

**BEFORE THE HEARINGS PANEL**

**FOR THE QUEENSTOWN LAKES PROPOSED DISTRICT PLAN**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

The Resource Management Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

The Rezoning Hearing Stream 11 (Ski Area Sub Zones)

**EVIDENCE OF**

**Stephen Skelton**

Landscape Architect

BCom, MLA (Hons), NZILA (Registered)

**ON BEHALF OF**

572 - NZSki Limited

**DATE**

28 March 2017

## 1. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 1.1 My name is Stephen Russell Skelton. I hold the qualifications of Bachelor of Arts in Communication from Northern Arizona University and a Masters of Landscape Architecture from Lincoln University. I am a registered member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects and the acting Chairman of the Southern Branch. I am the Director of Patch Limited, a landscape architecture and landscape planning consultancy. I am contracted as a landscape architect to Baxter Design. I have been involved in landscape consultancy work in the Queenstown Lakes District area for approximately 4 years and have lived in the District for approximately 6 years. I am professionally familiar with the landscape values of the Queenstown Lakes District.
- 1.2 I have visited the both sites where NZSki Limited (NZSki) seeks to extend the Ski Area Sub Zone (SASZ). I am an avid recreational user of the Remarkables Mountains in all seasons. I have hiked and/or skied in the Doolans, Wye Creek and Alta Basin and have climbed all aspects of Single Cone and Double Cone.
- 1.3 I was retained by NZSki in May of 2016 to provide landscape advice and assessment services. I prepared a Landscape Assessment report in respect to the proposed re-zoning to confirm the appropriateness of the proposed rezoning and to inform the refinement of the provision and proposed zone boundaries.
- 1.4 I have read the Section 42a Report prepared by Ms Kimberley Banks and the Statement of Evidence prepared by Dr Marion Read.

## 2 CODE OF CONDUCT

- 2.1 Although these proceedings are not before the Environment Court, I have read the Environment Court's Consolidated Practice Note 2014 relating to the Expert Witness Code of Conduct. I have complied with the Code of Conduct in preparing this evidence. Except where I state that I am relying on the evidence of another person, this written evidence is within my area of expertise. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed in this evidence.

## 3 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 3.1 My evidence addresses the landscape effects of two proposed SASZ extensions on the Remarkables Mountains, one in the upper alpine areas of the Rastus Burn catchment and the other on the lower, western slopes near the Kingston Road. I will assess each proposal separately and will address them in the same terms as Dr Read, being *Area A: The Rastus Burn Catchment* and *Area B: The Coneburn Valley* (**Attachment A**).

3.2 The proposal is to:

**Area A** Extend the existing SASZ of the Remarkables Ski Area to the crest of the ridge which physically contains the ski area's eastern and southern extents. The SASZ will be extended to the south and west across the slopes of the summit known as Wye Dome. It is understood that the primary reason for this proposal is to legalise avalanche control (a Ski Area Activity) which already occurs periodically outside of the existing SASZ. A rule (21.5.3X) is proposed which would restrict structures and earthworks on the slopes of Wye Dome and the ridge which separates the Rastus Burn catchment from the Wye Creek catchment.

**Area B** Create a new SASZ which takes in the base of the Remarkables Road and the lower portions of the switchbacks which lead up the west face of the Remarkables. It is understood that the new SASZ is to provide for the establishment of buildings, parking, storage, entranceway signage, commercial activities and accommodation ancillary to the continued operation of the Remarkables Ski Area.

#### 4 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND WIDER LANDSCAPE

- 4.1 The Remarkables (2200amsl) is part of the larger Hector Mountain range which forms the dramatic southern and south-eastern backdrop to the Queenstown area. The craggy western face and sharp horizon line of the Remarkables is a well-known iconic form as viewed from Queenstown and its image is heavily used in tourist focused marketing tools.
- 4.2 The western slopes of the Remarkables are generally dominated by the craggy faces and jagged ridgeline of the upper mountain. The fans and deltas which give form to the mountains western lower reaches are more vegetated in tussock and grey shrubland species with patches of pasture and exotic forests creating an interplay of natural and rural character which provides the visual frontispiece to the upper mountain. The western foot of the mountain acts as a transitional space between the dramatic relief and natural character of the upper slopes and the flatter, rural lands between the mountain and the Lake. These flatter lands are known as the Coneburn Valley.
- 4.3 The Coneburn Valley contains rural farmlands and pasturelands as well as intricate and isolated landscape features such as hummocks and tables lands. The residential development and associated golf course of Jacks Point are located within the Coneburn Valley as are several other residential dwellings. It is

understood the northern portion of the Coneburn Valley is experiencing pressure from residential development.

