

Objection Submission to Application SSD-6334 Sutton Forest Quarry Project

Department of Planning and Environment

GPO Box 39

Sydney 2001

Attention Planner Jarrod Blane Resource Assessments

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I am Ingrid Skirka, I have lived in the Southern Highlands for many decades. I have seen Long Swamp and at the end of this objection I attach my account of my encounter with the Giant Dragonfly, *Petalura gigantea*.

Firstly, this objection submission promotes innovation regarding what is considered a global sand deficit, solutions are listed towards the conclusion.

It is the role of Government agencies to consider the impact of global warming in decisions affecting imperilled species and their recovery, the maintenance of biodiversity, water security and the complex environmental systems that contribute to its catchment and should apply systems thinking for preservation and conservation of the natural world, its flora and fauna and for the survival of humans.

Sand must not be mined by Application SSD-6334 because it is already in use, and plays a critical role.

The Great Artesian Basin, one of the largest natural underground water reservoirs in the World, stretches from Cape York to Dubbo and Coober Peady to the South-East corner of the Northern Territory. Long Swamp and its subterranean hydro stratigraphic units form one of the intake beds, which recharge the Great Artesian Basin. Along its elevated margins where water from rain and some rivers enters the groundwater, the Southern Highlands is a high point and part of the

complex system is the 65 to 250 million years' worth of sediment sandstone below Long Swamp, it's a drip-fed filtering system whose porosity and permeability create pure water, it feeds the aquifers and is natural capital of the highest value to water security for the NSW Catchment.

The area of the Application SSD-6334 is critical habitat area for the recovery of species from threat of extinction, its biodiversity and ecological uniqueness fulfils criteria for heritage listing and conservation.

We can learn from the relatively recent collapse of the Wingecarribee Swamp, as the late David Tranter tried to warn us. Wingecarribee Swamp collapsed tragically in 1998, it had been mined for peat since 1967. The inadequate mitigations regarding the Mining Buffer Zone between the dredge pool and the Reservoir didn't work, and would probably have never worked, that failure should be claimed as hubris which is a hallmark of disregarding the natural capital. Despite the Sydney Water Corporation, the Environment Protection Authority, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW), the then Department of Land and Water Conservation, the Royal Botanic Gardens (Sydney), the NSW Heritage Council, the Australian Heritage Commission, the Wingecarribee Shire Council, volunteer environment groups including REPS, the National Parks Association all involved in arguing the case against the renewal, mining lawyers won a further peat mining lease, then the Wingecarribee Swamp collapsed, how ironic that then it was added to the New South Wales State Heritage Register in 1999. Will a similar yet more devastating fate face Long Swamp?

Application SSD-6334 represents an irreversible environmental tipping point that necessitates systems thinking to protect unique ecosystems and with this approach the conservation of Long Swamp, the Southern sandstone recharge bed of The Great Artesian Basin and the Western Wildlife Corridor. This time of polycrisis Climate Change, which is drought, extreme weather events, ecosystem collapse, pollution promulgation and the sixth extinction of species (unlike previous extinction events caused by natural phenomena, the sixth

mass extinction is driven by human activity, primarily through the unsustainable use of land, water and energy use) rising seas and temperatures and all of these compounding effects where future water security is at risk and the preservation of clean water systems is now paramount. The worst outcome would be the creation of the mining hole and then the filling of it with Sydney's waste. Collex (now Veolia) already tried to do that, with an application in the early 90's to put 500,000 tonnes of Sydney's waste at the source of its water, of its pure water filtration system, which was rejected in favour of water protection.

