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To the NSW State Planning Department,

The Sydney Basin Koala Network (SBKN) has been established by the Total Environment Centre (TEC) and WIRES to advocate for the protection and expansion of connected, thriving koala core habitats and corridors across the Sydney Basin Bioregion, including in Port Stephens and the Hunter. We are writing to strongly object to this proposal due to its significant impact on koalas, as well as many other threatened species and endangered ecological communities. That a proposal to clearfell such a huge tract of state forest occupied by koalas is even being considered rings alarm bells for their recovery across the state.

After reviewing the Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) for this proposal we are at a loss to why the proponent is suggesting this proposal at all, given the ecological importance of this area as part of the recognised North-East fauna corridor, with evidence of endangered species thriving on the site documented within the proponents own surveys.



**Koala Sighting in 2022.** Source: Stone Ridge Quarry Habitat Suitability for Threatened Species 4158\_R08 Stone Ridge BDAR\_Final



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According to the BDAR, Koalas were present in every survey of the site over four years. Most damning, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIS) notes that: *"All Plant Community Types within the proposed Disturbance Area are considered to provide suitable habitat for the koala. The assessment indicates the Project will lead to a long-term decrease of suitable koala habitat. A population decrease may occur indirectly in association with the clearing of occupied koala habitat. Therefore, the assessment indicates the Project will likely have a significant impact on the koala..."* (pg 124)

The significant impacts on other endangered animals are also immense. Page 111 of the BDAR states that:

*The DCCEEW have identified that the Project is likely to have a significant impact on the following threatened species:*

- Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*)
- Grey-headed Flying-fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*).

*The DCCEEW have identified that the Project may have a significant impact on the following additional threatened species:*

- Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*)
- Spotted-tailed Quoll (southeastern mainland population) (*Dasyurus maculatus maculatus*)
- Yellow-bellied Glider (south-eastern) (*Petaurus australis australis*)
- New Holland Mouse (*Pseudomys novaehollandiae*)
- South-eastern Glossy Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami lathami*).

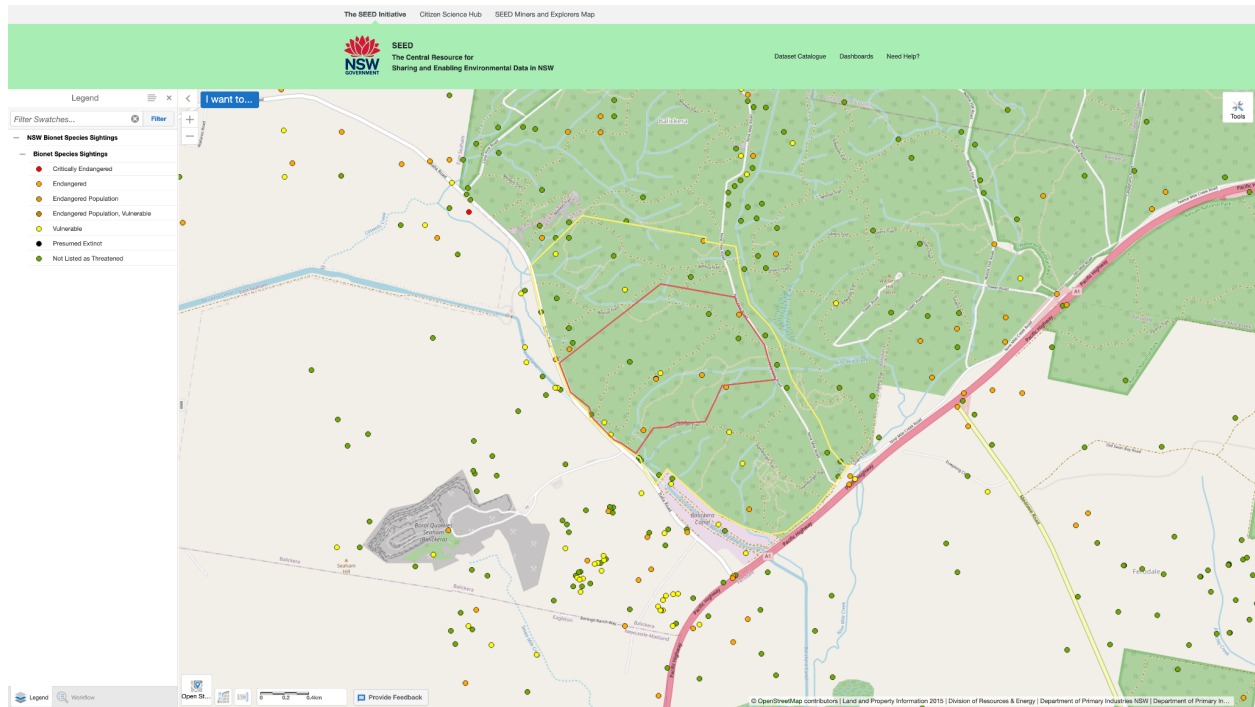
These significant impacts on so many iconic endangered species do not have a social license, and development within such an important wildlife corridor will have enormous cumulative impacts that can never be adequately offset.

The indirect impacts of this proposal are also unacceptable, especially to a koala population already vulnerable to disease. The ear splitting noise, choking dust, and explosive vibrations are almost certain to create an unhealthy amount of stress in already displaced koalas. Researchers have found a direct link between anthropogenic stress and disease in koalas (Narayan, 2019), and we would expect this to result in a further decline of the remaining colony in the Wallaroo State Forest. The increased risk of car strikes within such an ecologically sensitive area is also an obvious impact which has not been adequately addressed.



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*Endangered animal sightings in and around the quarry site. Source: NSW SEED Map & Bionet*

The serious and cumulative impacts of this proposal have not been thought through. It is a disaster for koalas. The 30 year time frame guarantees that a nationally significant koala colony will lose another strategically crucial area to recover from their endangered status. With other quarry expansions already approved in the area, the significant impacts are unjustifiable and should not proceed.

Yours sincerely,  
Stephanie Carrick  
Manager, Sydney Basin Koala Network.

### References:

Narayan, E. Physiological stress levels in wild koala sub-populations facing anthropogenic induced environmental trauma and disease. *Sci Rep* 9, 6031 (2019).  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-42448-8>