- 4.4 The lesser graded slopes in the vicinity of the Remarkables Road near Area B are populated with patches of mature evergreen plants which, together with the landform, screens activities on the lower slopes including residential activities and industrial uses. Ascending the lower, western slopes of the Remarkables, the Remarkables Road begins near a distinct 90 degree bend in the Kingston Road and switches-back across the lesser graded slopes. The road continues until the grade begins to considerably increase where the road deviates to the north following a contour to the mountain's northern face where it eventually enters the Rastus Burn and ascends to the Remarkables Ski Area. This road is clearly visible from most of the Wakatipu Basin and surrounding landscapes.
- 4.5 Located within a basin to the east of the Remarkables summits, The Remarkables Ski Area itself is not readily visible from Queenstown or the surrounding areas. The existing ski field infrastructure is generally only viewed from within the site or from a considerable distance at the northern extents of the Wakatipu Basin. It is possible to see portions of the ski field infrastructure from more northern portions of the Wakatipu Basin and the Coronet Peak area.
- 4.6 The existing Remarkables SASZ is within an alpine environment. From approximately June to October the Remarkables Ski Area is blanketed in a thick layer of snow, providing accessible winter activities within a high alpine environment in close proximity to an urban centre. The existing SASZ has allowed earthworks and the construction of facilities and infrastructure such as lift lines and snowmaking equipment which support snow-riding activities. In winter the area is constantly active with ski area activities in the daytime and snow grooming activities at night.
- 4.7 During summer months the Remarkables Ski Area can be frequented by hikers, naturalists and climbers seeking experiences in an accessible alpine environment. A network of Department of Conservation (DoC) managed trails and routes starts near the base of the Remarkables Ski Area and leads to Lake Alta and beyond into the Wye Creek catchment. Lake Alta is an alpine lake which pools in a depression below the impressive summits of Double Cone and Single Cone (**Attachment B**).
- 4.8 The vegetation within the Remarkables Ski Area (Area A) generally consists of a mosaic pattern of hardy, high altitude plants. Generally the vegetation is dominated by snow tussocks (*Chionochloa macra*) which extend to approximately 1850amsl. The landscape also hosts bog and fellfield communities.
- 4.9 Schist is the main rock type of the Remarkables. Schist outcrops extend towards the craggy peaks while large boulders rest within the gullies and atop the flatter terraces of the mountain faces. In summer the finer schist stones, especially along the formed ski trails portray a light grey colour while the more heavily

bouldered and craggy schist slopes are a dark grey. In winter with a normal cover of snow, only the darker outcrops and limited vegetation is visible.

4.10 The Remarkables existing SASZ exists within a parcel of land known as the Rastus Burn Recreation Reserve which is managed by DoC and leased to NZSki. The Remarkables Ski Area is currently spread across four main areas known as the Shadow Basin, Alta Basin, Curvey Basin and Sugar Bowl. These four basins drain into the Rastus Burn and culminate in a central point in the vicinity of the new base buildings. This base area is a relatively flat point at the head of the Rastus Burn. It is a heavily modified area with extensive earthworks, service buildings and other ski area infrastructure.

4.11 Currently, the ski area infrastructure contained within the Remarkables SASZ consists of the following:

- Approximately 13,800m<sup>2</sup> of car parking,
- Six lift lines (including two surface conveyor lifts and the Curvey Basin lift),
- A base building (it is understood the old base building has been removed)
- A service hut near the top of the Alta lift,
- Workshops and grooming base,
- Ski trails,
- Terrain park,
- Tube Park,
- Underground snowmaking pipes and hydrants,
- Snow making machines and associated structures,
- Snow fences,
- Signage.

## 5 LANDSCAPE CLASSIFICATION

5.1 While the SASZ is not subject to a landscape classification, the proposal seeks to extend the SASZ into areas shown as being part of an Outstanding Natural Landscape on *Map 13* of the *Proposed District Plan* (PDP). There is little doubt that Area A will occur entirely within an ONL

5.2 The location of the ONL line near Area B is more ambiguous as the transition point between modified and natural landscape characters is not clearly defined by landform or land cover. Environment Court Decision C90/2005 examined in detail the Coneburn Valley and found that the Coneburn Valley is part of a VAL. Environment Court Decision C203/2004 was mainly concerned with the landscape classification of the

northern slopes of the Remarkables and their relationship with the Kawarau River and Morven Hill. This decision has been referenced in determining the landscape category boundary across the subject site and Court Order, RMA1165/98 has confirmed this category boundary. However, the Court's decision was focused on the northern slopes of the Remarkables and there is little detail on the logic which underpins the landscape line which traverses the subject site as shown in the C203/2004 Decision.

