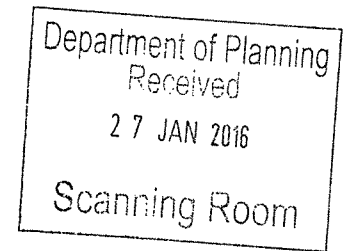




**Re: Proposal: Cabbage Tree Road Sand Quarry (SSD 6125)**  
**Property: 398 Cabbage Tree Road, Williamtown**



Dear Sir/Madam

In 2014, Port Stephens Council controversially awarded a contract for quarrying of 4.6 million tonnes of sand over 15 years at 398 Cabbage Tree Road, Williamtown. It would remove critical Koala habitat and other at risk species, will destroy the quality of life of our family and local residents, and would add hundreds of heavy truck movements to an already overloaded and unsuitable carriageway within a 90km/h zone. The risk of sand dust silicosis is real and threatens the health of our community and their children. The removal of 54 hectares of vegetation would see a major disruption to the sensitive charge and discharge rates of the Tomago sandbed aquifer – the trees effectively act as ‘pumps’ to the aquifer, regulating the entire ecosystem. The removal of that vegetation and flattening of the land would remove a critical mitigating buffer zone to the RAAF base and its activities directly to the North and North East of the proposed site. All of this for a quarry supplying a product which is not in short supply, is readily available at the 5 other sand mines already located within 10km of the proposed site, employing a measly 3 to 5 people with any royalties going back to the council for their use and disposal and not necessarily to the rate payers.

Finally, the proposed site now sits directly in the middle of a declared ‘red zone’ contamination area. An area governed by strict precautionary and cautionary principles dictated by NSW EPA and NSW Chief Scientist, Professor, Maryanne O’Kane. The proponents have failed to take any of this into account in their submission.

The means must justify the end and the unknown and known significant risks to this significant environment can only be avoided by refusing this proposal. We reserve all our rights and entitlements against the NSW Department of Planning and any decision makers in relation to any future loss or damages (including future health claims) as a result of the proposed sand mine should the proposal be approved.

#### **Environmental Impacts –**

##### **Koalas**

The Port Stephens area is an important population for the Koala, at a state and federal level. This is recognised by the federal Department of the Environment and the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage. The proposal will wipe out preferred Koala Habitat, a total of 10 koalas were found on site as noted in the EIS, this area is imperative to the survival and interbreeding of the population.

There is no formal offset or offset calculations using the NSW Bio banking calculator have been included.

##### **Water**

There are unknown effects to the Tomago sand beds. The native vegetation acts as the main stabiliser of the water table, removing the vegetation and flattening the dunes will cause a natural increase in the water table. A characteristic that in the current situation and the Red Zone is not acceptable. Once the natural undulation is flattened, this will cause further drainage problems affecting nearby properties, if and when we have the next rain deluge.

Historically the previous mining on the site for Rutile and Zircon the RZM mine, was shut down in the early 90's, this is due to the operation bringing up arsenic and heavy metals to the water table, Hunter water and residents bore supply.

#### **Other Environmental**

- Water dependant ecosystem
- A significant impact is likely to occur on another species and the study area is likely to support an important population of the squirrel glider
- No assessment of cumulative impacts in the local area (required in DGRs) on Koalas or loss of bushland and habitat
- There are no north-south wildlife corridors to allow wildlife to move between all unmined areas, only a token east west corridor along sparsely vegetated ground.
- There will be no rehabilitation of the land, just spread mulch and let natural seed revegetate the site

#### **Visual impacts –**

The EIS has stated that there will be limited visual impacts on residents; however the properties next door and residents who live on higher elevations will overlook the operations of the mine. Which has currently been a picturesque bush landscape?

#### **Noise Impacts –**

Noise impacts will be of the operation, truck movements and possible changes to airport noises once the natural hills are taken away. There will be an increase of everyday noise for the surrounding residents, there will be the noise of the everyday operation of the sand mine, including the times of operation including and not limited to transportation and loading 5am – 6pm Monday to Friday and 7am to 4pm Saturdays.

On either side of the proposed sand mine entrance there are 25 entrances to homes, all of which will be negatively impacted by the proposed changes to Cabbage Tree Road and the entrance to the site. All of these homes will suffer with increased noise of trucks accelerating and decelerating in and out of the site from 5am. When the natural sound buffer of the sand hills is taken away there will be an increase in noise of the airport and RAAF base operations, this could result in the RAAF needing to re-evaluate the noise mapping.

#### **Traffic and access impacts –**

There are 25 homes within 500 meters of the site entrance, Cabbage Tree Road is a 90km road and already incredibly dangerous for residents safely turning in and out of properties. At present residents are already limited with exit strategies to escape an accident if other motorists are overtaking or do not see a car slowing down to turn into a driveway.

## **Air Quality/ health -**

With any mine or quarry operation there is a risk of increased dust and diesel emissions. We know that dust travels as per Dr Van Steenis, Visit to the Hunter Valley: Urgent Reform of Coal Industry Operating standards; Children living 1.5km from a coal mine have 33% risk of Asthma, at 3km the risk is 22% and at 5km it is 12%. The quarry will be as close as 20 meters to a resident's boundary. The product that will be mined is classed as high grade silica sand; there is a real risk of not only silicosis but also other related respiratory diseases, Asthma, COPD and chronic rhinitis.

The airborne particle/dust study seems to be flawed. It was carried out with a wind speed of 3.1 m/s whereas we are regularly subjected to winds >70kmh i.e. >20m/s. Real established risk of sand dust silicosis was dismissed in the report, which is of great concern to all surrounding residents

## **Socio Economic –**

It was suggested that that local residents keep a diary of significant dust, traffic and other events that affect us, why should the onus be on us, given the back ground of the tender process and the company involved, how Can we trust their use of the operation and adherence to proper policy and procedure with regards to the safe guarding of the community. Why should we have to bring non-compliance to their attention? These areas should not be monitored via a complaint system, these things should be addresses and mitigated beforehand....

Maximum of 6 staff employed

## **Aboriginal and Cultural heritage**

One site was noted as significant, where they found 66 objects, it was noted that this area had no historically value in the EIS.

## **What we want the Department of Planning to do?**

Knock back the inappropriate development

There are five other sand mines in the area; we do not need another one in an inappropriate location.

In the event it is approved, strict monitoring AS WELL AS PROACTIVE MEASURES PUT IN PLACE to address issues of drainage, water table levels, dust, noise as well as a buffer of 200 meters from any property boundary must be implemented to protect the peaceful enjoyment and quality of life we currently enjoy. As the proposal currently stands, parts of the mine encroach within 20 meters of some properties, this is not acceptable for local families. In addition, proper barriers by way of 5 meter high soil walls or proper acoustic fences are to be erected on the perimeter of the site. A height of 5 meters is necessary to ensure the bulk of the noise from the site is captured taking into account types of heavy equipment and vehicles proposed to be used. Proper shielding of light from any machinery and buildings must also be sufficiently diffused so as not to impede on the local resident's and their homes. This will ensure the aesthetic, acoustic and general privacy of local residents is maintained or at least preserved to some extent.

Yours faithfully,

*LR & RB box on.*