

Robyn McMahon

28 Irrawang St

Raymond Terrace

NSW 2324

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Email:dogcalledmidge@bigpond.com

To whom it may concern,

I wish to express my opposition to the proposed Williamtown Sand Mining development for the following reasons:

The area and residents of Williamtown are already under considerable stress with the contamination situation from the RAAF Base; having already had their livelihoods threatened, their homes massively devalued and their land made useless for any kind of farming the proposed sand mine will impact on these same residents who are currently trying to cope with the impacts of toxic contamination. Their quality of life is already under enough pressure without adding the effects of water, dust, noise and land clearing that this development will create.

There appears to be little or no consideration given to indigenous cultural issues despite there being evidence of previous habitation by the Worimi Peoples in several adjacent areas. A living environment which culturally connects the land to their cultural identity why would this land be the exception? Clearly it would not. What use is acknowledgment of the first inhabitants when destruction of their heritage is permissible?

Further, since as few as 200 koalas are thought to remain in the area where the development eats into bushland, if the proposed fifty hectares of Williamtown bushland are bulldozed should the plans for the sand mine be approved, it will surely decimate important koala habitat. It is well known that shrinking habitat in Port Stephens is one of the key causes of decline for the koala population which is now at a tipping point.

The Council has already admitted that its koala population is "under threat from human settlement and agricultural activities", and points to its koala plan of management – adopted in 2002 and 95per cent implemented – which makes koala habitat a part of any development application. Is this really the case or perhaps it is just as has been suggested not a tool to protect the koalas, but a box to tick.

If as the Council says its "role" is to "ensure we manage the balance between our natural resources right across the LGA and ongoing community development", then surely Tourism is dependent on those natural resources being preserved with the future in mind not development with callous disregard to whomever is left in the wake of the profiteering few.

Sincerely,

Robyn McMahon