

Martins Creek Quarry Expansions – Application SSD 14_6612

I am opposed to the MCQ

There are several aspects of this EIS that are questionable and raise serious doubts about the sincerity of Buttai Gravel P/L (hereafter referred to as Daracon, this being consistent with nomenclature in the EIS). They include the assertion that the product (andesite) is somehow unique in the quarry industry and vital to the future of infrastructure in NSW.

Included in the EIS Buttai Gravel P/L sets a strong case for time-sensitive materials as justification for extended hours but this case is based on false arguments. Furthermore Daracon assert their quarry operation is independent, stand alone and not vertically integrated and therefore more beneficial to the state of NSW but their operations show otherwise.

Accordingly the EIS then extrapolates these to then justify a change in operational consents that are ensconced in terms that supposedly benefit the state of NSW. But the biggest issue with the quarry and hence the EIS is the transportation of product.

The township of Paterson is the funnel for all road transport and it deserves special mention. The EIS fails to adequately address this key issue and uses other aspects as a smokescreen to avoid confronting this key point. As well the sections relating to transport ignore the use of the rail network in favour of using an antiquated out-dated and inadequate road network.

Another aspect of this report is the glaring absence of any section addressing of the social amenity of the communities that are impacted by this application.

While the applicant repeatedly discusses the ‘consistent and coherent’ purpose of the EIS this is simply a throw away phrase with no substance to increase production without consideration for the community.

Where is Paterson?

Paterson is an historical village that has road system developed in the 19th century. The road network is therefore designed and aligned for times where high volume, high-speed heavy haulage was non-existent. Appendix O (4.7)

There is a need for improved road access. The main vehicle links between Raymond Terrace, Maitland, and the Dungog LGA are poor and accident statistics are high;

It has these features:

- Narrow bridges that cannot accommodate passing vehicles especially large heavy vehicles. Gostwich Bridge on Dungog Rd, Tin Bridge on Dungog Rd and Iron Bridge on Paterson Rd are all examples.
- A road that passes right through the township (as was the key design feature in those days). Past the shops, service stations, churches and community halls as well as residential areas. This is reflected by high pedestrian activity from residents and visitors. A small but busy shopping precinct.
- The road through the village has a unique and inflexible route due to the railway line bisecting the town.
- The road is essentially built in the valley of Paterson and is constrained by the Paterson River hence the numerous bridges.
- Narrow roads and shoulders that are very narrow (non-existent in parts) that is commensurate with the vehicles of the era.
- Heading south through Paterson the main road (it has several name changes which for clarity will not be listed here) takes a sharp left turn and crosses through railway gates over the main Northern Railway Line that services all goods and passengers en-route to Brisbane. Within 100m pass a busy pedestrian and commercial area it then meets a T intersection which has a 90° turn. This turn has very narrow turn in and all vehicles tend to cross over double lines to negotiate the turn. Two heavy vehicles cannot pass simultaneously on this bend. Refer to next dot point regarding school buses. Next within a short distance is a blind dog leg corner on another intersection again with a very narrow shoulder on one side which then leads to a down hill gradient that levels out at a known flood prone point. It then climbs through a narrow cutting with zero shoulders onto a flat and very distressed piece of road to exit the town.
- School buses (100% of high school aged students have to utilise transport) use the top end of town near the T intersection as a drop off and pick up point. This creates congestion with parents connecting with the buses, children crossing and the requirements of bus parking a potential traffic hazard.
- Along the cited route of haulage there are no designated bus stops. Most pick-up and drop-off points are on the roadside. This is for all school buses including those heading for Maitland, Dungog and those serving the local primary school. They share the road with high volumes of heavy haulage. The EIS has ignored this critical aspect. With Daracon's

utilisation of experts it seems a questionable as to why this critical aspect of transport management was overlooked.

These aspects should have been covered in great detail throughout the EIS, as it is one of the major impediments to utilising the road network for high volume heavy haulage. The glaring absence of any in depth analysis or discussion of possible problems indicates a deficient EIS.

The Traffic survey has not included the coexistence of heavy transport with school bus transport. Nor has it examined the conflicts that are present due to the design, layout and usage of the road in the village the very place that transport will have the most impact. There is no proposed traffic management plan provided for vehicle movement through both residential and commercial areas.

