

Submission Regarding the Martins Creek Quarry Expansion

I strongly oppose the expansion of Martins Creek Quarry (MCQ).

Firstly I would like to say that it is not the amount of rock and gravel being extracted that I object to, although I know it a large concern for residents of Martins Creek, it is the manner of transportation that is critical to all the communities through which excessive trucks move. You cannot believe that anyone can live a normal life with over 1000 trucks per day travelling along Brandy Hill Drive along with several thousand cars that use it morning and evening as their only/preferred way to and from work. This number of trucks is taking into consideration the cumulative effect of the Hanson Quarry expansion which will be before the DoPE shortly.

At no time has MCQ/Daracon approached us with regard to cumulative effect on our community. When we have tried to bring it up at CCC meetings it has been glossed over or totally ignored. The EIS states that they have not had any contact with Hanson therefore do not know what the cumulative effect might be. My question is this: what about their consultants sitting on the side of the road during a peak contract and counting trucks; what about extrapolation on most likely scenario of both Quarries operating on a large project at the same time using the same roads as they did in 2014 and what about CONSULTING with residents on this issue? We are the ones living this debacle.

At the end of this submission I have included photos of articles in The Herald, the paper local to Newcastle and this area of the Hunter Region, which shows that residents of both Paterson and Brandy Hill have been very concerned about this issue for over 2 years. May 2014 was the "tipping point" for us when Daracon began running trucks continually down Brandy Hill Drive, to the point that it was mentally distressing residents and disturbing their daily routines and lives.

The proposal in the EIS that only 25% of truck traffic from MC would travel along Brandy Hill Drive and Seaham road is utter nonsense. In 2014 we had ALL their trucks move along Brandy Hill Drive for a large contract at Williamstown. This went on for about 6 weeks. In addition Hanson was filling a similarly large contract. We have experienced 100% from both Quarries and it had residents extremely concerned. We now know that this could be the norm for us. Seriously, where else would over 1000 trucks a day on rural/ residential roads be accepted? The answer must, respectfully, be staring you in the face. The rail line into the Quarry at Martins Creek must be used to transport as much product as possible. Hanson doesn't have that option so it will be treated as a separate issue by residents with other transport suggestions when Hanson's EIS needs to be addressed.

At MCQ CCC meetings the idea of using existing railway infrastructure has been met with silence or with "it would cost too much". We are talking initial outlay by Daracon for a 30year (?) life of the Quarry! Their total profit might be down in the short term but long term will be but a drop in the bucket. It would release the pressure on the road system in the whole area and residents would not lose their amenity completely.

Amenity is a huge issue for residents.

While Brandy Hill Drive looks deceptively wide, when walking or cycling along its length, it becomes obvious that there are many parts where there is less than 1/2 a metre of shoulder, the gutters are totally overgrown and 2 cuttings through hills have virtually no verges at all making pedestrians and cyclists use the road proper. I noticed that Daracon, in its EIS seemed to assume that residents did not use Brandy Hill Drive as a walking or cycling area. Then why did the consultant hired by Daracon, Mr Brett Peterkin, have a meeting with me and my husband and then a private telephone

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conversation with me on the topic of what Daracon could do for residents of Brandy Hill Drive to mitigate the problems of walking and cycling along a road that would become more dangerous for users once extra truck traffic from MCQ eventuated?

Mr Peterkin indicated that he would be able to source money that local Councils, State Government and Federal Government had in their "special rural initiative?" funds. In addition, with Daracon having the road/cycleway building expertise and Hanson providing the raw materials, a cycle way could be built well and quickly.

Even though the idea of a cycleway was glossed over at CCC meetings we were surprised that the EIS made no mention of residents' safety when using Brandy Hill Drive and the cycle way idea was totally ignored.

To understand why Brandy Hill looks so deserted at times you have to look into the history of the area.

