

Submission in Support of the Bluestone Hardrock Quarry Project

To: Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

Re: Environmental Impact Statement – Bluestone Hardrock Quarry Project

I write this submission in support of the Bluestone Hardrock Quarry Project as the founder and director of Bluestone Hardrock Pty Ltd, the applicant for the project, and as the owner of a number of adjoining properties surrounding the proposed quarry.

I make this submission openly acknowledging my interests. I am the proponent of the project and stand to benefit if it is approved. Equally, I also own and continue to operate adjoining rural land that will remain my home, workplace and long-term investment. My family and I will continue living with the outcome of this project long after the assessment process has concluded. For that reason, I have every incentive to ensure the quarry is designed, approved and operated to the highest possible standard.

This project is not the result of speculation or an attempt to secure a planning approval for sale. It represents almost a decade of investigation, planning, consultation and significant private investment.

In 2017, after recognising the quality of the hard rock resource on our property and following preliminary investigations and feasibility studies, we consulted with industry experts as to the best way to proceed with the approval.

We prepared our scoping report in 2024 and were further inspired into lodging it to progress to a SEARS approval when we were invited to discussions surrounding the Regionally Strategic Growth Area between Anambah and Branxton by the Department of Planning. I became convinced that the Hunter Region would require additional strategically located construction materials to support its future growth.

Rather than simply recognising the opportunity, I committed to undertaking the work required to determine whether the resource could be responsibly developed.

Since then, I have invested substantial personal funds into geological investigations, drilling programs, resource assessment, environmental studies, specialist consultants and the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement. Every stage of the project has been undertaken with the objective of ensuring the proposal is assessed on sound science and objective evidence.

The Environmental Impact Statement represents years of work by independent experts across numerous disciplines including ecology, groundwater, surface water, traffic engineering, noise, blasting, air quality, visual impact, social impact, economics and rehabilitation.

Importantly, the project has not remained static throughout this process.

As issues have been identified through consultation with government agencies, the community and technical specialists, we have continued refining the proposal.

Examples include reducing operational impacts through amended haulage arrangements, removing Saturday haulage, reviewing operating hours, refining traffic movements, undertaking further specialist assessments and continuing consultation with agencies and neighbouring landowners.

These refinements demonstrate our willingness to listen and adapt where practical while maintaining the viability of the project.

The Hunter Region is one of Australia's fastest-growing regional economies.

Government housing targets, industrial expansion, renewable energy projects, transport infrastructure and public works will require enormous quantities of quality construction materials over coming decades.

Hard rock suitable for concrete production is not uniformly distributed throughout the region it is only available where it is formed geologically.

The proximity of supply matters.

Every additional kilometre travelled by heavy vehicles increases costs, fuel consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, road maintenance and pressure on public infrastructure.

A strategically located quarry capable of supplying high-quality construction materials close to where they are required provides benefits that extend well beyond the quarry itself.

It supports housing affordability, infrastructure delivery, employment and regional economic development.

The Environmental Impact Statement demonstrates that the proposed quarry can operate while meeting the environmental standards established by NSW legislation and regulatory agencies.

I acknowledge that some members of the community oppose the project.

I respect their right to express their views and understand that change can create uncertainty.

However, planning decisions should ultimately be based upon objective evidence rather than perception alone.

The assessment undertaken by independent specialists provides a comprehensive basis upon which the Department and the Independent Planning Commission can make an informed decision.

One aspect of this proposal that I believe is particularly relevant is the layout of the quarry has been proposed in a way that when operating it will have minimal impacts on neighbours.

My family has spent more than two decades assembling and improving these rural properties. We continue to farm the land and intend to do so into the future understanding that both agriculture and quarrying can co-exist and already does in many locations across NSW.

If I believed the quarry would irreparably damage the surrounding land, compromise its agricultural productivity or diminish the long-term value of the properties that I continue to own, I simply would not be pursuing this development.

That is not because I underestimate the challenges of quarrying, but because I have confidence in the extensive consultation with industry peers and the work, we have undertaken to design the project responsibly and to ensure that environmental impacts remain within acceptable and regulated limits.

The project has required persistence, patience and considerable investment, but at every stage our objective has remained the same—to establish a quarry that will operate safely, responsibly and transparently while providing an essential resource for future generations.

This project also represents an opportunity to create long-term skilled employment in the Hunter Region, support local contractors and businesses, strengthen regional supply chains and provide certainty of construction material supply at a time when demand is expected to continue increasing.

Importantly, nearby quarries that have served the Hunter Region for decades have finite reserves. Replacement resources cannot be identified, assessed, approved and brought into production overnight.

The planning system must continually look ahead to ensure future supply is available before existing operations become exhausted.

One of the matters that has reinforced my commitment to this project has been the level of support received from experienced participants within the quarrying industry.

Operators who understand the practical realities of extracting hard rock have recognised both the quality of the resource and its strategic importance to the region. Their encouragement has strengthened my confidence that this is a resource worthy of responsible development.

I have never viewed this project as simply obtaining a development consent.

Approval is only the beginning.

If approved, the quarry will require decades of responsible operation, compliance with stringent environmental conditions, continual monitoring, rehabilitation and ongoing engagement with the surrounding community.

I respectfully ask the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure to assess this proposal on the evidence contained within the Environmental Impact Statement, the advice of specialist agencies and the applicable planning framework.

After many years of investigation, consultation and refinement, I remain firmly of the view that the Bluestone Hardrock Quarry represents an appropriate, responsible and strategically

important development capable of delivering long-term benefits for the Hunter Region and New South Wales.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours faithfully,

Jamie Pittman

Founder and Director
Bluestone Hardrock Pty Ltd