Historically the quarry was developed around the rail infrastructure and not the road network. Hence the inadequacy of the road network is historic and fundamental to this whole EIS.

Andesite

Reference to the importance of Andesite to the community and state of NSW is heavily overstated.

Like all igneous rock it has particular qualities that are unique but this does not make the use of andesite a pre-requisite for major civil and construction projects. There are other sources of igneous and hard rock products throughout the Hunter and the state of NSW.

Within the Hunter there are several quarries that have similar if not the same quality of ignimbrite style rock. These quarries can easily supply the same or equal quality rock for infrastructure needs. The Sydney market and intended large projects within the Sydney basin are used as justification for the extension of hours and operation. Quarries to the south in the Goulburn area (Lynwood, Peppertree and Gunlake) are established and producing large quantities (up to 5million tonnes per annum). Figures from the NSW Department of Industry-Resources and Energy (2014,2015) show the Gosford region supplying equivalent amounts of aggregate. These operations are equally capable of supplying Sydney. While Appendix O mentions several quarry sites around NSW it has omitted to mention both Lynwood and Peppertree and that they are both committed to using rail as the preferred method of transport.

It is a free market but Daracon are establishing a case that Martins Creek quarry and its product is somehow unique. This is not the case and is quite clearly overstating the importance of Andesite and consequently negates the need of the expansion of quarry output and increased operating hours.

Daracon

The EIS states that costs for major infrastructure projects are reduced because other quarries are:

owned by major vertically integrated companies which would have significantly increased price pressures within the market potentially adding significantly to the infrastructure project costs.

This implies that Daracon is not vertically integrated. Comparing this with the Daracon Group website shows that the Daracon Group are a major civil engineering and construction group operating Australia wide that are highly vertically integrated. It could be reasonably argued that their quarry business is in fact the base for their vertical integration into major civil construction.

Daracon Group completed many of the major projects cited in the EIS or were utilised as major sub-contractor and supplier of materials and machinery for these projects. In Appendix O the Daracon Group is mentioned as the most likely supplier and developer of the infrastructure proposals on the site. This negates the claim of not being vertically integrated. Daracon has vertically integrated by value adding to their products through the pug mill, establishment of a concrete batching plant in Newcastle, hiring and utilising portable pug mills for major infrastructure projects and as the principle contractor for many projects.

The notion that extending the operating hours will benefit the community through lower costs should be totally rejected. This is a commercial operation that will charge according to the market demand. Daracon is establishing a case to reduce their own contract prices for construction and civil works and therefore gain a competitive advantage and avoiding developing infrastructure costs associated with transportation. This is not for the communities benefit.

Time Sensitive Product

A basic premise to the application for extended operating hours is the need to deliver time sensitive products. This is in particular reference to the pug mill activities. Products from this facility are principally used in roadworks and associated activities. The market that needs its product at the start of business each day supposedly drives early delivery. Whilst the attached table in the EIS has vague and unsubstantiated numerical outcomes the reality is that:

- This pug mill is deliberately situated at Martins Creek Quarry so that it can provide justification for the extended operating hours. Time sensitive products are produced nearest the source of consumption as in the case of concrete batching plants. Daracon has its own concrete batching plant permitted to operate 24 hrs. a day and is located near the M1 Pacific motorway. This is close to the end consumer of the product yet for

stabilised material Daracon situate the plant as far as possible from the end consumer.

- Following this principle it is usual for large infrastructure projects to use portable pug mills and batch plants on site to produce time sensitive products. The assertion in this EIS that this product is needed for Sydney and beyond is not consistent with time sensitive materials.
- Daracon has its own portable pug mills (5xArar).
- Daracon has its own concrete batching plant in Newcastle adjacent to the Pacific M1 motorway that has approval for 24 hr operation. Gravel is sent each day to this plant for batching. The quoted possible delivery time of product has always been possible. Daracon are using their figures to create a false sense of urgency.
- Most projects listed as requiring time sensitive products in fact have imposed start times through the DA process and these are incompatible with figures supplied. Again Daracon has established a plant that is removed from the end user and is using that as justification for early start times.
- A basic business principle is that pug mills should be located to suitable locations that minimise time sensitive issues. This is reflected by the establishment of concrete batching plants being located near the source of product usage. This EIS establishes an inappropriately sited pug mill then requests operating conditions to justify this inappropriate location.
- The associated costs as outlined in the EIS are based on this false premise and are included for the purpose of creating an incorrect conclusion.

