

To: Department of Planning and Environment

From: Paul O'Donohue

23 Tocal Rd Bolwarra Heights, 2320

Subject: Objections to the Martins Creek Quarry application for expansion

My wife and I live at 23 Tocal Rd Bolwarra Heights in the narrow section of Tocal Rd between the intersection of Maitland Vale Rd and Paterson Rd. We moved here 14 years ago due to the attractive green (well vegetated large blocks) and quiet/peaceful setting of this area.

History, Tocal Rd: The section of Tocal Rd my wife and I live on is now classed as a 'main road' as it is a primary access road to towns such as Paterson/Vacy/Dungog, but originally it was built as a very minor gravel road to access the small localities such as Maitland Vale and Lambs Valley. The larger towns of Paterson, Gresford, Vacy, Dungog etc was then accessed via Paterson Rd (Tocal Rd was not a through Rd). In later years housing subdivisions and other progress altered Tocal Rd forever and made it the main thoroughfare to the towns of Paterson/Gresford/Vacy/Dungog as well as Maitland Vale and Lambs Valley.... and of course the Martins Creek Rock Quarry. Unfortunately though, this 1 km section of road was never widened or made suitable for the high volume of traffic it sees now, it is barely 8 mtrs wide, gutter to gutter, with no possible parking in either direction and exposing pedestrian pathways either side EXTREMELY close to the 60km/h traffic passing.

History, Martins Creek Quarry: This rock quarry was originally managed by 'Rail Corp' to supply hard rock for their rail ballasting requirements, the site includes a rail siding with access to the main nth rail line and the vast majority of the quarry's product originally left the site by means of rail transport, output was some 300,000 T/Year. Around 2006(?) Daracon purchased the quarry and since then the vast majority of quarry product leaves the site by trucks.... not surprising though as Daracon is a major civil company that utilises trucks and heavy plant/machinery to carry out their contracted work.

What Changed: Prior to 2014 the amount of traffic was high on Tocal Rd, but manageable in the opinion of myself and other residents here, but in 2014 serious concerns developed for road/pedestrian safety along with 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 large quantities of hard rock for the Hexham Rail Depot upgrade project. The quarry increased output from 300,000TPA to an estimated 1 million TPA for the duration of the project. This increase was way outside their DA approved output capacity and was not approved. Unfortunately continued complaints from residents in all affected communities to the EPA, Dracon, Maitland Council, Dungog Council and State Government had no effect on the situation. Having lived through the nightmare of the extremely high volume of truck movements on our road, I STRONGLY OBJECT to Daracon's recent application to expand the quarry even further to an output to 1.5 million tonnes per year along with its extend the hours of operation and increase number of trucks on our local roads.

My Ojections: I 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 road shoulders to avoid a potential accidents with pedestrians, other vehicles or power poles. One side has a pedestrian footpath with no room for error with the pedestrians walking within one metre of these large heavy trucks driving at 60kmph or above, the other side has a gravel/grass track that is not formed adequately for pedestrians due to the lack of road width available.

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 truck movements 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 new increase to output 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 truck movements and exposed to high volumes of dust and diesel engine exhaust emissions from these truck movements. Diesel emissions contain carcinogenic substances and increase the risk of lung cancer, therefore I deem it unacceptable to be exposed to 80 truck movements per hour on the top of regular traffic on Tocal Rd.
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 was not a genuine consultative process. I have attended and other concerned groups have attended the scheduled meetings, but it was always 'one way' communication not a cooperative 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 in our area, one of the fastest growing residential areas in NSW. Car and transport movements will increase significantly in future years as towns such as Newcastle and Maitland spread westward.
7. The EIS has not taken into account vehicle loading for the COMBINED TRUCK LOADS of both Martins Creek Quarry and nearby Brandy Hill Quarry. 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 now meet at the intersection of Tocal Rd and Paterson Rd which makes this very busy intersection very hazardous for all users. The vast increase in trucks proposed by the Martins Creek Quarry and nearby Brandy Hill Quarry expansions would see this intersection and the roads south of that point extremely congested and dangerous.
8. The vast majority of trucks that haul to and from the quarry are not Daracon owned trucks (contractors and private trucks). Darcon (David Mingay) has openly admitted, and the

company has proven, that Daracon have NO CONTROL over the non Daracon trucks. These trucks currently 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 once again.

9. I strongly believe the ENVIRONMENT around the Martins Creek quarry will be severely affected by the clearing of an additional 37 hectares of native vegetation. Endangered and threatened species have been identified in this area, including koala population. I believe that Daracon has no right to destroy the 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, snakes and kangaroos, any increase in truck movements 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.
10. Daracon's demands are in stark 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 and other popular recreational/tourist destinations. Their reputation as places of safe recreation would be jeopardised by noise, dust and danger from truck movements associated with the quarry expansion
11. Already the increases in truck activity have already led to the DEVALUATION of our 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. Any further expansion and subsequent truck movements would leave myself and other property owners financial far worse off in the future when we attempt to sell our properties.
12. 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 (a legacy of the Rail Corp agreement to operate). It is also understood that the ongoing major repairs to Tocal Rd is funded by our taxes, which is neither fair nor acceptable.

My suggestions/requirements of the DoPE/Daracon regarding this application: Due to the long list of negative social and environmental impacts on our community and lack of any tangible positive impacts (except for Daracon's profits), I ask the NSW Department of Planning and Environment to REJECT Daracon's application for the expansion of the quarry.

If however the DoPE decides to approve the quarry's EIS for approval to continue operation or expand in any way, I would like to take this opportunity to ask for the following limitations and improvements to be imposed on the Martins Creek Quarry:

1. That the output tonnage carried by trucks from the quarry is limited to 300,000TPA
2. If any extra to previously approved 300,000TPA is approved it needs to be transported by means of RAIL transport only.

3. Hours of truck haulage are minimised to between 7am and 5pm Monday to Friday ONLY.
4. That Daracon enforce a 40kmph speed limit to ALL TRUCKS (not just the Daracon trucks) that haul to and from the quarry and travel this section of Tocal Rd between Maitland Vale Rd and Paterson Rd, and that engine breaking is not used in residential areas. At present Daracon trucks voluntarily reduce their speed to 40km/h for the 1km stretch of Tocal Rd and this is well appreciated by local residents, but contract drivers do not comply with the reduced speed limits.
5. 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. Also, that Daracon enforce a disciplinary system to deal with contract or other drivers who contravene Daracon's public road procedures.
6. That Daracon contribute to public road repairs and upgrades, minimising the burden on tax payers.
7. That Daracon enforce that ALL TRUCKS that haul to and from the quarry 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.
8. That Daracon supply new electronic speed advisory signs on either side of Tocal Rd in our vicinity.

IN CLOSING PLEASE NOTE:

Please note that if this was COAL mine wanting to transport up to 1.5million tons of product BY TRUCK through small residential streets to the Newcastle Port Coal Loaders, it would NEVER be approved! It would be seen as totally unacceptable by all, hence nearly all coal is transported to the Port via the rail network.

This is NOT a different situation, the Martins Creek Quarry has a rail siding and can send its product by rail.

Obviously it may mean some double handling and extra cost in the short term, but it can be done. If Daracon had a rock crushing/blending/handling area in an industrial area remote to Martins Creek (rather than next to residents at Martins Creek as is now), the vast majority of the extracted product could be sent from the quarry by rail to it and then by trucks from the remote processing plant. This suggestion is entirely feasible and should taken seriously by Daracon as it would address the vast majority of the community objections

Yours sincerely, Paul O'Donohue

