

My name is Rhianna Gorfine and I along with my family own and lives at 350 cabbage Tree Road, Williamtown. A property that has become our castle and a house that has become our home. It is a place of happiness as our children grow and memories are created.

This is my submission against the proposed development of a sand mine/quarry at 398 Cabbage Tree Road, Williamtown. A proposal that is to be an operational sand mine 20 meters from our boundary fence and 100 meters from our home.

As a little girl I moved around between England and Australia and lived in many houses, I was determined that the house I bought was to be my forever home for my family. From the age of 14 I lived in the Hills District of Sydney, where I was lucky enough to be surrounded by my love of horses and finally own one of my own. Through hard work, determination and various after school jobs, I could finally afford to have a horse, my old thoroughbred 'Boy'. It was from this time on that I was determined to own my own five acres, to create a home to be called 'Tenmoku Park'.

After meeting Cain, plans changed slightly and I moved up to Newcastle, but my dream had not waned, in fact we stumbled across our now property for sale. It had everything we needed and wanted, 7 acres, large house, granny flat, huge shed, paddocks, only one side flanked by a neighbour and very importantly acreage located close by to my step son's mother and future school. This was essential as we have a week about arrangement . In fact the property was so right for us that we waited 3 agonising months in limbo for the vendor to exchange the contracts. Very quickly the dream was soon to become a reality and on 13 October 2009 we took possession and moved in. The family grew a little girl Bronte in 2011 and Ryan in 2014.

Almost a year ago on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015, we had two men visit our property about 10am, fortunately my husband Cain was just leaving for work and could greet these men. They introduced themselves to us as Murry and (can't remember the other man's name) who worked for Castle Quarry Products. Neither representative had identification or a business card. They had called in to advise that a sand mine would be going to be set up next door to us. Both my husband and I were in shock and upset by this information. Prior to moving into this property, we had done out due diligence. We were advised that the bush surrounding our property was conservation land, preferred koala habitat and wouldn't be touched.

During this visit we were advised by our visitors that we didn't need to do anything until the proposal went on exhibition and it's not until that time that the community can have their say. When I was visibly upset and angry about the close proximity of the mine, Murry in words to the effect advised that he "didn't blame me for getting upset, that he wouldn't want a sand mine next to him either."

It's hard to explain what you go through, what you feel, when you home is under threat. When the quality of life you enjoy could be thrown away, when your family's health could be put at risk and when our local environment can be desecrated. This shadow that had overhung our community for most of 2015 was to get worse, on December 4, the development application was put on exhibition. The possibility of a sand mine next door was a very real possibility...

Following the visit by Castle Quarry Product or CQP some very interesting information came to light, the highly questionable tender process through Port Stephens Council, the history of CQP and their

other sand mine operations, the questionable lease transfer requests. Not one but two requests. If I was to write it all down I would be here till next month. I'm going to rely on past correspondence to the Department of Planning, Minister Stokes office, ICAC and Minister Toole and face to face meetings with the Department to cover this. The role of my submission is to outline how this proposal will affect me, my family and why it should not go ahead.

Following discussions with neighbours, passion and a lot of hard work – Williamstown and Surrounds Residents Action Group Inc. was established. If this inappropriate proposal was to progress through the stages, we were going to make sure that we, as a community would do all that we could to stop it. Our initial meeting attracted more than 100 residents, only 11 people put up their hand as to have had a visit by CQP. Extremely poor given that 500 meters either side of the mine entrance are 25 homes. During the meeting, the audience was asked if there was anyone in attendance from CQP or related companies. It was only when we were notified by a local councillor that it became apparent that Umwelt were there and hadn't identified themselves.

WSRAG grew, our committee was active, we made incredible contacts and we kept going to make sure that every area was covered, we were going to be ready for if and when the EIS was to be released.

