

## **The Bolwarra Heights Community Group**

### **Outline of Objections to the Martins Creek Quarry expansion**

**Who are we?** The Bolwarra Heights Community Group is made up of residents who live on or near Tocal Rd Bolwarra Heights, mainly in the narrow section of Tocal Rd between the intersection of Maitland Vale Rd and Paterson Rd. Our group was formed in 2014 due to our serious concerns for road/pedestrian safety and increased road noise and congestion caused by a major increase of quarry truck traffic on Tocal Rd. This increase in quarry trucks movements was a result of Daracon's Martin Creek quarry supplying hard rock for the Hexham rail depot upgrade. The quarry increased output from 300,000TPA to an estimated 1 million TPA for the duration of the project. This increase was outside their DA approved output capacity and was not approved and resulted in complaints from residents in all affected communities to the EPA, Dracon, Maitland City Council and State Government. Having lived through the nightmare of the extremely high volume of truck movements on our road, we strongly object to the Daracon's application to expand the quarry, increase the output to 1.5 million tonnes per year, extend the hours of operation and increase number of trucks on our local roads.

We ask for the application to be rejected for the following reasons:

1. **Pedestrian and vehicle SAFETY.** The section of Tocal Rd between Maitland Vale Rd and Paterson Rd was originally built as a minor access road to local farms from Maitland Vale through to Lambs Valley. Now it is the main road to Paterson and Dungog areas; it is narrow, congested and not suitable for fully laden 50 ton double quarry trucks at a rate of 80 movements per hour. It is very narrow with no shoulders to avoid a potential accident, power poles; one side has a pedestrian footpath with no room for error with the pedestrians walking within one metre of these large trucks driving at 60kmph or above.
2. **NOISE at our homes.** This section of the road is a tree lined, previously quiet part of the community to live. That's why many of us moved here. With the illegal increase of trucks in 2014/15, as mentioned above, the noise was unbearable for all with empty quarry trucks rattling through as early as 4:30am and going well into the evening each day. The proposed increase will see at least 50% more truck movements than in 2014/15. It is totally unacceptable that we and other residents should endure this just to allow one company to enjoy healthier profits. According to the surveys presented in the EIS the Tocal Rd area will be the most affected by proposed increased (69dba).
3. **DUST and AIR QUALITY.** Houses on Tocal Rd are very close to the haulage route and exposed to high volume of dust and diesel engine exhaust emissions from truck movements. Diesel emissions contain carcinogenic substances and increase the risk of lung cancer, therefore we deem it unacceptable to be exposed to 80 truck movements per hour on the top of regular traffic.
4. **The EXTENDED HOURS** asked for in the application would mean that Daracon, contractor and private quarry trucks will be on our roads from before the quarry opens to after it closes, this in our area would mean from 4:30am till 8:00pm continually for 6 days a week. This is unacceptable for a residential area.
5. **The CONSULTATION** process was an exercise in ticking a box imposed by the Government and not a genuine consultation. We and other concerned groups attended the scheduled meetings, but it was one way communication not a dialogue. We were not

allowed to give input or query the expansion plans. All it did was to allow Daracon to state in the EIS that they have consulted with the communities.

6. The EIS has not taken into account future housing developments and associated vehicle loading or the COMBINED TRUCK LOADS of both Martins Creek and nearby Brandy Hill quarries. Brandy Hill Quarry (application # 5899) 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). Trucks from both quarries meet at the intersection of Tocal Rd and Paterson Rd which now makes this tight intersection very hazardous for all users. The vast increase in trucks proposed by the Martins Creek quarry expansion would see this intersection and the roads south extremely congested and dangerous.
7. The vast majority of trucks that haul to and from the quarry are non Daracon trucks (contractors or private trucks). Darcon (David Mingay) has openly admitted, and the company has proven, that they have NO CONTROL over the non Daracon trucks. These trucks commonly do not conform to Daracons' road use policies in the way of speed reductions, engine breaking and general poor/noisy condition of the trucks. Any expansion of the quarry would see the number of non Daracon trucks and their associated problems increase dramatically and it will be out of Daracon's control.
8. We strongly believe the ENVIRONMENT around the Martins Creek quarry will be severely affected by the clearing of an additional 37 hectares of native vegetation, including habitat vital for endangered and threatened species. We believe that Daracon has no right to destroy the valuable native environment just to increase profits of a company which has nil positive impact on the community.

Our local roads have seen a vast increase in traffic over the last few years with many native animals being hit and killed by road users, including possums, lizards, birds, snakes and kangaroos; any increase in truck movements and habitat loss will only exasperate this problem.

Furthermore 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.
9. Daracon's demands are in strike contrast with the character of settlements such as Paterson, Martins Creek, Bolwarra Heights and Lorn. They are all small villages 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 would be jeopardised by noise, dust and danger from truck movements associated with the quarry. This would subsequently lead to the DEVALUATION OF PROPERTY PRICES. So far Bolwarra Heights has been sought after, leafy, semi-rural area. Extended Daracon's operations would change our suburb into an industrial corridor.
10. It has been stated that the quarry does not pay the State Government any royalties for the tonnage of product that is extracted from the quarry. It is also understood that the ongoing major repairs to Tocal Rd is funded by our taxes, which is neither fair nor acceptable.

Due to the long list of negative social and environmental impacts on our community and lack of any positive ones, we ask the NSW Planning and Environment Department to reject Daracon's application for the expansion of the quarry involving clearing of native vegetation, increasing the output to 1.5 million tonnes per year, extending the hours of operation and increasing number of trucks on our local roads. We would like to take this opportunity to ask for the following limitations and improvements to be imposed on Daracon's current operations:

1. That the output tonnage carried by trucks from the quarry is limited to 300,00TPA, that is, any extra to 300,000TPA be transported by means of rail transport.
2. Hours of truck haulage are minimised to between 7am till 5pm Monday to Friday only.
3. That Daracon enforce a 40kmph speed limit to all trucks that travel the section of Tocal Rd between Maitland Vale Rd and Paterson Rd, and that engine breaking is not used in residential areas.
4. A system be implemented that gives clear identification of all trucks that haul to and from the quarry, similar to the high vis ID labels used by coal mines. This will help identify rouge truck drivers on the public roads, and that Daracon enforce a disciplinary system to deal with drivers who contravene Daracon's procedures.
5. That Daracon contribute adequately to public road repairs and upgrades, minimising the burden on tax payers.
6. That Daracon enforce that all trucks comply with a 'minimum good condition standard' which will minimise noise on our roads. Currently the owned and operated Daracon trucks appear to be to such a standard, but nearly all non Daracon trucks are below standard.
7. That Daracon supply new electronic speed advisory signs on either side of Tocal Rd in our vicinity.