

Martins Creek Quarry –The Facts

I believe it is important not only to consider the planning application and impact statements but to examine these in light of the facts surrounding them.

This gives not only an indication of the integrity of the applicant but also a mirror into the possible future intentions regarding the applicant's real attitude to the local community and its contempt for the planning regulations and the greater law itself.

Martins Creek was a railway ballast quarry with a limited output and regulations concerning the amount of road/rail transport allowable under its approval.

Daracon, when it carried out its due diligence, would have been aware of the limitations on the approvals, but instead of making further applications prior to its commencement it seems to have chosen to ignore them and place its own profit before the regulations set on behalf of the community.

This contemptible behaviour and lack of consideration for the community at large, its amenity, and indeed the community owned assets being the hard rock itself shows the corporate bastardry operators of this type display.

Knowing there were limitations on several of the local roads, they chose not to consult how these could be upgraded but to run the unapproved excessive production by road through the village of Paterson and the communities of Bolwarra, Butterwick, Brandy Hill, and Nelsons Plains, without a seeming concern for the residents or damage to the infrastructure.

It is my understanding that the Planning Application has come about simply due to the complaints by residents and thereby the focus on the existing approvals, not by any honourable intention of the applicant.

The real question Government should ask, is how this form of activity should be rewarded, or indeed its proponents trusted for any future undertakings made.

I must suggest that Government should consider the bestcase future scenario and negotiate itself from there. That is the response that this type of dishonourable attitude must call for, not to be fooled by employment statistics or other spurious information, as it is only reality and logic which dictates that the material will be obtained somewhere in NSW, if not from Martins Creek!

Somewhat alike the negotiations over the quarry at Brandy Hill in the early 80's, where the result was the operator's building of a new road to handle the transport of gravel in return for regulated subdivision of the acreage required to achieve this.

The operator should be required to bypass Paterson by building a new road and bridges or tunnels to vest with the community. This could be to the west across the Paterson River or to the east under Duns Creek, into Glen Oak across the Williams River to link with Italia Rd and ultimately the Pacific Highway. It may sound unrealistic, but the eastern tunnel could possibly provide a source of hard rock (given geological research), and acreage required in Glen Oak could be opened for further subdivision.

Unless planners remove their blinkers and learn to look at the bigger picture, the community will continue to be short changed in negotiations of this nature.

There consistently remains the need for constant subscription by the operators to cover maintenance and improvement for all the road infrastructure impacted by this heavy vehicle transport. Many years ago NSW had a system of road tax collection which presented a user pays system of meeting some of these costs.

As a community we need our regulators to consider the longer term effects on residents, not just the short term aspirations of sometimes two dollar companies which belatedly tend to make all sorts of promises about their "good intent", whilst reaping substantial short term profits. Alongside this question is the bond for long term site restitution and its sufficiency to meet this requirement – something with which we in the Hunter Valley currently have major difficulties involving open cut coal mines.

History has shown a tendency for these projects to be used as levers for an increase in the value of the operator often with the consequence of sale to foreign interests. The case mentioned above, Brandy Hill Quarry is now owned by a German company Hansen. One only wonders what the environmental controls for extractive industries such as this would be in the EU, or Germany in particular! These are the sorts of considerations we need our regulators to make.

I am afraid this note has been written somewhat in haste without particular reference to the Planning application or environmental impact studies submitted. My purpose has simply been to examine the broader aspects of this change of operator and increase in throughput through the eyes of a long term local resident with consideration of the history involved and the future of our community.

I submit this is of prime relevance to any application or impact statement made in this matter.

Concerned Citizen,

Nelsons Plains

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