



# Hunter Environment Lobby Inc.

PO Box 188  
East Maitland NSW 2323  
22<sup>nd</sup> November 2016

## **Martins Creek Quarry Expansion - Objection**

Hunter Environment Lobby Inc. (HEL) is a regional community-based environmental organization that has been active for over 20 years on the issues of environmental degradation, species and habitat loss, and climate change.

We note in the Executive Summary of the EIS prepared for Buttai Gravel Pty Ltd for the proposed expansion of the Martins Creek Quarry that Buttai Gravel have leased the operation since 2012 and wish to have all consents and conditions under the one licence.

The proposal seeks approval for:

- Extracting up to 1.5 million tonnes of hard rock material per annum;
- Expanding into new extraction areas and clearing approx. 36.8ha existing vegetation;
- Increasing the hours of operation for:-
  - quarrying from 6am-6pm (Monday to Saturday),
  - processing from 6am-10pm (Monday to Saturday),
  - mixing and binding from 4:30am-10pm (Monday to Friday) and 4:30am-6pm (Saturdays),
  - stockpiling, loading and dispatch of road transport to 5:30am-7pm (Monday to Saturday), and
  - train loading 24 hours per day, 7 days per week;
- Consolidating existing operations and approvals;
- Construction of a new access driveway and bridge; and
- Rehabilitating the site.

This activity is comprehensive as an industrial site activity and when country populations are impacted on by this noise, dust and blasting we will see increasing health problems in the nearby communities, including Martins Creek, Paterson and Vacy.

Added to these impacts on the local population are the impacts on all the populations which live along the many roads that are being used to transport the product to its final destination. These impacts are massive on the property holders and on the infrastructure of roads and bridges in that long haulage journey.

HEL sees no reason why rail transport of the materials cannot be utilised to a greater extent. In fact this would solve many of the impacts that neighbours and local people, plus urban dwellers in the many areas where these trucks are transporting the material.

We note in the EIS that Buttai Gravel claim that, 'In general, rail dominance for the transport of aggregate materials in this region has declined over time with road delivery becoming the preferred method of transport, even for rail infrastructure projects.

Nevertheless, the final design of the project will incorporate elements to facilitate additional rail haulage in the future should market conditions become more favourable and, where possible, materials will be hauled by rail to limit the number of trucks on the local roads along the haul route.'

HEL makes the comment that it favours the communities to have this material to be hauled by rail, the infrastructure which is right at the quarry head, and it is also a Greenhouse friendly way to transport materials.

The original quarry was developed because of the proximity to rail – we see no reason to abandon that commitment, if it is not profitable to transport by rail then the project needs to re-look at its bottom line.

HEL's main focus in all its submissions for mining projects has been that of biodiversity, both flora and fauna. It is with that lens we examine the EIS in its request to clear and destroy 37ha of existing vegetation.

As the company has outlined, the EPBC Act provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places—defined in the EPBC Act as matters of national environmental significance, or MNES.

The Biodiversity Assessment Report prepared by Conacher Consulting Pty Ltd contains the results of the search of the Protected Matters Tool (AGDE 2016) for EPBC Act listed threatened and migratory species recorded within 10km of the site (Refer **Appendix L**).

HEL asks is that a considerable effort on behalf of the company? 10km is not a substantial distance when considering these threatened and vulnerable species whose habitat has been impacted on considerably by other mining practices, especially coal.

The Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy (**DoEE**) declared the proposed development a controlled action on 21 July 2016.

The SEARs were amended and reissued on 4 August 2016 to include additional environmental assessment requirements that need to be addressed so that the proposal can be assessed in accordance with the Bilateral Agreement between the NSW and Commonwealth Governments.

DoEE has determined that the proposed action is likely to have a significant impact on:

- Slaty Red Gum (*Eucalyptus glaucina*) – Vulnerable;

- Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) combined populations of Qld, NSW and the ACT – Vulnerable;
- Regent Honeyeater (*Anthochaera phrygia*) – Critically Endangered;
- Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*) – Critically Endangered; and
- Spot-tailed Quoll (*Dasyurus maculatus maculatus*) SE mainland population – Endangered.

The migratory fauna species, Rufous Fantail and Black-faced Monarch were observed on the site during surveys conducted. No threatened ecological communities listed under the EPBC Act were observed on the site during surveys, which could mean the surveys were inadequate.

Our main point of course is the any further destruction of habitat of threatened and vulnerable species must be taken into consideration with the thousands of hectares of vegetation that has been removed in the interests of private coal companies, mostly overseas owned. That means a considerable cumulative impact.

Added to the cumulative loss of precious habitat for vulnerable species, we see many impacts on communities in the Lower Hunter, of noise and dust in particular. As you know, the Department of Health made a recommendation some years ago that there be no more mines open in the Hunter, unless an equivalent one was closed.

The recommendation was made because of the addition of particulates into the air which is breathed by populations in the Hunter, and that in fact over 3,000 people die earlier than expected in the Hunter because of the air quality issues.

This expansion will only exacerbate the issue, and forms a serious threat to our local population. It is for this reason, plus the biodiversity issues above the HEL condemns the request and asks that the Department not give consent.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Jan Davis'.

Jan Davis  
President