When the owner of Hunter Quarry, now Brandy Hill Quarry, was asked to consider constructing a new road through grazing land to alleviate the truck traffic through Seaham (at the time, 1983, residents complained about the prospect of 50 trucks per day being excessive), he agreed as long as Port Stephens Council gave the go ahead for the land on either side of the road to be subdivided. This became the small acreage locality now called Brandy Hill. It was marketed as a 'rural/residential lifestyle choice where children could ride bikes or horses on the side of the road, create large gardens and enjoy an outdoors lifestyle to share with neighbours and friends. Other side roads were added. A close knit community ensued with children able to access their friend's places by walking or by bike. Gradually with expansions of Brandy Hill Quarry more care needed to be taken on the road but then suddenly truck traffic exploded to unacceptable proportions when Daracon came onto the roads. That was the end of the community interaction that was. Walking was severely restricted, horses are no longer ridden along the edge of the road and cycling is too dangerous with several culverts and cuttings giving no road shoulder to pull off into. Now, the only time people feel free to walk is before dark, after truck traffic has ceased. Usually possible during daylight saving hours. My husband and I even tried to walk by torchlight at night.

As for cycling, the cycle clubs from Maitland and Newcastle that regularly ran Saturday morning races no longer do so. They have been frightened off by the number of trucks.

Safety is our number one concern but not a concern addressed by Daracon at all.

Where is the safety provided for children needing to cross the road to get to the bus stop morning and afternoon when there could be a truck passing every 30 seconds?

Where is the safety when residents leave their driveways or when slowing to turn off the road into a driveway with a convoy of trucks behind?

How does Daracon address my safety when I walk along the edge of my road and one of their contracted trucks cuts the corner right in front of me?

Surely we have the right to be safe in our community.

We also have the right to good health. The pollution caused by the continual truck movements through exhaust and various forms of dust pollution has not been addressed in this EIS.

The very serious issues of health and safety have hardly rated a mention in the EIS.

There have been very well documented examples and medical research confirms that road noise, in particular truck noise in all its forms, leads to an increase in sleep deprivation if the noise continues into the night and for shift workers it also leads to a loss in productivity.

Medical research from around the world points quite strongly to the correlation of truck noise to **mental health issues such as anxiety, depression and stress**. These are not to be taken lightly as it is well known in all Government agencies that 1 in 5 people suffer some form of mental illness and must be addressed at all cost. One of the contributing factors to alleviating anxiety and depression is the ability to exercise regularly on a daily basis. Residents of Brandy Hill don't have that option any

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more. I am in that category and find my exercise choices are now severely restricted in my local area.

In addition, it has also been researched and documented widely that stress levels are likely to rise with continual truck noise in all its forms. It has been found that this, in turn, causes cardiovascular problems, with stroke high on the list.

Aggression has been linked to high levels of stress and anxiety and this is evident when a group of people begin to talk about the issues attributed to expansion of Martins Creek Quarry.

I would like to make some personal comments.

- Sunday is now the only day of the week when the only noise I hear when I wake up is the bird calls and no truck noises.
- When my husband and I are out in the yard during busy truck times I can only speak to him if I am quite close. There is no point in calling out to him from a few metres away as any conversation is overridden by truck noise. Truck noise is hard to define. It is a mix of roar, whoosh, squeal, clatter, grind - sometimes all together.
- My personal life has suffered. If I can't get outside to work in the garden because the truck noise is so upsetting I become very anxious and edgy and angrier over the smallest things. My mental health is at risk.
- My regular morning walks with friends, something I have done for over ten years for health reasons, both physical and mental, have now ceased because it has become too dangerous. It has meant that I no longer have as much contact with some friends as driving defeats the purpose of the hour long "walk and talk".
- My husband and I love gardening. That is why we moved from suburbia to Brandy Hill in the first place. My relaxation has always been working in the garden. A large garden requires quite a bit of time to keep it well maintained however, the relentless noise day after day makes that hard to attain.
- I can no longer hold our regular Brandy Hill Garden Club meeting in our yard. You cannot hear guest speakers over the continual roar and rumble of trucks and discussions and conversation is often truncated.

There are many personal compelling arguments from residents throughout the Brandy Hill and surrounding area as to why the proposed expansion of Martins Creek Quarry cannot go ahead. We all have a right to be not just heard, but our views must carry considerable weight when the DoPE makes a determination on this issue. I believe my life and the lives of my neighbours and of all the localities that will be continued to be impacted upon, is worth more than a tonne of gravel. Even if it is "State significant".