5.3 I consider the west facing slopes of the Remarkables between Wye Creek the Kawarau River are essentially composed of three landscape characters (**Attachment C and Attachment G Image 5**):

- A. The highly natural, schist dominate, steeply graded, snow tussock and cushion community clad mountain faces which culminate in the jagged ridge that forms the dramatic skyline of the Remarkables.
- B. The fans, deltas and mid to lower slopes of the Remarkables which are less steep and craggy, more heavily vegetated and more rural in character.
- C. The Coneburn Valley, tablelands and hummocks which host farmlands and residential development and are composed of a patchwork of pastures, remnant patches of grey scrubland and the Kingston Road corridor.

5.4 I do not wish to debate the whole of the ONL category boundary and it is accepted that the transition in landscape category occurs generally within the fans, deltas and lower slopes of the Remarkables. This change in character is sometimes obviously defined by landforms, but is more often obscurely situated at fence lines and other landscape features such as the Remarkables Road.

5.5 Within the vicinity of the subject site, the lowest slopes which abut the Kingston Road are certainly within the RLC/VAL landscape as they are predominantly pastoral in character and more closely related to the Coneburn Valley than the dramatic mountains. The land to north of the subject site on the F S Mee Development Company Ltd site (the Mee site) is distinctly less densely vegetated, rendering the landform highly legible and clearly displaying a point where the lower slopes of the Remarkables meet the flatter pastureland. This transition in topography provides a clear separation in landscape categories (**Attachments C and D**).

5.6 Immediately north of the subject site on the Reavers (NZ) Ltd site, a dense patch of evergreen trees and an indistinct watercourse separates the more legible landform transition point on the Mee site to the north

from a less distinct more, undulating landform transition between the landscape character areas B and C (**Attachment C and Attachment G, Image 5**).

- 5.7 The land within the subject site is dominated by exotic and native grey scrubland vegetation and the Remarkables Road. The lower portions of the road are less steep, less visible and the switchbacks are not as tight. Near the upper portions of the site the land gradually steepens and the switchbacks of the road are sharper. A watercourse passes the upper south-eastern portion of the site and scattered evergreen vegetation existing near the sites southern boundary.
- 5.8 Farther south of the subject site, mature evergreen vegetation cloaks much of the land and the density of vegetation diminishes the legibility of the landform. This vegetation visually screens rural living type development and a quarry which exists on the adjoining sites.
- 5.9 I consider that the lands immediately north of the subject site are mostly within the ONL while the lands immediately south of the subject site are mostly within the RLC/VAL landscape. The subject site sits within a transition space and the landscape line crosses the site. I considered that the lower portions of the site which are less steep are linked by way of land cover and land use patterning to the more modified RLC/VAL of the Coneburn Valley. This landscape pattern is characterised by a more modified vegetation cover, the visual presence of structures, the Remarkables Road and the less steep tableland topography. My interpretation of the line between the ONL and RLC/VAL is depicted graphically on the images and plans in **Attachments A, C and D**.

## 6 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

### *Area A: The Rastus Burn Catchment*

- 6.1 The following portion of this report will assess the actual and potential effects on landscape character, visual amenity and cumulative effects of the proposed extension of the SASZ within the Rastus Burn Recreation Reserve.

- 6.2 In paragraph 4.6 of her assessment, Dr Read anticipated:

*“that the proposed zone change would facilitate the execution of earthworks as a permitted activity, and a number of other activities including the construction of gondolas and chairlifts and the construction of buildings as a controlled activity; and the operation of visitor accommodation as a restricted discretionally activity.”*

- 6.3 As a response to the sensitivity of the Lake Alta area and Wye Creek catchment, the applicant volunteers a building and earthwork restriction rule as part of its rezoning proposal. It is understood that the purpose of extending the SASZ into these areas is to legalise various Ski Area Activities, which by definition include activities such as avalanche control, and skiing and boarding, as the recently constructed Curvey Basin chairlift has extended the lift accessible ski terrain across that part of the mountain.
- 6.4 The subject area where the SASZ will be extended has a low level of visibility from public and private places outside of the mountain landscape. These places include the Skippers – Coronet Peak Road (**Attachment E, Image 1**) and an areas near the junction of Hunter Road and Malaghans Road (**Attachment E, Image 2**). It is considered that these more distant views will experience negligible adverse effects as the distance between the site and the viewpoint is significant.
- 6.5 It is understood that very little indigenous vegetation is present in Area A which occupies the upper elevations of the Remarkables. While there are swaths of tussock (*Chionochloa sp.*) especially above the Sugar Bowl Basin, most of the vegetation within the proposed SASZ is predominantly fellfield communities. The applicant has shown, through previous consents within the Remarkables and Coronet Peak ski areas, that NZSki is willing and capable of undertaking effective native vegetation reestablishment and relocation programs when required. Any future proposals within the proposed SASZ would continue to be subject to the provisions in the Plan and it is considered that these provisions can ensure the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the site's nature conservation values.
- 6.6 Certainly, the existing cumulative effects of the Remarkables Ski Area has changed the visual coherence and naturalness of the Rastus Burn landscape. It is considered that the bulk of this landscape, with the exception of the Lake Alta basin holds a distinct ski area character and that the proposed extension to the SASZ will not compound any adverse effects of the ski area infrastructure within the existing landscape context, nor will the extension have the potential to represent a threshold with respect to the landscape's ability to absorb change.
- 6.7 As the subject site exists within an area largely administered by DoC, the surrounding lands and the existing Ski Area Sub-Zone are considered public places. The existing ski area infrastructure dominates much of the Rastus Burn landscape. I consider the Remarkables Road and the Lake Alta / Wye Creek DOC trail are the most appropriate places to assess the effects of the proposal.

