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TO: The Director Resource Assessments, Jessie Evans

***RE: Objection to the Stone Ridge Quarry Project (SSD-10432)***

I object to the proposal for the Stone Ridge Quarry Project (SSD-10432) for several significant reasons.

I submit this letter as Co-Campaign Manager of “Save Port Stephens Koalas” and as a local resident.

The application for a hard rock quarry to be approved within the Wallaroo State Forest on Italia Rd, Balickera will see a devastating 79.2 hectares of koala habitat destroyed.

Social and environmental impacts because of this project, along with the cumulative impact of current and proposed quarries in the local area is significant. The large increase in extraction and freight, clearing of native vegetation, including threatened wildlife habitat, air quality, noise and vibration, blasting, water quality and the suitability of approving such a project in state forest is questionable.

Community members and action groups have been vocal in their objection to the application, predicting that the development will decrease local amenity, property values and business activity for tourism, hospitality and events industries, as well as increased noise, dust and toxic air pollutants. Our livelihood and the reasons why we choose to live where we live and raise our families here, are threatened by this proposal.

In 2020, Victoria Jack and I ran “Save Port Stephens Koalas”, a highly successful grass-roots environmental campaign that raised awareness of the impact of the expansion of the Brandy Hill Quarry and other developments will have on koalas and koala habitat locally and within Port Stephens. As one of the last remaining inland core koala habitat areas, it is of fundamental importance that our local koalas are protected. Our campaign was so successful that as a group and as an individual, we were nominated for local Community Awards on Australia Day.

The Brandy Hill Quarry is only a stones-throw away from the proposed Stone Ridge Quarry Project.

In the several months that we campaigned in 2020, our facebook group grew to over 5500 concerned locals, national and international members. We featured in over 220 media sources, including interviews on all major news channels, twice on The Project, breakfast and afternoon radio, multiple front-page print media, and international media articles. Our voice and concern for our local wildlife habitat was heard around the world. Our koalas were under the spotlight.

Our campaign was so successful in raising awareness of the threats of habitat destruction on our local wildlife and the rising tide of community opposition, that we garnered celebrity support and endorsement by a wide variety of actors, comedians, singers and influencers including Olivia Newton-John, Jimmy Barnes, Colin Hay and Magda Szubanski, to name just a few.

The mounting opposition and public outcry caused Sussan Ley MP, then Federal Environment Minister to delay her decision regarding the Brandy Hill Quarry expansion several times. The Minister and her key Advisors meet with our group and discussed the situation in detail. The community opposition against granting this quarry an additional licence grew so intense that the Parliamentary email system “crashed”. The server could not cope with the flood of opposing emails. Sussan Ley MP’s office was inundated with phone calls of concern.

Despite the success and breadth of our campaign, the Brandy Hill Quarry was granted approval to expand under a 30-year licence, but with significant caveats as an outcome of our local wildlife campaign. The IPC also flagged serious areas of concern and constraints with current ineffective environmental law. 52 hectares of core koala habitat has been granted approval to be cleared, but only after 74 hectares of pasture to the south of the site is rehabilitated and replanted with koala feed trees. Work can only begin on Stage 2 when these trees are of a suitable age and size. This type of restriction to work and operate is a new concept.

The community is watching. Martin’s Creek Quarry, another quarry in this local area, was recently rejected for expansion due to community opposition and environmental concerns. Stone Ridge Quarry simply should not be approved.

A recent NSW Upper House Inquiry found that, without urgent government intervention, koalas would be extinct by 2050 and “fragmentation and loss of habitat poses the most serious threat to koala populations in New South Wales”.

The Stone Ridge Quarry proposes a further unacceptable loss and degradation of core koala habitat. These are koala populations that have already suffered the devastating effects of drought, bushfires and land clearing. Enough is enough.

Port Stephens Council and the local community acknowledge koalas as an important environmental asset. Federal and State Governments recognise koalas as an endangered species.

Unfortunately Port Stephens Koala Plan of Management strategy (CKPom) is outdated and the West Ward is known to be a ‘black spot’ of up-to-date koala data amongst local experts such as Dr Ryan Witt from the University of Newcastle. This year, the research team from the University

hope to undertake extensive surveys of the area where Stone Ridge quarry is proposed. They, along with other koala experts, such as Steve Phillips, who surveyed the proposed Kings Hill development, suspect that there is a strong population of koalas within the habitat proposed to be cleared for the Stone Ridge Quarry project. The Western range has previously shown a lot of koala skat present.

Furthermore, the current Port Stephens CKPoM was prepared in June 2002 and relies on survey data from 1998. The continued use of such out of date data should not be allowed, as it does not give an accurate reflection of wildlife (koala) numbers for development applications. Out of date data hinders the Planning Department, local Council and local authorities' ability to support, protect and manage the Port Stephens Koala population.

In 2022, the koala received an endangered listing under both the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act (BC Act) and the Federal Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). Additionally, the NSW State Government also released the NSW Koala Strategy, which aims at doubling the number of Koalas in NSW by 2050.

The NSW Government has committed over \$190 million to deliver targeted conservation actions such as the development of Koala habitat maps in partnership with NSW Councils. Projects such as the Stone Ridge Quarry should not be approved whilst up to date data on koala numbers is not available.

In Summary, the Stone Ridge Quarry should not be approved for the following reasons:

- Loss of natural habitat and biodiversity and its impact on endangered species in the area, including the koala, squirrel glider and brush tailed phascogale
- Substantial increase in traffic. Resulting in increased noise, road damage and safety implications
- Loss of natural and cultural heritage
- Changes to the social amenity and fabric of our community, its character and ambience of our rural setting
- Loss of air quality and associated health concerns for residents
- Pollution of surface and ground water
- Noise vibration and dust from blasting and its impact on buildings, animals and mental health
- Cumulative impact of multiple quarries in close proximity which will grossly impact the wildlife connectivity and corridors

“Save Port Stephens Koalas” object to this proposal based on strong community opposition and the unacceptable impacts that further loss of core koala habitat will have on the remaining local populations. Our local koala population simply cannot sustain any further habitat destruction.

As my three young children continue to ask me, “The koalas need trees. Trees are their homes. Why are these rocks more important than our koalas?”.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chantal Parslow Redman', written in a cursive style.

***Chantal Parslow Redman***

*Local Resident and Co-Campaign Manager of “Save Port Stephens Koalas”*

*Member of the Port Stephens Koalas Plan of Management Committee*

*Member of Koala Koalition EcoNetwork Port Stephens and VOWW (Voice of Wallalong, Woodville and Surrounds)*