

An Open Letter to the Prime Minister, Federal Opposition Leader, NSW Premier and NSW Opposition Leader

This Statement of Concern addresses the proposed sand mine in Sutton Forest, NSW ([Application Number – SSD-6334](#)). The mine, which lies in the Commonwealth protected Great Western Wildlife Corridor, is expected to reach a depth of 60 metres over 45 years and will be the size of 60+ football fields.

The mine will extract and process friable sandstone, which has lain dormant for 225 million years, removing 29 million tonnes of processed sand at a rate of 1.15 million tonnes per year. It is expected to operate up to 24 hours a day, creating only 20 full-time jobs, with no more than 50 contractors during the construction phase.

The mine will lie in a critical area of the Great Western Wildlife Corridor – the only native habitat from the Blue Mountains to Morton National Park. One hundred and ninety-five native flora and 26 exotic species live in the Corridor, including nine threatened species – the powerful owl, gang gang cockatoo, glossy black cockatoo, scarlet robin, varied sittella, squirrel glider, eastern bentwing bat, greater broad-nosed bat and large-eared pied bat. The threatened plants are the Dwarf Phyllota and Paddy's River Swamp Gum.

The Corridor was established to facilitate the interaction of endangered animals in their native habitat. However, the mine will clear and narrow the Corridor to 500 metres in parts, threatening the fragile ecosystem.

Creeks and swamps will be disturbed by the mine, leading to eroded materials entering and polluting waterways – waterways that are the lifeblood of this fragile ecosystem and Sydney's water supply, which supports an increasing population of more than 5 million people. These waterways are already under pressure from irreversible damage caused by a decommissioned colliery, and additional coal and sand mining proposals in the region. In an area that faces intense rainfall, this sand mine and the proposed coal mine pose substantial and unquantified public health risks.

The mine could expose the surrounding community to excessive light, noise and vibration; increased traffic and transport; damage significant cultural and heritage sites; force residents from their properties; increase the risk of depression and other mental health issues; and damage socio-economic prospects of the region, including the continual growth and investment in agriculture, employment and tourism.

We are extremely concerned the proposed mine will significantly reduce air quality, exposing the community to silica dust (respirable crystalline silica). Exposure to silica dust can lead to the development of silicosis (an irreversible scarring and stiffening of the lungs) and other health issues. This is of particular concern, especially with a second sand mine just 4km from the proposed site. The sand mine has been proposed by Sutton Forest Quarries Pty Ltd, a private company established as a joint venture partnership between the Tulla Resources Group Pty Ltd and Mr Patrick Hallinan. We ask that the NSW and Federal Governments hear our concerns and opposition to the proposed sand mine. Together, we will prevent further irreversible damage to the Southern Highlands and Great Western Wildlife Corridor.

Signed

Leo Treacy - leo.treacy@sydstu.catholic.edu.au

Melissa Smith - mel.a.smith@outlook.com

Dawn Jonas - djonas1@westnet.com.au

Victoria Neill-Manning - victoriasharp108@icloud.com