

# **SUTTON FOREST SAND QUARRY**

## **REVISED DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION SSD-6334**

### **Issue**

#### **Objection to the proposed Sutton Forest Sand Quarry**

### **Background**

I am a resident of Moss Vale in the Southern Highlands. The proposed sand quarry at Sutton Forest is not far from the town in which I live. I wish to object to this development application.

I believe the proponent's application is disingenuous. It was raised 5 years ago and resulted in much community rebuttal of its claims. The application remains much the same as it was in 2018.

Assessment reports are outdated (2018) and the information and future projections are incorrect.

The application ignores the fact that the quarry abuts (and will therefore negatively impact upon) adjacent residential and religious properties including the Shine of Our Lady of Mercy, Penrose Park (ministered by the Pauline Brothers).

The proponent ignores the fact that the proposed quarry will mean noise, vibrations and dust that will carry beyond the site of the proposed quarry.

The proponent ignores the serious health risks to residents from inhaling airborne dust and sand/silica particles over time, resulting in silicosis.

The proponent also ignores the fact that silica dust from the proposed quarry will end up on residents' roofs then move into their water tanks (they are not connected to town water).

The proponent ignores the fact that sand/silica particles will find their way into the region's creeks and rivers that form part of the Sydney Water Catchment Area, due to the Highland's high winds. Local residents as well as the region's agriculture (including vineyards, horse studs and cattle farms) will be negatively impacted. The region's valuable age-tourism business will also be negatively affected.

The proponent ignores the fact that the proposed quarry will destroy habitat, in particular a most fragile point of the Great Western Wildlife Corridor, a region noted for its biodiversity and the Long Swamp ecosystem, which is a threatened ecosystem.

The Southern Highlands is a regional and semi rural community where clean air and water and green space is valued. People move to and live in the Highlands because of these features, its rural character and beauty of its native bushland.

The proponent has little interest in the natural environment of the Highlands or in the health and wellbeing of its community. The proponent sees the Southern Highlands as a place where it can pollute the air, land and water to the detriment of not only the natural environment and native wildlife but also residents' quality of life and as well as the livelihoods of local businesses, primary producers and those in associated agri-tourism businesses.

**The proposed sand quarry should not be approved;** it would not only affect natural habitat but destroy residents' health, residents' livelihoods and residents' lives. The proposal's impact will be felt further afield than just the Sutton Forest area.

## **Comment**

### **Out of Date Assessments and Reports**

The Traffic Report is dated February 2018. Its claims of existing traffic conditions traffic counts (undertaken in 2016) and road crashes (between 1 July 2010 and 30 June 2015) are redundant. It does not take into account the increase in population in the Highlands and to the south due to COVID 19, when many people left Sydney and settled in the regions knowing that they could work remotely.

This increase in population is also evident in the increased volume of traffic travelling north and south along the Hume Motorway. This increase in traffic volume also includes an increase in the number of 'car trips' and 'car/caravan holidays' undertaken by a variety of travellers since COVID.

These sections of the traffic report have no value.

It would have been appropriate for the proponent to have an updated traffic report prepared. This negligence on the part of the proponent indicates lack of respect for the process as well for those residents whose lives will be impacted by the proposal and government officers who have to provide accurate information as part of the overall assessment the proposal.

That being said, the report indicates the number of vehicles movements per day, for example at full production there would be at least 234 two way trips, including 178 two way heavy vehicles.

Construction of the proposed sand quarry would occur over (possibly) 12 months; processing and product despatch would be a 24 hour, 7 days a week operation.

There is the issue of heavy vehicle safety as trucks enter and leave the site via the Hume Motorway.

These issues will have a negative impact upon those who live and work in the vicinity of the proposed quarry as well as motorists travelling upon the Hume Motorway.

There is also the issue of how heavy vehicles are to access the site during construction, given that the proponent seeks Roads and Maritime Services to build an interchange to access the site, namely south bound off ramp and deceleration lane, a single lane bridge over the Hume Highway and a northbound ramp and acceleration lane. Questions for this include: funding? Design process? Approval process? Construction? Timeframe?

The conclusion of the traffic report includes:

*'The assessment has found that the road and traffic impacts of the proposal from Proposal general traffic are considered to be relatively minor.'* The opposite will be the case, both for motorists travelling along the Hume Motorway as well as for local residents, workers and visitors to the area.

### **Local Properties Impacted by the Proposed Sand Quarry**

The proposed quarry will sit alongside at least five residential properties all of which will be negatively impacted by the proposal.

The proposal will mean noise, vibrations and dust during construction (6am through to 10pm), full operation (5am-10pm) and processing and product despatch (24 hours and day, 7 days a week) for residents in the area, who currently enjoy the peace and quiet of a life in a rural setting. These residents also have livestock, crops and orchards of varying types on site. A sand quarry located next door to them will have a marked effect upon their lifestyle and work and the quality and quantity of their agriculture.

The proposed sand quarry will also affect the adjoining Shrine of our Lady of Mercy, Penrose Park (ministered by the Pauline Brothers). **The quarry will be located right behind the grotto.** The Shrine is a renowned place of worship and serves the Catholic Church in Australia. It is a place of prayer, quiet meditation and contemplation and spiritual enrichment for pilgrims of many nationalities. The Pauline Brothers celebrate Holy Mass and Confession, as well as devotional practices and preaching. The Shrine serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration to the many people who visit.

The Shrine also houses many International Chapels, built at substantial cost and maintained by groups and individuals representing many nationalities. The chapels are a great feature of the Shrine property and have themselves become the focus of pilgrimage for many visitors.