Yours sincerely,
Margarete Ritchie.
(Resident of Brandy Hill Drive.)

I have not made a reportable political donation.

(Newspaper articles found on next 2 pages)



NEWCASTLE HERALD

WEDNESDAY
May 21, 2014

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SMALL TOWNS, BIG HEADACHE

600 TRUCKS A DAY

By BELINDA-JANE DAVIS

RESIDENTS and businesses of two small Hunter towns are pleading for help to deal with the hundreds of trucks rumbling through their streets every day.

Paterson and Brandy Hill are bearing the brunt of trucks hauling materials from the Daracon Quarry in Martins Creek to construction sites across the region.

Between 5.30am and 6pm, an estimated 600 trucks – almost one a minute – travel through Paterson, which has a population of about 800.

Video footage taken in March recorded 100 trucks between 5.48am and 7am.

Residents have formed an action group to tackle the problem.

“People come here for the peace and quiet and because it is a historic town, they don’t want to put up with trucks all day,” said Kevin Hawtin, pictured, who owns a bed and breakfast in Paterson.

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LONG HAUL: Trucks in Paterson. Picture: Max Mason-Hubers

Health crisis sits waiting for our couch kids

By LUCY CARROLL

MORE than 80 per cent of Australian children fail to get one hour of exercise each day, ranking them behind Britain and Finland as among the least active in the world.

A landmark survey of 15,000 people, which compared the physical activity of children from 15 countries, found most five to 17-year-old Australians did not meet exercise guidelines and more than 70 per cent spent more than two hours a day watching an electronic screen.

Lead author and research associate Natasha Schranz said the results showed parents were falling into the “trap” that organised sport was enough to keep children healthy.

“It’s alarming that a nation committed to sport has fallen so far behind in incidental activity,” Dr Schranz, from the University of South Australia, said.

“We are just shutting it out.

“We need to do more active transport, reduce sitting and television time and incorporate active play into everyday life.”

The Active Healthy Kids Australia report card, which combined data from the Bureau of Statistics and the National Secondary Student’s Diet and Activity Survey, found one in five children walked or cycled to school.

Only 19 per cent of five to 17-year-olds met the guidelines of 60 minutes of exercise each day. For the broader category of young people aged two to 18, 25 per cent met minimum exercise guidelines.

Almost three-quarters of children aged two to four spent more than one hour in front of a television or computer daily and about 15 per cent had a screen in their bedroom.

But despite this, the average child

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news

Trucking quake shakes up town

Reports by
BELINDA-JANE DAVIS

HUNDREDS of trucks a day are rattling through two tiny Hunter towns and residents have had enough.

Paterson and Brandy Hill are bearing the brunt of trucks hauling materials from the Daracon quarry in Martins Creek to construction sites across the region between 5.30am and 6pm six days a week.

Monitoring by residents reveals there are up to 600 truck movements a day through the main street of historic Paterson and video footage taken one day in March showed 100 trucks passing through the town between 5.48am and 7am.

Residents fear for their safety crossing the road, are fed up with the noise, and want their narrow and heavily patched main street upgraded to improve safety and reduce the impact on road infrastructure.

Brandy Hill residents are unhappy that 150 trucks are travelling along Brandy Hill Drive, and said most were from the Daracon quarry.

Residents and business owners, upset at a lack of consultation, are lobbying Dungog Shire Council and the state government.

They said Daracon told its drivers to vary their route between Brandy Hill, Walwalong, Bolwarra and Pinarree to lessen the impact on residents.

But every truck still travels through Paterson, and many use Butterwick and Clarence Town roads to access Brandy Hill Drive, Seaham Road, and eventually the Pacific Highway.

Paterson Progress Association and Brandy Hill and Seaham Action Group have united to have their voices heard.

Action group spokeswoman Margaret Ritchie said Brandy Hill residents moved to the town knowing the Hanson quarry was at the end of the road, but trucks from that business were not a problem.

"We moved here 25 years ago, and now we are getting trucks from the Daracon quarry driving past as well as we are really starting to feel the impact," she said.