#### *The Remarkables Road*

- 6.8 From the Remarkables Road the bulk of the existing ski area infrastructure is generally not visible until the viewer is immediately upon the base area. This landscape is populated with lift structures, roads, parking



areas, buildings and associated vehicles. The landscape is dominated by the craggy ridges and series of summits which enclose the catchment. The proposed extension of the SASZ will allow this existing infrastructure to extend farther up the more easterly mountains, east of Pt 2035. This area is already highly affected by the existing ski area infrastructure and most of it is not visible from the Remarkables Road. Pt 2035 and the associated craggy summits to the north and east hold a highly natural character and contribute to the dramatic mountain landscape. It is highly unlikely for practical reasons that earthworks or structures would be applied for on these more steep and dramatic ridges and summits. I consider that the extension of the SASZ into Area A will have a negligible adverse effect on the visual amenity and landscape character as experienced from the Remarkables Road.

*The Lake Alta / Wye Creek DoC Trail*

- 6.9 The DoC Lake Alta / Wye Creek trail begins near the Remarkables base building and ascends the slopes near the Alta Chair where the bulk of the ridges and summits above the Sugar Bowl Chair become visible. I consider that there is capacity in this part of Area A for structures or earthworks be undertaken as a controlled activity such that they would not cumulatively effect the landscape character or visual amenity (**Attachment F, Image 3**).
- 6.10 The Lake Alta / Wye Creek trail enters a bog to the south of the Alta Chair top terminal where it hosts educational boards displaying information about the site's natural values. The nature trail continues to ascend the slopes towards the outlet of Lake Alta before culminating at a viewpoint which takes in the whole of Lake Alta as well as the slopes and peaks of Double and Single Cone (**Attachment F, Image 4**). A less defined track continues to the south up the scree slopes towards West Wye Saddle. The existing ski infrastructure is not within the basin which contains Lake Alta and the highest summits of the Remarkables. It is however possible as one moves farther to the west to view the upper portions of the Curvey Basin Chair and Sugar Basin Chair within the Lake Alta context (**Attachment B**). The distance between the existing ski area infrastructure and the Lake Alta basin diminishes the existing adverse effects of the ski area structures and earthworks on the more natural Lake Alta area.
- 6.11 The proposal would see the SASZ extended to the west, into an area immediately associated with the Lake Alta Basin. NZSki has agreed to overlay a new SASZ rule which will ensure that the erection of any structures or the undertaking of any earthworks in this area be restricted. It is considered that the only effects of extending the SASZ into the Lake Alta Basin will be the temporary effects of avalanche control and the commercial use of the area for skiing. This will be similar in character to the existing temporary effects of the chutes ski activities.
- 6.12 The SASZ Area A extension is generally only visible within the context of the existing ski area infrastructure. This existing context provides a strong ski area character which is open, but not void of built

form. The extent of modification that the proposed SASZ would enable would be small in comparison to the existing infrastructure within the current SASZ and would not adversely affect the visual coherence and integrity of the landscape in the existing, modified context.

#### *The Wye Creek Catchment*

- 6.13 The Wye Creek catchment is separated from the Rastus Burn catchment by series of summits and ridges which run between the summit of Single Cone and Pt 2035. Dr Read has expressed the opinion that the presence of any structures on this ridge would diminish the experience of remoteness, the very high natural character and the visual amenity of users of this area.<sup>1</sup> I agree that structures on this ridgeline would have a high adverse effect on the character and amenity of the Wye Creek catchment. However, a rule restricting structures and earthworks in this part of the SASZ would offer a high degree of certainty that no structure would be located on this ridge and that the Wye Creek catchment would experience no effects.