Application SSD-6334 is a bad idea because destruction of Long Swamp destroys the water table, the natural water filtration system millions of years in the formation that cleans water of the NSW catchment and is feeder to the aquifer. If allowed, tragically it would pollute NSW water at its headwaters from the top down and become an irreversible failure in water protection with generational effects on Sydney Water, as well as aquifer pollution, threats to water supply, destruction of significant Aboriginal sites and artworks, compounding pollution and its generational effects on flora, fauna, biodiversity, agricultural and human health, noise, blasting and light pollution from the industry, damage to surrounding mostly native bushland, crops, gardens, solar panels and residences, long term health risks to neighbouring and Highlands residents from vibrations and dust through mining and fine silica rock processing and transporting, risks to people and environments within the transport route, destruction of the Western Wildlife Corridor and an increase of 24/7, 365 days, 344 trucks a day (250 average), leaving and entering the Hume Highway with a 272 acre mined hole in the ground to a massive depth below the ground level of 60 m with mining continuing 39 metres below the current water table will destroy the precious aquifer and would not stop for 30 years. The Proponent, who have ironically named themselves "Hi-Quality" already have 24 EPA NSW penalties and, now also established in Victoria, the company and director, Patrick Hallinan, already face 33 new EPA charges. Abiding governing

regulations is obviously not a strong point, which makes the Proponent unsuitable.

It is maladaptation to use the pure water sandstone filtration system that is the body of Long Swamp, for what is believed to be the deficit of sand in the building industry.

Supply gaps for our ravenous building methods amidst global sand scarcity now necessitates creative solutions, rather than the hubris that would destroy future water security. Application SSD- 6334 is a lazy, quick fix for the building industry. The mine would be a maladaptation, a solution which backfires, should Long Swamp and its unique filtration system be destroyed to provide sand for the building industry.

The better solutions and substitutes for the building industry already exist in construction, at present, they are crushed recycled concrete, ground granulated blast furnace slag, washed bottom ash, quarry dust, sheet glass powder, rice husk ash, powdered brick, non-biodegradable and inert materials of construction and demolition waste, sorted, recycled and reassigned away from landfill, for which waste space is scarce, and redirected back to the building industry.

This is my account of *Petalura gigantea*

A system of vein like rivulets, the cartographer's representation pooling in kidney shaped ponds. I've walked that ancient place; you can hear the teeming throbbing, buzzing, matrix of life, before you see it. It's verdant green and spongy, I've stood and sunk my feet there, with a worry I might disappear, the thought did cross my mind; I looked over and saw my wise dog Zoe at the edges, where the earth was more stable, I'd wondered in, sanguine at age 16. There at Long Swamp it seemed I was always going around a corner, the swamp felt private, hidden, it's a secret preferring winged form to arrive, my feet sinking further with sucking squelches as I tried rounding its corners. This is where I had an encounter with what seemed to me at the time, two prehistoric giant dragonfly, one hovered close to my face, confronting, quivering glassily, no one would believe the size, with a

breeze on cellophane sound it flicked to the furthest side of Long Swamp, and I could see there was another one. They circled each other, a whirlwind, spooked I ran out fast, sprinting hard, stopping with my dog in a heap a hundred meters up hill. I'd seen two Petalura gigantea.

As a further note regarding the hubris that would see the Great Western Wildlife Corridor and Long Swamp destroyed, I believe that would be defiance of the Gods of the Dreamtime, if you like (the Burringilling), the great eel man Gurangatch, who formed this place, and the freshwater mountain people that were here and are still here, the Gundungurra and Darug people of the Southern Highlands whose sacred sites include Wingecarribee Swamp and other areas which are breeding grounds for eels and threatened species such as the giant dragonfly. As late as 1860 (reported in the local papers) a Corroborree was held in Moss Vale attended by hundreds of Aboriginal people, chronologically taking place many years after the murder of leader Cannabaygal and the massacre at Appin by Governor Macquarie's squad in 1816. My late friend Aunty Val (Velma) Mulcahy OAM would often tell me stories of Gurangatch and Mirrigan and the passed down ancient stories of the Dreamtime and the sacred places of the Gundungurra which is now known as the Southern Highlands whose rivers, swamps and fresh water supply 80% of water to Sydney and Wollongong and Goulburn in times of drought, all must be preserved.