"We weren't told that trucks from the [Daracon] quarry would be using our road.

"The trucks create extra wear and tear on roads in the Port Stephens Council area and we are not getting any compensation."

Progress association acting president John McNally said truck numbers significantly increased after Daracon started a four-month contract to supply 250,000 tonnes of materials to the relief roads project at Hexham earlier this year.



IMPACT: Zoltan Lyall from the Paterson Progress Association in Tocal Road.

He said the groups were sceptical that truck numbers would decrease after the contract finished because Daracon could extract 2 million tonnes from the quarry under its NSW Environment Protection Authority licence.

Daracon did not respond to the *Newcastle Herald's* questions.

The EPA approved the increase in 2007 when the Australian Rail Track Corporation was leasing the quarry, and had no grounds to refuse it because the Dungog council had not set a production limit when it approved the development consent.

Mr McNally said Daracon had been removing 500,000 tonnes a year since it leased the quarry in 2012, and residents had been coping with the truck volumes.

He questioned why the EPA would approve the increase without community consultation and why Daracon did not pay a levy to the Dungog council to compensate it for the impact on the roads.

"Paterson roads cannot cope with the amount of heavy vehicles using them and there is no levy being paid to pay for an upgrade," Mr McNally said.

"We want to know why the EPA did not stipulate that most of the materials be taken by rail."

Mr McNally said the impact of trucks was not new, but previous arrangements had been better for residents.

He said only 30,000 tonnes a year could be removed in the 1990s and 70 per cent had to be transported via the rail line that ran into the quarry.

The progress association has had several meetings with the Dungog council and Daracon management this year to discuss

their concerns, but a solution has not been reached.

Dungog mayor Harold Johnston has remained tight-lipped about the council's conversation with Daracon.

He said an announcement would be made at the appropriate time.

Mr McNally hoped there would be a good outcome because the council had acknowledged their concerns.

Progress association secretary Zoltan Lyall has also reached out to the state government for help to find a solution.

He wrote to Maitland MP and former environment and heritage minister Robyn Parker in March, expressing concerns about safety, noise, dust impacts and environmental impacts.

He said he did not receive a reply.

A spokesman for Ms Parker said the issue was not in her electorate, and the association should speak to Upper Hunter MP George Souris.

"We are very disappointed. This is a historic village with many historical buildings, and a lot of homes have been rattled because of the amount of trucks going past, especially those that are close to the road," Mr Lyall said.

The EPA cannot act on complaints about truck movements from the quarry.

A spokeswoman said the EPA regulated activities at the quarry under the Environmental Protection Licence, and had investigated complaints about noise levels.

She said Daracon had allegedly breached its licence conditions.

"The EPA has conducted unannounced audits of the quarry in the late evening and early morning and has identified alleged breaches of licence conditions," she said.

"The EPA is investigating and seeking further information from the operator in relation to these alleged breaches."

The spokeswoman said regulatory action might be considered, but that depended on the outcome of the investigation.

"The EPA has a number of regulatory tools available including official cautions, additional licence conditions, notices, legally binding pollution reduction programs, penalty notices and prosecutions," she said.

The degree of environmental harm, whether the action was deliberate, compliance history, public interest and environmental outcomes would be considered before any action was taken.



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Rail relief may be the key to peace in once quiet village

LONG-time Paterson resident Wally Fletcher wants Daracon to install dump points at Telarah and Newcastle so material from the quarry could be moved via rail.

He said the rail line was easily accessible to the quarry, and dump points at key locations would remove trucks from Paterson and other local roads.

It would also give truck drivers direct access to the New England Highway.

Mr Fletcher acknowledged it would be expensive to build the dump points where materials would be transferred from a train

onto a truck, but he thought the end result would be worth the effort.

"I don't know any other place in Australia where this is allowed to happen, it certainly doesn't happen in any other heritage listed village," Mr Fletcher said.

"The pounding through the town starts at 5.30am and doesn't stop until the quarry shuts at 6pm, the roads aren't built for it."

"The previous owners used to move a lot of the material via rail and if Daracon did this it would allow Paterson to again become a peaceful place."

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