#### *The Doolans Catchment*

- 6.14 Another portion of land which could potentially experience change as a result of the SASZ Area A extension is the land to east of the ridge which separates the Rastus Burn catchment from the Doolans catchment. This ridge, existing between Pt 2035 and Pt 2057 and also marks the boundary between the Central Otago District Council and the Queenstown Lakes District Council. The Doolans is administered by DoC and the CODC.
- 6.15 The existing Sugar Bowl and Curvey Basin lifts provide relatively easy access to the skiable terrain below the ridge on the Rastus Burn side. I consider it unlikely that any structures or earthworks would occur within this part of the SASZ Area A. However, I consider there is capacity in the more rounded tussock land between Pt 2057 and Pt 1934 where a structures could be discretely located.
- 6.16 I agree with Dr Read that structures located on the ridge which separates the Doolans from the Rastus Burn would diminish the experience of remoteness, the very high natural character and the visual amenity of users of the Doolans. During winter I frequently go backcountry ski touring in the Doolans catchment. It is my experience that the ridge which separates the Doolans from the Rastus Burn is consistently windy and exposed and would be an unlikely place to site any structures. It is also my assessment that if a structure were proposed to be located on or near the subject ridge, that it would subject to provisions in the plan which seek to control the location and size of infrastructure such that development within the SASZ is cumulatively minor. It is highly unlikely that any structures would sited on the ridges which enclose the Rastus Burn catchment unless they were proposed in tandem with an extension of the SASZ into the

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 7.9

Doolans catchment. This would be subject to a separate application process with DoC and CODC. Ski field infrastructure in the Doolans would certainly change the character of that catchment. I consider any infrastructure which may occur within the proposed extension of the SASZ Area A, which may accompany an extension into the Doolans would likely be assessed on its own merits and could be situated such that effects on the Rastus Burn catchments would be cumulatively minor.

- 6.17 Overall I consider that the potential adverse effects of the Area A SASZ extension are appropriately controlled through provisions of a no build and earthworks rule which will protect the amenity and character values of the Lake Alta basin and Wye Creek catchment. I consider that the more easterly portion of the SASZ extension has the capacity to absorb appropriate development and that the provisions in the SASZ will ensure any future proposals are controlled such that the effects of development within the SASZ will be cumulatively minor.

*Area B: The Coneburn Valley*

*Visibility of the site*

- 6.18 The elevated nature of the site and its location adjacent to the Kingston Road make it part of a widely visible expanse of open landscape. There are however two significant land features which restrict views into the site from many, more distant locations. Peninsula Hill screens the site from more westerly locations while the shoulder that falls down from the Remarkables to the Kawarau River screens the site from more northerly locations.

- 6.19 The subject site can be seen from the following public places. These places are not the only locations where the site can be seen, but they are chosen as they are indicative of views from the surrounding lands.

D. The Kingston Road, south of the site (**Attachment G, Image 5**). Existing mature evergreen vegetation to the south of the site, which gives much of the landscape its RLC/VAL character also provides a high level of screening of the site from the Kingston Road and other locations south. The undulating landforms too, provides some level of screening to the south.

E. The Kingston Road, northwest of the site (**Attachment H, Image 6**). There are relatively open views from this location.

F. The Kawarau River Bridge (**Attachment H, Image 7**). Views are available directly towards the site from a distance of approximately 2.17km.

G. The Queenstown Marina (**Attachment I, Image 8**). Views are available directly towards the site from a distance of approximately 4km.

H. The Queenstown Events Centre (**Attachment I, Image 9**). Views are available from a distance of approximately 3.3km.

6.20 As demonstrated in the images attached to this report, existing activities within the vicinity of the subject site are reasonably difficult to see. This is attributed to the appropriate siting of structures and other activities within the surrounding vegetation and landforms. These images also demonstrate how existing activities are not visually prominent such that they detract from the more natural landscape or adversely affect the appreciation of the wider landscape. It is understood that future proposals within the proposed SASZ Area B would be subject to the proposed provisions affording Council discretion over the colours, materials and overall external appearance and visual prominence of all future buildings as well as their size. I consider these provisions will ensure the existing visual landscape pattern and visual amenity will be continued as part of the proposed SASZ extension.

6.21 The landscape category boundaries as I described above in the *Landscape Classification* portion of my evidence differs from the boundary and that shown on the C203/2004 Decision. The line which is shown on the C203/2004 Decision runs parallel to the Remarkables Road near the site's northern boundary and drops down to meet the flat lands to the north of the site. The line is shown roughly in red in **Attachments A, C and D**. I contend that the ONL line crosses the site's more elevated easterly extents and links the existing patches of evergreen vegetation before dropping to the flatter parts of the landscape near the watercourse which crosses the Reavers (NZ) Ltd land.