The basis of time constraints is not grounds enough to allow the extension of operating hours. Daracon has made an extremely poor business decision that the community should not have to pay for in loss of amenity.

Road Transport

The biggest aspect of this project is the impact of the transportation of product by road and the village of Paterson is the most affected. The consultants have overlooked many key factors. Others were not mentioned and if they were it was such detail as to be dismissive.

An example is the intersection of King and Duke Streets in Paterson. The consultants completely overlooked and avoided the key issues of this intersection UNTIL at the public meeting the DoP saw the trucks crossing double lines. Then and only then did Daracon address this issue with an ill-conceived and unworkable option. This resulted in an addition to the EIS on approximately November 10th 2016.

After two years of planning Daracon address this problem that was obvious to a DoP representative on a one-day whistle stop tour. This reflects either the lack of thought in the EIS or the deliberate avoidance of key issues by Daracon in this whole process. There are many other critical points on the road network similarly ignored or overlooked.

The route from the quarry is along Dungog Road where a single lane timber bridge at the bottom of a steep gradient after a blind corner with no line of sight is the first high risk point. (Gostwich Bridge) The EIS only refers to the longevity of the bridge and does not address the safety aspects. This is another example of avoiding the issues.

Next major point is the township of Paterson where trucks cross the main Northern Line. This has no Railway Sight Triangle to observe northbound trains. There is not a line of sight to the railway gates and warning lights. Again not mentioned in the EIS.

A further 100 metres the narrow road with high pedestrian and light vehicle parking turns 90degrees at a T intersection with limited radius for large vehicles. Past the small but popular shopping and community area is an off camber corner with no sight lines at another intersection. This does not have a shoulder on one side with a 3-metre retaining wall on the property line. Vehicles entering Duke St from Prince St do not have a line of sight for oncoming heavy vehicles. Again not addressed in the EIS.

No mention of the fact that the Tocal Road is flood prone in several places and under different scenarios.

Trucks have travelled through town and floodwaters to access the quarry in previous events. Video evidence available of trucks ignoring road closed signage and traversing flooded roads.

Tocal Road in the vicinity of John Tucker Park is flood prone in the first instance by flash flooding then through the Paterson River overflow. Traffic can divert around this by using Railway Street and Sloane St. These are both residential streets that the quarry vehicles have used in such situations. They are not designed nor maintained to a standard for this purpose. It is narrow with unformed shoulders and no line markings. This aspect is well known and Daracon have totally ignored this in the EIS.

After this flood prone section the road goes through another cutting without shoulders and on one side the property line is very close with no footpath or parking possible. The house is built very close to the property line.

Tocal Rd between Paterson and the CB Alexander College is on flood plain and it is common (once per year minimum) for this road to be inundated and closed to all traffic for several days. Heavy traffic after such events causes structural damage.

If vehicles head east then it is 90° turn straight onto a small iron bridge on Paterson Rd. This can accommodate two cars passing but only one truck at a time. No solution to this serious issue was addressed in the traffic report. Heading further east to the intersection of Paterson Road and Duns Creek Road is another narrow 90° bend that trucks cannot negotiate without using both sides of the road. Not addressed in the EIS.

My submission does not address the impacts on the residents of Brandy Hill, Bolwarra and Lorn but they are equally as important as those through Paterson.

Road construction is generally asphalt with a surface layer of chip seal. This is aggregate that is sprayed with a binding agent. It is cheap, quick and easy to apply but it has distinct disadvantages. There are serious concerns with durability especially with high axle loads causing distress to the road surface that exacerbates water ingress and total destruction of road surface. Other forms of distress include a breakdown of the sub surface causing depressions and uneven surfaces. It is also very noisy compared with other hot-mix road surfaces. Chip and seal is cheap and is often associated with poor shoulder construction and equally poor drainage systems resulting in potholes. Patching though is very easy, cheap and requires minimal equipment. Potholes are a feature of the roads discussed in the EIS. With large vehicles that have aluminium bodies the noise generated is excessive and resounds through the valley for several kilometres. A large percentage of the roads along the proposed routes in the EIS are bitumen type chip and seal roads. Any prolonged or major rain event will result in major pavement deterioration which heavy vehicles exacerbate. Scant addressing of the on-going long-term repair and maintenance of the road network.

