchard, providing the business with a clear pathway for obtaining approval to conduct their existing operations as well as options to grow their business and offerings.

"We are in a good position, in that our children are interested in continuing our business if we are able to continue down the on-farm tourism track. However, it is currently too difficult to operate and expand the facilities that we have on our farm." – Jo-Anne Fahey

Planned Activities and Opportunities

The business has plans to develop a new onsite purpose-built premise to house their farm gate store, offering apple cider tastings and retail sales. This space will likely include cafe or restaurant space that could host weddings, conferences, and events. In an outdoor context, the property has a natural amphitheatre which would be ideal for festival and events. Interest from the property owners to develop the site for these activities, to deliver facilities that meet visitor expectations and market demand is a goal that would be significantly assisted by the proposed amendments to the planning framework. By pursuing this through standard Development Application (DA) options, this will provide clarity and certainty for the family to invest and continue their business for future generations.

Property Snapshot

Location	Darkes Forest, NSW
Local Government Area (LGA)	Wollongong City Council
Zoning	E3 Environmental Management
Land size	22.05 ha
Other planning considerations (if applicable)	SEPP (Sydney Drinking Water Catchment) 2011





CASE STUDY 5: Narrawilly Farm

Current Use and Activities

Owned by the Miller family, [Narrawilly Farm](#) is a fifth-generation dairy farm, first established in 1859. In addition to being working dairy, the business has offered farm stay accommodation for over 25 years in specially built structures on the property.

Grown onsite is a range of seasonal produce, flowers and honey – the hives are managed and is honey produced by local apiarists. The family also works with a professional soap and candle maker to make hand-made soaps using cows’ milk from Narrawilly Farm and beeswax candles made from the hives kept on the property. These products are all sold online and the business also operates a farm cart to sell direct to customers. The cart is parked on the side of the highway, generally between Christmas and May/June, depending on the availability and seasonality of produce. Narrawilly Farm does not currently have the facilities or commercial kitchen to produce their own value-add products on site, instead engaging local suppliers to assist with this process – owner, Rob Miller’s goal is to work in partnership with local networks as much as possible.

“Not every family has sons and agritourism has the opportunity to include more of the family, supporting greater diversification to provide viability to our business” – Rob Miller

Current Situation

The property owners have approval for their two existing farm stay accommodation buildings, as well as approval for a further two buildings (to provide four in total). The 2019-20 bushfires, which severely impacted the property and “really shook up” the property owners, highlighted to Rob the need to diversify. Since this time, Rob has been seeking approval from the local council for relocatable homes, to develop the farm stay accommodation rather than the (already approved) fixed buildings. This has been a challenging process and is quickly becoming cost prohibitive.

Planned Activities and Opportunities

Due to the location of the property, access from the Princes Highway is an ongoing concern of Council and the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS), and this significantly impacts the business’ ability to develop on farm experiences at their existing property. To overcome this concern, Rob has purchased an additional property on which he aims to develop a farm gate experience that is more accessible from the major highway. The proposed amendments and new definitions for inclusion in the planning framework will directly support Rob’s goal to developing this visitor experience. This will provide an approved outlet for him to sell his farm products direct to customers, supporting greater viability for his business.

Property Snapshot

Location	Milton, NSW
Local Government Area (LGA)	Shoalhaven City Council
Zoning	RU1 Primary Production
Land size	74.72 ha
Other planning considerations (if applicable)	Heritage: Item - General (Local) - "Narrawilly" Dairy Farm Complex, including Garden, Rainforest and Convict road





CASE STUDY 6: Mali Brae

Current Use and Activities

[Mali Brae Farm](#) is a historic property located in the Southern Highlands, specialising in weddings, conferencing and events. The property has been operating as a venue for eight years and has an onsite restaurant that is currently open two days per week.

A popular wedding venue, Mali Brae attracts couples from across the Southern Highlands, Illawarra, South Coast, Canberra and Sydney. The average spend by these couples is \$50,000 including the venue,

accommodation, transport, suppliers – florists, hair and makeup, etc. and there is significant demand from Sydney and Canberra visitors for intimate rural events. The property owners have grown the business into a successful venue employing two full-time, two part-time and ten casual staff.

Current Situation

Mali Brae has the necessary development approvals to operate but has had to rely on the property's heritage buildings to receive approval for hosting of events on the site. The business owners have experienced endless challenges with the local council in securing these approvals, due to limitations of the existing planning framework.

Other venues in the region rely on temporary use approvals, for these businesses and as an industry this causes significant uncertainty. Business owners are hesitant to invest, with the unknown of their next temporary approval and this is typically a very costly process to undertake on an ongoing basis (generally every three to five years). With the added lead time and market demand for wedding bookings, this uncertainty of the venue can cause issues across the entire supply chain.

Planned Activities and Opportunities

Mali Brae have plans to extend their current building and would also like to operate the restaurant more regularly, however the current planning framework does not support these activities. The business already faces difficulties in finding and securing qualified staff, particularly chefs, due to industry-wide skills shortages and without the certainty to operate and ideally extend their existing offering, it simply is not viable for them to do so.

Property Snapshot

Location	Moss Vale, NSW
Local Government Area (LGA)	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Zoning	E3 Environmental Management
Land size	34 ha
Other planning considerations (if applicable)	Heritage: Item - General (Local) - Mali Brae (Hatch Cottage) cottage and outbuildings <i>SEPP (Sydney Drinking Water Catchment) 2011</i>