On September 4 last year, shocking news broke of the Williamstown RAAF PFOS/PFOA contamination. This in itself has brought more incredible stress and concern for the broader community and residents living in and near the Red Zone. Toxic chemicals had leached into the water ways and the aquifer – the Tomago sandbeds. Really has this really happened? We have a huge asset underneath us, a water source that can supply Newcastle with up to 25% of its water supply, a water source that has been shipped down to the Central Coast in drought. How can we allow this to have happened? How could council and planning even consider more development over the aquifer?

Cain and I have sat on the Community Reference Group panel set up by the Department of Premier and Cabinet. We have put the community first and represented them to the Premier, the Senate Inquiry and also in Canberra. We have acted as a conduit of information between the agencies and the community. WSRAG Inc is now protecting the environment from several threats.

Throughout it all even through the lowest of lows, the stress, time away from family, the tears as I feed my horses and look up to the beautiful back bushland that might be shipped away. I have tried to take the positive out of the situation. The community spirit is fantastic; the support of neighbours in times of adversity and the new found friendships. Because at the end of the day, I am not going to let a sand mine define me. We have and we will continue to use this situation to grow and learn, and use our actions to teach our children about standing up for what you believe in and doing what is right!!

I feel that it is important for the assessing panel to understand what my family and I have gone through and how this whole process has affected us before I outline my issues with the proposal and the incredible poorly written EIS.

This inappropriate proposal should be knocked back on many levels, the land in question is close to neighbours, is koala preferred habitat, on top of the tomago sandbeds and boarders conservation land.

Personal affects:

This proposal is set to be 20 meters from my boundary, 100 meters from our home. This poses a loss to our quality of life and enjoyment of our home and our property. My children are deeply concerned about the proposal, losing the bush backdrop and the effects that it will have on our use and enjoyment of that part close to the site.

In the EIS it was stated that we are to fill out and keep a diary with any issues we have, this is entirely unacceptable, why should the onus be on us to keep the proponents on track. The social impacts study is flawed and unethical, most of the content came from our first community where Umwelt negated to advise they were in attendance. They have also taken the feedback collated at the meeting on butchers paper and used it in the EIS. This is unacceptable and unethical.

The whole process has caused undue stress on our family and the potential for further stress and effects on our family have not been truly identified in the report. Why should we have our lives totally ruined for the profits of a few individuals? I understand that we need resources; however this needs to be carried out in appropriate locations in a sustainable fashion. We need to ensure our communities and environments to be protected.

The EIS seems to have glossed over the aboriginal significance of the site; we know that these dunes that they want to mine are the original sand dunes from 10000 years ago. These areas will certainly have cultural significance. After discussing this site with an Aboriginal local, it is very apparent that he felt a spiritual connection, when he visited the site.

This proposal will have a greater impact on our use of the local area; the increase in trucks will make the road more dangerous. At present it is already dangerous, given the 90km an hour speed limit and the locations of the broken white lines. Vehicles can overtake in certain stretches of the road, if this occurs while a resident is waiting to turn into their property, there is no escape route. At our property we have two entrances to enable us to have as much choice as possible when entering our driveway. Numerous times there have been near misses for us and neighbours. Twice my husband has had to do an emergency escape onto the verge on the other side of the road to stop a truck slamming up the back of our car. This is very scary especially when we have three young children in the car.

The proposed access and exit lane will cause further issues and dangers with residents coming home and leaving their properties. I am incredibly concerned about the acceleration lane as it will end right in the middle of the frontage of our property. This poses the questions how will this enable a safe leaving and coming home to our property. It is already a limited view of the traffic coming from the west. Drivers will inevitably speed up to get past the truck in turn causing further danger to the situation and residents.

The proposed slow down, speed up lane for the entrance of the mine. This will cause an increase in noise with the trucks slowing down and speeding up from 5am in the morning. We already deal with trucks using exhaust breaks at all hours of the day including the middle of the night. I am extremely

concerned about the increase in trucks both on a safety and noise level. Not to mention the increase in diesel pollutants as the truck accelerates past our property. Diesel pollutants are a known carcinogen and can exacerbate respiratory problems.