The Shrine hosts several religious events when many pilgrims visit the Shrine. Particularly popular is the Fatima Day devotions, held on the 13th of every month, which sometimes draws crowds of over a thousand pilgrims to the Shrine.

Many visitors to the Shrine are from out of area. They contribute to the local economy through their overnights stays in local accommodation and through their purchases in local shops and cafes.

The Shrine's tranquility and air of peaceful meditation for the Pauline Brothers and the many visitors to the Shrine property would be shattered by the sand quarry's 24 hour 7 days a week operations - noise, vibrations, truck movements, light and dust. Shrine visitor spend in the local area, therefore contributing to the local economy would also plummet.

### **Airborne Sand and Dust**

The proposed sand quarry poses serious health risks to not only local residents but to residents across the Southern Highlands. The mining, processing and transportation of silica rock will result in airborne silica dust and particles moving across the region. Residents (as well as livestock and native wildlife) will inhale the particles. The particles will fall into local dams, creeks and rivers, into residents' water tanks (they are not connected to town water) and into the river catchment system.

Residents of the Highlands will inhale the silica particles. Silicosis develops by inhaling silica dust over time. Inflammation and scarring of the lungs develops with fatal results. The presence of a sand quarry in the Southern Highlands is a source of real fear for me and many others across the community. The sand particles will become airborne and move around and across the region due to the almost constant high winds we experience. It will impact upon our health and wellbeing and that of our animals and native wildlife. It will destroy lives, destroy local agriculture and agri-tourism as well as the Highlands' vibrant visitor economy. Who wants to visit and stay in an area where the air is contaminated by silica dust?

This will also affect workers at the proposed quarry as they will also be exposed to silica dust.

Silica particles released from the sand quarry will also fall into and contaminate local creeks and dams and move into the Wingecarribee River, part of the Sydney Water Catchment Area.

Silicosis has appeared in recent national media and the number of people affected is believed to be currently under reported. Symptoms may take years to develop. It is noted that the proposed life of the sand quarry is 30 years.

Should the sand quarry be approved and should local residents be diagnosed with silicosis - with a link to the sand quarry - who is accountable? Where does liability sit? With the owners and operators of the sand quarry or the State Government for approving it?

### **Destruction of Habitat**

The proposed sand quarry will destroy beautiful bushland, habitat to native wildlife and flora and a source of enjoyment to many.

The proposed sand quarry will impact upon the **Great Western Wildlife Corridor**, (GWWC), a key corridor in the Great Eastern Ranges located between Bullio and Bungonia, linking the southern Blue Mountains with Morton National Park. In the

Southern Highlands it includes High Range (behind Berrima and Mittagong to the north) and moves through to Wingello in the south and Canyonleigh to the west. **The proposed sand quarry is located within the Corridor.**

The GWWC has been mapped as a core, regional corridor within the *Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan* (via Wingecarribee Shire Council) and is critical for connectivity conservation as many **threatened species including the Koala, Regent Honeyeater, Glossy Black-Cockatoo** and other important ecological species such as emus utilise this corridor.

Fragmentation through land clearing is an ongoing risk to the Corridor and its biodiversity. **Sutton Forest, Paddys River**, Wingello and High Range localities are where the GWWC is narrowest and highly fragmented and where conservation efforts are needed most. The proponent wants to clear native bushland for the quarry which would mean more of the Corridor would be destroyed, in turn meaning more loss of habitat for endangered native wildlife.

**The Long Swamp at Sutton Forest** is a precious and fertile piece of land which is home to native wildlife and is a source of secure food and water. It is fed from springs in the surrounding hillsides.

**Platypus sightings have been recorded here** as well as at other local waterways: Paddy's River (Bundanoon) and Black Bob's Creek at nearby Exeter.

**The Platypus is under threat.** The effects of a sand mining operation at the eastern end of the Long Swamp with its land clearing, impact upon water quality, water extraction and associated pollution, dust contamination and disturbances from vehicles would result in the destruction of this area and devastation for the platypus and other wildlife in this area.

### **Destruction of the Beauty of the Southern Highlands**

People move to and live in the Highlands because of its clean air and waterways, its natural environment and its rural characteristics. Residents value the natural bushland and native wildlife. Wingecarribee Shire Council and residents band together on many wildlife conservation projects..

I like many others across the Highlands moved from Sydney to escape heavy traffic and its pollution (in my case, the West Connex), heavy construction and to enjoy a quieter lifestyle with access to more green space.

The proposed development will destroy the unique nature of the Southern Highlands and will denigrate its rural character and natural environment.

The proposal, if approved will prove the ruination of this beautiful part of New South Wales.

**The proposed Sutton Forest Sand Quarry should not be approved.** It will have negative impacts upon Sutton Forest and the wider community: pollution, dust, noise, vibrations, toxicity, possible silicosis - and traffic impacts. The proposed quarry will border people's homes and a much visited religious shrine. Its 24 hour, 7 days a week operation will ruin people's lives and amenity. It will destroy habitat in its construction and operation. The entire region will be negatively impacted. The area's high winds that occur for much of the year will cause silica particles and dust to travel and contaminate the land and water for residents, agricultural producers and wildlife. The pollutants will affect the Wingecarribee River, part of the Sydney Water Catchment Area.

The proposed sand quarry would quite simply destroy residents' health, residents' livelihoods and residents' lives; and cause great impact upon the region's threatened native wildlife.

I cannot understand how the NSW State Government promotes local tourism via Destination NSW/Destination Southern Highlands and on the other hand would deliberately destroy that industry (and livelihoods) through the approval of inappropriate and totally unsuitable industry in the same area.

**The Development Application for the proposed Sutton Forest Sand Quarry must be rejected.**

Yours sincerely

Sandra Jones  
30 November 2023