

Proposed Stone Ridge Quarry Project

Application Number: SSD-10432

EPBC ID Number: 2022/09368

I am making a submission against this proposed project.

This project is proposed for an area within a State Forest, a valuable natural resource that has been, and should continue to be, put aside for the use and enjoyment of everyone, not to be destroyed for the benefit of a few.

Figure 4.1 – Land Zoning

This map shows those areas that are zoned for agricultural use (RU1), rural landscape (RU2), and RU3 being Forestry. Here, I note a definition of ‘forestry’ is: the science and craft of creating, managing, playing, using, conserving and repairing forests, woodlands, and associated resources for human and environmental benefits’. It does NOT include the destruction of these resources.

I also note that RU2 – rural landscape – is ‘an open swath of land that has few homes or other buildings, and not very many people’. And ‘the rural landscape supports biodiversity and has a unique ecosystem’. Unfortunately, Mt Seaham quarry has been allowed to be developed on land classified as RU2.

And RU1 is ‘primarily intended to promote agricultural production and environmental protection’.

My Community and Stakeholder Concerns –

None of these above definitions promotes the development of quarries within these areas. I would challenge the project developers to show how they can enhance the environment and the wider community by developing a quarry within a State Forest.

First and foremost there has been a failure to engage the wider communities of East Seaham, Eagleton and the township of Seaham, as very few residents and/or businesses have been notified of this proposal. The target area is only a radius of 2000m from the quarry, and this does not include many other residents and businesses that will be severely impacted by this project.

I refer to the **Scoping Report, ‘Land Context Use’ page 5** and note that “*small pockets of rural residential development are located approximately 2-5 km to the west of East Seaham*”. The research is incorrect, as I alone own a large scale beef cattle enterprise at East Seaham, running around 800 cows – this is not small scale, it is my livelihood and shows complete disregard and lack of understanding of the communities within 5kms of the proposed project. My business alone employs 8 people from the local community. I refer here to the **‘Umwelt Report’ page 34** and question how they can guarantee that 31 jobs will be created for the local community, and that they will employ persons only from the local community?

Page 23 – Stakeholder Consultation – here they talk about ‘genuine partnerships’, engagement etc, yet they have effectively excluded everyone outside their 2km radius – how was the 2km radius determined in the first place? **Figure 5.1 – Location of Residences for Preliminary Community Consultation** – this map identifies only 3 residences outside the 2km radius – there are many more not highlighted, particularly along Italia Road.

I am extremely disappointed in the complete disregard of the community in their 'Stakeholder Engagement Strategy' – this was, quite obviously, a 'strategy' that suited their proposal, by only including those within their 2km radius, and I also note that the businesses does not include others in very close proximity – ie myself.

I also refer to **page 25** and cite *"Provision of feedback to near neighbours and key stakeholders on the outcomes of the issues raised in the scoping phase"* and ask who these 'near neighbours and key stakeholders' are who will be informed?? I find that this is discriminatory, and I am sure will exclude many who are 'near neighbours' and would be 'key stakeholders'.

My Environmental Concerns –

I have major environmental concerns as listed below:

- Displacement and/or destruction of existing flora and fauna. Loss of koala (endangered species) habitat, along with other fauna habitats that cannot be replaced.
- Water quality is a major concern, as this proposed project is adjacent to the Balickera Channel – a major water supply to Newcastle and beyond. Caswell 's Creek also falls in this area – this creek runs into the Balickera Channel and then across my farm. Dust pollution not only affects water quality in the Balickera Channel, but also on my farm, as well as domestic water supplies from water tanks. I would also have concerns about the Balickera Tunnel that runs below the proposed entry to the quarry – with the amount of traffic anticipated, I cannot see how they can guarantee the integrity of this channel. Blast fumes and diesel exhaust fumes are also cause for concern with regards to air quality, but the risk of spills should also be accounted for, as this could be detrimental to water quality, particularly if not contained and dealt with in a timely and proper manner. **Page number 38 – 6.3.5** states that the proposed project area contains highly dispersive soils, yet it is also stated that further detailed soil surveys are not considered necessary to inform topsoil management practices – I find this statement to be contradictory, and showing disregard for environmental impacts.
- Weed control – introduction of weeds through vehicle movements is a major biosecurity concern. As this is a major domestic water catchment area, weed control is a very large problem, as the weeds can spread rapidly via wind, water and feral animals, and indiscriminate or uncontrolled spraying within a catchment area is not acceptable.
- Feral animals – failure to control and/or eradicate feral animals would mean these would push them onto private lands, again, creating both a biosecurity issue and/or putting domestic animals and landholders at risk of injury or death. Control is absolutely paramount, and again, this is a major water catchment area.
- I have concerns about ground vibration and overpressure as a result of blasting, as, if the blasts are not properly designed and controlled, then neighbouring properties have the potential of significant damage – this is irreversible. I am requesting access to the blast impact assessment.