The EIS does not make mention of this situation either through deliberate avoidance or through lack of research. If the consultants that are experts in the field had addressed these issues they would have determined that the quarry road transport option is not sustainable.

Rail Network

This EIS dismisses the use of rail infrastructure without full investigation. This is contrary to many other quarries in NSW. From the Holcim website:

Rail is the preferred solution for bulk transport of construction material as it allows use of existing rail infrastructure, it is cheaper and it has less impact on the environment than road transport

The EIS (Appendix D—Plateways) does discuss the use of rail infrastructure but when read in conjunction with other parts of the EIS appears to contradict itself. It is claimed that only short trains can be loaded given the current infrastructure, and the use of longer trains is essential. The cost to a company specialising in civil works would be minimal to accommodate these longer trains. Rail is dismissed because it is easier for Daracon to utilise an existing sub-standard road transport regime that the government and ultimately the people of NSW will bear the cost. The main Northern Railway travels through Martins Creek and the quarry has an operational spur line of less than 1km. There does exist overhead loading as described in the EIS combined with loading from front-end

loaders. Other quarries within the state have spent millions developing rail infrastructure while Daracon has it all established and existing and continues to reject it. The EIS request 24 hr. loading for a train structure that they do not use and openly state is not a viable option. This does not have any rational base and is contradictory. It is unbelievable that Daracon can construct new access roads and bridges but cannot add a few hundred metres of track to their rail loader. Even more efficient would be a rail loop but Daracon dismiss this with very little investigation unlike Boral Peppertree Quarry or Holcim Lynwood Quarry.

The rail link at Martins creek gives access to:

- Direct access to the Newcastle line.
- All markets along the Northern line
- Return line direct to Sydney
- Access to New England line and markets via Maitland Rail Junction.
- Access to western line through Maitland Rail Junction.
- Extensive realignment of track between Mindaribba and Paterson in 2011 under Federal Government funding. It is a high quality piece of infrastructure capable of carrying large volumes of long trains.

Daracon continue to discuss the benefits to the state of NSW of their product but do not use the man made resource that has very little impact on the community and is more environmentally sustainable.

Safety First

Most of the aggregate produced throughout Australia has MSDS sheets that stipulate the long-term inhalation of dust as a serious health issue. Whilst all trucks by law have a stipulation of being covered the volume of trucks being proposed exposes the community to particulate levels higher than normal. Vision of torn covers and truck covered in dust are all indicators of this issue. Diesel particulates are also of high concern as the volume of trucks and type of trucks being used create dangerous levels.

Irrespective of Daracon having a late model fleet of vehicles that satisfy the above criteria many of their sub-contractors are using older and poorly serviced vehicles. These vehicles are louder, emit more black exhaust smoke and have covers that are often torn and inadequate. Daracon have stated in public meetings that they have no control over their contractors driving habits and behaviour and will not enforce any such regime. They abdicate responsibility as soon as product leaves the quarry gate. This reflects the attitude of Daracon and the basis of this EIS.

The material for the pug mill is transported inward in fully closed bulk carriers yet on the outward journey it is carted in open dump trucks (truck and dog) and only loose tarpaulin type covers contain the load. The same vehicles return to Martins creek quarry with residue in the vehicles that is more of a dust hazard than the outward bound vehicles because the residue in the trucks (principally the fly ash) has dried out making it less contained and more prone to wind dispersion. The concentration of fly ash in this product renders it a safety risk both as an irritant to eyes and a risk of inhalation. This issue of residue in empty vehicles is well established and reflected in recent studies regarding coal transport to the Port of Newcastle.

All vehicles pass through residential areas and in the case of Paterson the main business and commercial area.