6.22 I consider that the upper portions of the site which are within the ONL are too widely visible and prominent and more closely associated with the Remarkables mid slopes to absorb further development. I have recommended to NZSki that that the SASZ boundary be lowered so that it is consistent with my interpretation of the ONL boundary. I consider that there is capacity for the mid to lower portions of the site to absorb appropriate development as they are less visible, more closely associated with the tablelands of the Coneburn Valley and contain pockets where structures and other infrastructure could be appropriately sited.

6.23 The subject site is within a broadly visible expanse of open landscape, however the site is partly enclosed by existing vegetation, screening it from views to the south. This vegetation, while not wholly on the subject site, will contribute to the containment of any potential effects likely to arise from future proposals within

the SASZ. Similarly, landforms which cross the subject site, such as the terrace which holds a shed consented under RM960686, will be able to accommodate some future development within the SASZ, Area B.

- 6.24 I consider that the proposed SASZ, Area B is not likely to adversely affect the openness of the landscape as the site is within a more densely vegetated landscape pattern where future proposals can be appropriately located and controlled such that they will be visually absorbed. Area B is also within the much more widely visible landscape and future proposals within this site can be absorbed within the context of the wider, open landscape.
- 6.25 The subject site occupies the lower portion of the slopes that lead up to the Remarkables Mountains. It is highly unlikely that any future proposal would have the potential to break the line and form of any skyline or ridgeline, but could potentially be seen as breaking the form of what is a prominent slope. Care should be taken to ensure future proposals within the SASZ are sited such that any structures do not break the form of the slopes, and that any earthworks, roads or landscaping is considered in the context of the existing landscape patterns so that it does not adversely affect the naturalness of the landscape. I understand that the provisions in the SASZ would give Council control of the landscape effects of any future activities with Area B.
- 6.26 It is understood that the area of the proposed SASZ does not contain any significant indigenous vegetation, wildlife habitats, wetlands or geological features. The site is mostly clad in exotic weeds, some of which have a high potential to spread and naturalise. It is a foreseeable outcome of future proposals within the SASZ that much of this wilding vegetation could be removed and replaced with more appropriate and less threatening vegetation. Regardless of the realisation of this outcome, it is considered that the subject proposal will have a negligible effect on the nature conservation values.
- 6.27 Existing and consented development, modifications and vegetation within the vicinity of the site is what gives this portion of the landscape its RLC / VAL character. Activities such as the quarry to the south have certainly compromised the landscape's naturalness temporarily, but the visual effects of this activity aren't generally experienced unless the viewer is at an elevation above the quarry. I consider that a significant level of development would need to occur on the subject site to push the landscape beyond its threshold with respect to its ability to absorb change and it is anticipated that the SASZ zone provisions would prevent development which would be inappropriate. Overall I consider that appropriate development could take place within the proposed SASZ Area B without leading to further degradation of the landscape's visual coherence or naturalness.

## 7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This proposal is in two parts, both seeking to create new areas of SASZ for the Remarkables Ski Area. The first part, Area A would take place adjacent to the existing SASZ in the Rastus Burn catchment and would extend the SASZ to the crest of the ridge which physically contains the ski area to the south, east and west. The primary reason for this proposal is to legalise skiing and boarding and avalanche controls which already occur periodically outside of the existing subzone. A policy is proposed which would restrict structures and earthworks within the Lake Alta basin and on the ridge which separates the Rastus Burn from the Wye Creek catchment. The second part of the proposal is to create a new SASZ in Area B which takes in the base of the Remarkables Road and the lower portions of the switchbacks which lead up the west face of the Remarkables. This part of the SASZ would not extend up the slopes of the Remarkables beyond what I consider to be the ONL boundary.
- 7.2 The Remarkables forms the dramatic southern and south-eastern backdrop to the Queenstown area. Located within the Rastus Burn catchment to the east of the Remarkables summits, The Remarkables Ski Area itself is not readily visible from Queenstown or the surrounding areas. The primary indicator of the ski area as viewed from the wider landscape is the Remarkables Road. The base of this road extends off the Kingston Road and switchbacks up the west facing slopes before cutting across to the north.
- 7.3 The purpose of the SASZ is *to enable the continued development of ski field activities within the identified boundaries, where the effects of those activities are anticipated to be cumulatively minor (ODP 5.3.1.2).*
- 7.4 I consider the proposed SASZ extension into Area A will have very low to negligible adverse effect on the ONL. Generally all activities will be contained within the area already changed due to the existing ski area infrastructure. It is considered that certain activities, such as structures and earthworks would not be appropriate to the west of Wye Dome Spur or near the ridge which separates Wye Creek from the Rastus Burn as these areas are especially sensitive to development. A policy which will restrict structures and earthworks in the vicinity of Lake Alta and the Wye Ridge has been proposed together with rules preventing development in these sensitive areas.
- 7.5 I consider that the provisions for the SASZ in the Plan will give Council discretion with regard to future development which may occur within the easterly part of Area A extension of the SASZ. Any development here is likely to occur in tandem with an application process for extension into the Doolans Basin and will be subject to a further assessment. I consider that the easterly part of Area A has the capacity to absorb some appropriate development which would not lead to unacceptable cumulative adverse effects.
- 7.6 With regards to the proposed SASZ which will take place in the lower parts of the Remarkables Road (Area B), I consider that this land is mostly within the ORL/VAL landscape category and is less open and