On our property we have four horses, two Pure breed Arabian show horses, an Arabian Pony show horse and a Shetland pony. I am concerned about the general operation of the mine upon my horses due to the close proximity to their paddocks. Horses are intuitive animals that can also get stressed with changes to their environment. This in turn could result in stomach ulcers or colic. Silica dust is a known threat to humans; however it can also cause health issues with livestock too. Livestock tend to suffer with autoimmune diseases rather than respiratory.

We have several members of our family with respiratory problems, asthma and chronic cough. Among all of my concerns this is my main concern regarding the proposal. Silica dust is a class 1 carcinogen causing silicosis if inhaled. We know that the workplace is monitored and employees with wear protective gear. What about the local residents, I do not want to turn around down the track and my children have being affected by breathing in silica dust. We as a society do not know enough about the effects of fugitive dust on the community. We do know that there is evidence coming from the USA and the sand fracking mines that the local communities are being more and more affected. We need to make sure that there is adequate monitoring of the air quality. We also are requesting that the site is removed to at least 500 meters away from local residents.

The proponent has advised that they are going to use a vortex air separator to split the sand, the concern around this equipment is that we don't know enough about it. What are its capabilities, how loud will it be and what levels of fugitive dust will it cause. Again too many un knowns.

#### Economic:

The mine will employ up to six people and pay royalties back to Port Stephens Council. The royalties are expected to be around 20 million dollars over the life of the mine. In real terms, it is not much money for the council over such a long period of time. It would seem to be more a case of lining a few people's pockets at the cost of the community and their environment. On the flip side of the royalties, how much will council have to spend to maintain the roads with all of the extra truck movements on the local roads used the transport the sand? It is a known fact that Cabbage Tree Road and its current state struggle to keep up with the current traffic and large loads. A key example of this is about 2km towards Nelson Bay Road, on the bend the road has buckled from the trucks, causing an uneven unsafe surface. Every time I drive that corner, I drive out to the left over the boarder white line to miss the buckled lumps as these deformations cause your car to feel unstable. This is only exacerbated in adverse driving conditions. I would also like to note too that even when driving as you pass a sand truck, a sheet of dust and particles hit your car, it is not only fugitive dust for local residents but also other community members using the roads.

There is a huge unknown with what impacts the mine will have on the value of our homes in the area. This is not fair on any of the residents, we have all worked hard to own our properties and create a home in this hamlet, called Williamtown.

#### Environment:

It's incredibly sad that the leaders of our country and members of all levels of Government do not appreciate and see the value in our environment. I think that it is too easily forgotten that we rely on trees to live. It is also very sad to know that the koala populations in Australia are under threat in many locations. Having English background, I know all too well that the koala forms part of our national identity and tourism culture. It is reported that there are as little as 200 koala left of the Port Stephens population. 10 within the site in question, what value can you place on a national icon?

In conclusion, I have shared with the Department of Planning through my submission, the background as to why we live where we do and how incredibly hard we have worked to achieve what we have and the home we live in. My previous year has been dedicated to our community and the environment, I have tried to limit the exposure to my children, however at times I have felt that I have been working full time and not enjoying my maternity leave. I haven't delved into the scientific side of things or provided reports in this submission; these will be included in our WSRAG Inc Submission. The role of this submission is to convey my personal thoughts, feelings and experience's with this whole situation. I will attach a copy of the presentation that I did to both the Department of Planning and Minister Stokes office. It's a simple explanation of all of the issues surrounds this inappropriate proposal.

I thank you for taking the time to read my submission and hope that you take all of these areas into consideration. I ask that the Department of Planning reject the proposal as quite simply it is in an inappropriate location even before the Red Zone existed. If the proposal is to progress then I ask that you amend the location of the mine and change the boundaries so that all residents are at least 500 meters from any mine operations. We request proper air quality monitoring and a change to the hours of operation. Each resident chose to live here for a reason, we live on acreage and have the right to enjoy our properties. There are too many unknowns in the area that have the very real potential of negatively affecting the residents and the environment. It is not acceptable to have a suck it and see approach. We need to act and we need to act to protect what is most important, our children, our environment and our water source. This proposal needs to be knocked back