

1359 Highland Way
TALLONG NSW 2579

26th November 2023

Planning Services
Department of Planning and Environment
GPO Box 39 SYDNEY NSW 2001

For the attention of:
Director – Resource Assessments

A submission on the Sutton Forest Quarry Project: EIS SSD 6334

I want to express my strong objection to the proposed Sutton Forest sand quarry adjacent to the Hume Motor Way a short distance south of Sallys Corner. As I have lived in the Southern Highlands for the past 20 years I am fully familiar with the existing sand mining at nearby Marulan and Penrose. I have many concerns about the proposal and I believe it should not be approved.

I understand that the mine will require the clearing of 110 hectares of mostly native bushland and sandstone will be mined to a depth of 60 metres. I also understand from the publicity surrounding the proposal that rock from the mine will be processed on site for 24 hours each day for 7 days a week and trucked out of the area with an average of 250 truck movements each day for the next 30 years. It is also reported that the pit will ultimately become a waste disposal dump for the Sydney metropolitan area.

My first concern is the possible damage this proposed mine could do to the ground water in the Penrose / Sutton Forest area and its environs. I live on a rural property and depend on a bore for water security for my property, as so many people in the region do. Like other local landowners, I am angry about the potential impact this 60 metre deep pit could have on the ecosystem that could be irreversible. When this quarry was first mooted in 2018, water scientist and Western Sydney University environmental science professor, Professor Ian Wright, told ABC Illawarra, "The proposed mine does pose substantial and unquantified risks" and "It's likely that it's going to change the hydrology of this area and it's likely to produce sediment-laden run-off with a whole series of contaminants."

The proposed mine is not only a concern for Southern Highlands locals, it should also be of concern to metropolitan Sydney. Professor Wright fears the fragile ecosystem, which feeds into Sydney's water catchment supplying 5 million people, could be irreparably damaged. "We get a lot of intense rainfall here," he said, "any major human activity that involves clearing of vegetation and disturbance of soil and rock has the opportunity of creating soil erosion and transporting eroded material into waterways."

The proposed mine has generated grave environmental concerns. A sand mine in the proposed area involving the clearing of 110 hectares of native bushland and farming land is a full frontal assault on the Great Western Wildlife Corridor. The corridor (GWWC) is a key corridor in the Great Eastern Ranges located between Bullio and Bungonia, linking the southern Blue Mountains with Morton National Park.

On its website Wingecarribee Shire Council stresses the importance of the GWWC pointing out that it has been mapped as a core, regional corridor within the Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan

Regent Honeyeater, Glossy Black-Cockatoo and other important ecological species such as Emus utilise this corridor.

In addition the website points out that fragmentation through land clearing is an ongoing risk to the GWWC and biodiversity, with the Sutton Forest, Paddys River, Wingello and High Range localities where the GWWC is narrowest and highly fragmented and where we need to focus conservation efforts.

How can approval be given to this Sutton Forest sand mine when an environmental project such as the Great Western Wildlife Corridor is exposed to the risk of clearing is area estimated at the size of 60 football fields?

Over and above the water and environmental concerns over the mine, the development of this project will have an immediate impact on the people of the area. If the Sutton Forest sand mine project is approved and proceeds it will have catastrophic social implications on the Southern Highlands. The area is renowned as an attraction for tourism. The population of the Wingecarribee Shire in particular is expanding rapidly with new housing subdivisions appearing regularly. People have chosen to settle in the Southern Highlands because of the peace and tranquillity of the area. One of the most significant properties affected by the project will be the Our Lady of Mercy Shrine at Penrose Park with its facilities on the boundary of the mine. This shrine attracts thousands of visitors each month and its Easter celebrations have attracted up to 10,000 people.

In spite of the inconvenience and discomfort that a 24/7 mining operation will bring to the Southern Highlands with its dust, noise, lighting pollution and traffic congestion to say nothing of the possible damage to the area's water table and its wildlife, the mine developers want to proceed. Approval for this project will provide economic gain for the mining company at the expense of the quality of life of the local residence, the enjoyment of tourists and the thousands of pilgrims who seek the tranquillity of the Penrose Park monastery annually.

The mining company Hi-Quality will undoubtedly offer assurances that it will protect the environment and the water issues associated with its operations as well as protect the local residents from noise, dust, lighting pollution, traffic congestion and the like. It is interesting that the Victorian Environmental Protection Authority issued a media statement on 4th July 2023, which is on the internet, that 33 charges had been laid against Hi-Quality Quarry Products Pty Ltd and the company's Director, Patrick James Hallinan. The charges relate to breaches of EPA landfill licences and failure to comply with EPA remedial notices. Can Hi-Quality be trusted to run a safe operation at Sutton Forest if it is granted permission to open a quarry?

In the light of all the above again I object strongly to the granting of approval for a sand mining quarry at Sutton Forest.



Michael Bach

Planning Services
Department of Planning and Environment
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

BN

DATE 28/11/11
RETURN TO SENDER
Unclaimed
Incorrect Address
Post Office Unknown