more modified than the adjoining slopes of the Remarkables. I also consider that that there is potential for appropriate development to be located within pockets of the subject site which will not adversely affect the existing landscape values. While no actual developments are proposed as part of the rezoning proposal , I consider that future proposals within SASZ Area B would be subject to the zone provisions and that those provisions would adequately guide and direct development which would be appropriate and would not adversely affect the landscape and visual amenity values.

Steve Skelton

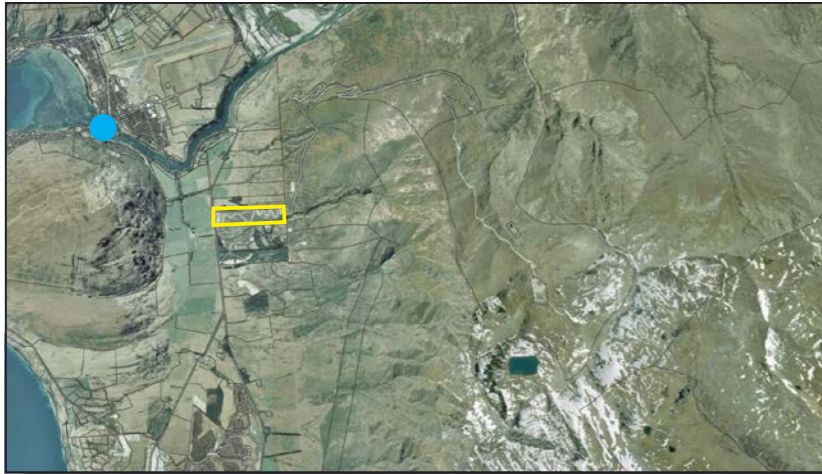
Registered Landscape Architect

March 28, 2017









**Landscape Character A**

Highly natural, schist dominate, steeply graded slopes culminating in the dramatic jagged skyline ridge

**Landscape Character B**

The fans, deltas and lower slopes which are less steep and more heavily vegetated.