The EIS does not address these issues and Daracon is abdicating responsibility by avoiding the issue.

Social Amenity

The Paterson Valley is a semi rural community with values that are consistent with this description. Due to surrounding flood plains and green belts it maintains this visual rural aspect. It is a valley because the Paterson River, a major source of irrigation both upstream and downstream and is a major recreational retreat and a significant geographical feature. The infrastructure in this community is suitable for these traditional needs and the social wellbeing but there are serious shortcomings and limitations on what developments that can occur. Much of the community relies on tank water from rain events thereby making the dust implications more significant. The area is prone to periods of isolation during weather events such as east-coast lows. It is poorly serviced by technology. There is a high reliance on motor vehicle travel with limited public transport. These entire factors make it what it is and this development is too large with too many impacts that change the basic quality of life in this area. It is a popular area for people to live with the purpose of raising a family and living a lifestyle with traditional values.

This proposal from Daracon destroys that lifestyle. The EIS when looked at in totality and as a sum of the individual parts puts enormous pressure on the community through invasion and destruction of the social amenity. This proposal does not create a place of wellbeing and connection with place. Daracon does not appear to understand, or is failing to apply, this concept that the local environment has basic and underlying principles that help shape and develop the citizens within it.

Community spirit is one of the end results. At the meeting on the 2nd November the DoP would have witnessed both the number of participants and the passion displayed for its community. Daracon is destroying this sense of unitedness and connectedness through its actions and attitude of complete disregard for the community and their feelings. All meetings when Daracon representatives are present they have shown contempt for the views of the community. Phone contact shows Daracon to be dismissive, unsympathetic, unhelpful and often plain rude. Daracon has used its wealth and size to effectively gag residents and override their concerns with derision.

The latest road works as suggested in the EIS are designed without any regard to the community. Removing parking spaces and access to the businesses shows a complete disregard for the community. The Post Office offers unique financial services that are only offered in Maitland.

The quality of life is diminished for the whole community as the noise, dust, pollution and intimidation caused through sharing a road network with a high volume of high speed heavy haulage vehicles. Driving on Tocal Road either way is very intimidating when caught between convoys of heavy vehicles. You must drive to the pace of the heavy haulage vehicles whether that is slow up the gradient when they are loaded or beyond the speed limits when they are empty.

The number of heavy vehicles by their very physical presence is daunting on narrow bridges and on regular dual carriageways. Damage to vehicles is increased through the large number of heavy vehicles using the full width of the roads and throwing rocks and debris from the shoulders.

Crossing the road and accessing the local services can be very daunting

Sleep is disturbed and very spasmodic.

Conversation in open areas and even within buildings is limited to the crashing and banging of the aluminium truck bodies, squeaking wheel brakes and the constant use of compression brakes. The exhaust systems are obviously for highway usage and not for residential areas as they are quite intrusive. Daracon have not addressed this issue in the EIS.

Caveat emptor

A basic premise in law and in the purchase of property is that the buyer shows due diligence. The issues associated with Martins Creek Quarry were well known to Daracon at the time of signing the lease. Daracon signed the lease with full knowledge of the existing limitations of the quarry site and is now proposing amendments that reflect a lack of due diligence. Daracon's experience in civil construction and road improvements would have been key advantages in Daracon assessing the methods of extraction and transport. Daracon would have been well aware of the shortcomings of the road network. However Daracon have decided to submit an EIS that is Daracon centric and not relevant to the community.

Conclusion

The Martins Creek Quarry has long history and attachment with the district. It was always held in high esteem and valued as a local resource. The quarry through its various proprietors has always been a good corporate citizen working with and for the community. The quarry was established on the basis of the rail infrastructure and not the road network.

Daracon have turned this around 180°. They treat the community with contempt. This is evidenced in all the negotiations and interactions with community. This EIS is a demonstration of how issues have been glossed over, or ignored or manipulated to create a scenario not consistent with reality. Their corporate profit is thinly veiled in an image of doing the broader community a service whilst destroying the social environment and infrastructure.

This EIS is shallow, evasive and dismissive of the key issues yet espouses and overstates the value of the quarry to the local, Hunter and state economies. There should no expansion of the quarry and it should be forced to utilise the existing rail network.