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Other Concerns –

I have major concerns about the impact on the local roads, as well as access to the Pacific Highway, that the number of truck movements per day (estimated at a possible 1000/day), will put a major burden on these roads, and this doesn't include vehicles that currently enter/exit Mt Seaham quarry.

How can they guarantee that no trucks will turn right out of this proposed project? Italia Road is also a school bus route, and this volume of trucks will have a very big impact on the safety of school buses travelling this road. I have major concerns that there is the possibility of accidents, not just on Italia Road, but also entering to/from the Pacific Highway.

This proposed project will severely impact on the ability of the wider community to have quiet enjoyment of their properties, due to the long hours of operation, noise production and the volume of traffic that has been projected. This project will also have a significant impact on property rights and property values. While I do understand there are some economic benefits, there is also the consideration if these benefits will be advantageous to the wider local community, or will the issues that have been raised outweigh these benefits? I believe all the issues raised are far greater than the economic benefits, as the local communities will not directly benefit in the long term, particularly as the proposed project area will destroy part of a State Forest, and the residual effect of this project will create long term negative effects, not only the environment, but also on the community as a whole.

Page 14 – Umwelt Report

Sustainable Livelihoods Approach – the entire quote from the guidance sheets should be noted here – *“A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base.”* Leaving out the first part is disrespectful to the intelligence of the community, as this proposed project would take away or restrict a vast majority of the *“capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living.”*

Page 15 – Umwelt Report

I understand there is the need to source natural resources, but consideration must also be given to those other resources that help to feed the country! In many cases, these farms have been successfully operating for many years, and sustainable agriculture is one of our primary means of existence. **Umwelt Figure 3.2** shows four Study Locality areas, yet only those within the 2km radius were actually approached – again I find this totally disrespectful and shows complete disregard for the community. The township of Seaham should also have been included in this consultation process.

Page 35 – Umwelt Report

As a resident of East Seaham since 1971 (52 years) I take offence at not being included. I have been involved in the agriculture sector for that entire time, yet have been excluded from this consultation, which I find completely offensive and disrespectful.

Page 47 – Umwelt Report

I totally agree with the community comment about the experience not being transparent – it is far from it.

Page 48 – Umwelt Report

There are concerns expressed from residents about land management, or lack thereof, and also the very possible risks of fire. If there were to be a fire that started as a result of work in this project, then this would have a major impact on not only residents, but also surrounding areas, as well as the water quality in both the Balickera Channel and Grahamstown Dam from ash fallout.

Conclusion

- The Scoping Report document is lengthy and very repetitive, which makes it difficult for the lay person to read and understand – is this deliberate?
- I believe the entire consultation process was completely flawed, and weighted heavily towards approaching only those who would support this proposed project.
- There needs to be community meetings that include all those parties who have an interest in the relevance of this proposal and the impact on the wider community.
- I also understand that there is a Community Consultative Committee, and that this committee is not accepting any other members, minutes are not available for the community to read, and the meetings are closed meetings. How was this committee established, and who decided who would be members of this committee? How can this be a 'Community Consultative' committee? I question the legitimacy of this committee, particularly if decisions are made that affect the wider community, when there is not inclusive community involvement.