Skelton interpretation of the ONL boundary

Approximate ONL boundary as shown in map attached to the C203/2004 Decision

ONL

RLC





Image 1



Image 2



Image 3

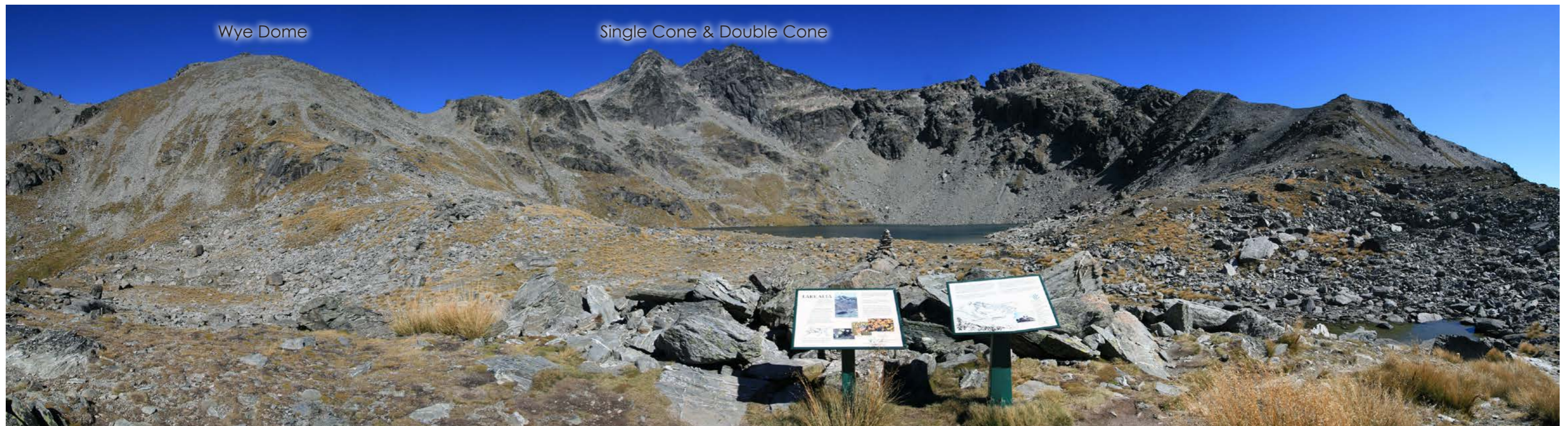


Image 4

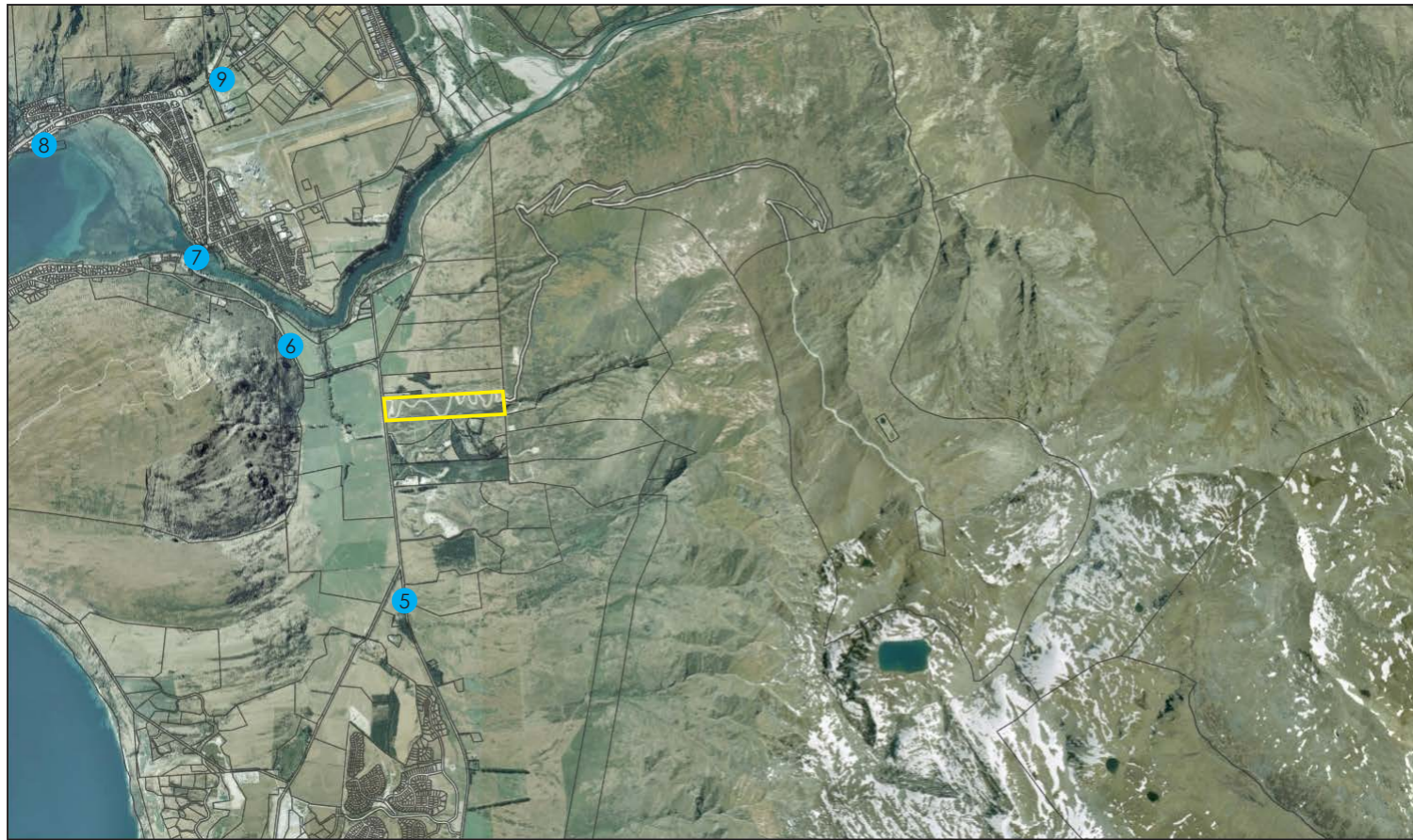


Image Locations



**Landscape Character A**  
Highly natural, schist dominate, steeply graded slopes culminating in the dramatic jagged skyline ridge

**Landscape Character B**  
The fans, deltas and lower slopes which are less steep and more heavily vegetated.

**Landscape Character C**  
The tablelands and hummocks with a patchwork of pastures, grey shrubland and the Kingston Road corridor.

Image 5



Image 6



Image 7



Image 8



Image 9