

Submission: Martins Creek Quarry Project

I live on Tocal Rd, Bolwarra Heights and I'm one of many residents directly affected by Martin's Creek Quarry operations.

I'm writing to express my opposition to Daracon's development application to clear 37 ha of vegetation, increase the quarry output to 1.5 million tonnes per year, extend the hours of operation and increase number of trucks on our local roads.

What Daracon is proposing is not compatible with the location of the quarry and its close proximity to historical villages and townships and recreational and tourist activities associated with these settlements. It's in a striking contrast to community expectations and its right to peaceful life, uninterrupted sleep, safety on the roads and clean air and water.

In my view operations of the quarry should be scaled down, clearly defined, regulated and monitored for breaches.

As a resident living on the main haulage route for the quarry trucks I'm very concerned about the following issues:

Noise

Noise from truck travelling on Tocal Rd starts about 5 am, sometimes as early as 4:30 am. We had all our windows replaced to double-glazed, but it didn't help. The noise is relentless. It's impossible to open windows or sit in the garden during the quarry business hours. This has an extremely negative impact on our quality of life and wellbeing.

Road Safety

The trucks often travel in convoys, they are frequently speeding and tailgating, making a turn into our driveway a life hazard. We were nearly killed once by a truck travelling on the wrong side of the road and there are many "near-misses" to report. Daracon claims that its drivers adhere to self-imposed speed limit of 40km/h. The fact is that only small percentage of trucks are Daracon-owned (19 according to their report) and the vast majority of quarry trucks are operated by external transport companies subcontracted by Daracon on an "as needs" basis. Daracon management has no control over those drivers (as stated by the Executive Director / owner of Daracon, David Mingay, during a public meeting held at Paterson school of Arts on the 31/7/14) and the drivers have shown no intention of adhering to a lower speed limit. There are often trucks in front of our house clearly exceeding 60 km/h limit, especially early in the morning.

Road Quality

Although recent work completed by Maitland City Council on Tocal Road in Bolwarra Heights had initially improved the road surface, it has taken only few months before the road started deteriorating again due to the volume of truck movements. The road has been already resurfaced in part and is in a need of repair again. Although Daracon's trucks are the major cause of Tocal Rd deterioration, as far as I know Daracon never contributed to any repairs. It is the Maitland City Council's residents who are left with the bill. It is unfair that our rates are going towards subsidising Daracon's operations instead of projects benefiting local community.

Dust and exposure to diesel exhaust fumes

Houses on Tocal Rd, including ours, are very close to the haulage route and exposed to high volume of dust and diesel engine exhaust emissions from truck movements.

As diesel emissions contain many carcinogenic substances and are known to increase the risk of lung cancer, it is very concerning to us that Daracon proposes to increase the number of trucks travelling through Tocal Rd to as many as 80 per hour.

Environment

As a person who cares about the environment, I was very saddened to learn that Daracon wants to expand its operations and profit at the cost of threatened, endangered and critically endangered species. In my view destruction of such unique habitat cannot be justified by a project that is overwhelmingly opposed by the community, has zero positive impact on community and seems to be solely about economic benefit of an individual / a small group of individuals.

The quarry operations pose a big risk to water quality from erosion and sedimentation. Buttai Gravel Pty Ltd (part of Daracon group) was already fined four times in the last 2.5 years by EPA for breaching the conditions of its Environment Protection Licence for Martins Creek Quarry in relation to poor sediment and controls at the quarry. The penalties were issued on 16 May 2014 and 27 March 2015.

Negative impact on tourism

Paterson, Martins Creek, Bolwarra Heights and Lorn are all small settlements frequented by tourists and cyclists. They are not only significant in their own right, but are also on the route to Barrington Tops. Their reputation as places of safe recreation is currently being ruined / is at risk to be further ruined by noise, dust and truck movements associated with the quarry.

Devaluation of property prices

We are very concerned about our property value dropping due to quarry extension. So far Bolwarra Heights and surrounds has been considered a sought after, leafy, semi-rural area. What Daracon is proposing would change our suburb into an unliveable industrial zone, where nobody would want to live.

Company's Conduct

The company does not have social licence and public trust.

The huge attendance and level of passion with which many local community members spoke at the consultation meeting in Paterson 2/11/16 was indicative of community attitude towards Daracon and the frustration of having to live with the negative impacts of their daily operations.

The executive director David Mingay showed nothing but contempt for the community, even stating in one of the meetings that if it was him being affected by the quarry he would move. Although this is not about personalities, Mingay's attitude is indicative of Daracon's corporate culture with its huge sense of entitlement and lack of social conscience.

The community consultations were a sham. The EIS was made as difficult to make sense of as possible with vital information scattered between various documents, appendixes and tables. It is hard not to think that it was intentional and the purpose was to confuse, intimidate and make it

more difficult for the affected communities to respond. At the recent meeting in Paterson, Daracon representatives attended 'to listen to concerns'. We were sitting next to them – no one of them, including the quarry manager, took any notes or recorded what the public had to say.

Conclusion

Expansion of Martin's Creek quarry would have an enormous detrimental impact on the lives of thousands of people living close to the quarry and along the haulage route. The economic benefits, including potential jobs, would be limited to a very small group of people.

As negative social and environmental impacts outweigh disproportionately any possible benefits, I urge the NSW Planning Department to reject Daracon's application for the expansion of the quarry. I would like the outcome of the assessment to be a strict definition and regulation of the current operations to accommodate the following:

- The output tonnage carried by trucks from the quarry should not exceed 300,00TPA, with any extra output transported by rail.
- Rail transport should be the main transport mechanism for the quarry.
- Hours of truck haulage are reduced to between 7am – 4pm Monday to Friday only so the residents can have noise free time on the weekend
- That Daracon enforce a 40kmph speed limit to all trucks travelling the section of Tocal Rd between Maitland Vale Rd and Paterson Rd, and that engine breaking is not used in residential areas.

It's also extremely important to consider cumulative impacts of Martins Creek Quarry and Brandy Hill Quarry (application # 5899) which also seeks planning approval to increase annual production to 1.5 million tonnes per annum and extend the hours of operation to 24hrs Mon-Sun, including 144 loads per day (288 trucks movements including empty trucks travelling to the quarry). The impact of both applications separately, not to mention cumulative impact, on Bolwarra and adjacent suburbs would be beyond devastating.