

Dear Members of the Independent Planning Commission

**RE: Bobs Farm Sand Mine Application**

We are writing to strongly oppose the development of the Bobs Farm sand mine. We are residents of Bobs Farm and believe that this development should absolutely not be approved due to reasons listed below.

Bobs Farm is a semi-rural community of primary producers, hobby farmers and tourism operators and a sand mine is completely out of character with the area. The proposed area to be mined consists of ancient sand dunes that are not regenerative, unlike the sites of other sand mines in Port Stephens.

Proximity to Bobs Farm Primary School

Students will be affected by noise and air pollution. Of particular concern is the dredging, stockpiling and transport of silica sand, and the potential for silica dust to result from this and contaminate the air. Assuming that sand will be transported in a dry state, the potential for it to spill onto Marsh Road during transport and then be further crushed and forced into the air by traffic and wind is plausible. This is concerning considering the proximity of classrooms, play areas and school structures to Marsh Road. We are a young family with our first child due to start Kindergarten in 2023 and we are looking forward to enrolling him into Bobs Farm Primary School. It has an excellent reputation, with families outside of the local enrolment area choosing to enrol their children there for that reason. Should this development be approved our son will unfortunately not be attending Bobs Farm Primary and we will choose to enrol him elsewhere due to the reasons stated above and below. This is a view shared by many parents and the possibility of closure of the school and loss of jobs due to decreasing enrolments is very real. The environment that will be created by noise and vibration as a result of mining and transporting of materials will not be conducive to effective learning, not to mention the health risks associated with dust contamination.

Increased Truck Movements

During peak operation truck movements will increase to 200 trucks per day (EIS Vol 1 Chapter 2.9 pg 91). Please note that the EIS states "200trucks/hr" but it is assumed that this is an error. This equates to one truck exiting the mine site onto Marsh Road every four minutes. Marsh Road has a weight limit of 3 tonne and is not equipped to carry the proposed increase in heavy traffic load. The proponent states in the EIS (Vol 1 pg 62) in relation to traffic and transport that "Consultations with Port Stephens Council have not indicated any specific safety, capacity or operational issues with the proposal, including in relation to any potential impacts on the safety of primary school students", however this is in direct contrast to a submission prepared by Port Stephens Council in January this year stating that "The proposed haulage route has been assessed and is not supported. Should the application be supported the preferred haulage route would be a left in and a left out from Nelson Bay Road, subject to an appropriate design being submitted. There are a number of traffic, noise and safety concerns in relation to the exit route being along Marsh Road especially around school drop off and collection times. Council has previously expressed these concerns to the Department (12 March 2014)."

Restrictions to truck movements during school zone hours have not been proposed. The number of trucks exiting the mine site during these times will severely disrupt traffic to and from Bobs Farm

Primary School and pose safety concerns to pedestrians and road users. Additionally, during peak traffic periods i.e. morning and afternoon when there is heavy traffic travelling along Nelson Bay Road the intersection of Marsh Road and Nelson Bay Road will become congested.

We believe that alternate transport routes have not been given enough consideration and that should any development be approved trucks exiting the mine should use Nelson Bay Road. The reasons cited by the proponent in the EIS Vol 1 Chapter 2.13.1 for Marsh Road being the preferred option are based on operational preferences and economic benefit for the proponent and are not at all in the best interests of the community.

#### Impact to Groundwater

Many business owners and residents, including ourselves, rely on bore water for farming and domestic irrigation. At completion of mining activity a 24.5 hectare open water filled void will be left. It is hard to believe that this will not impact on the availability and quality of groundwater in the long term. This will, of course, be detrimental to current farmers' livelihoods and make any future primary production ventures unviable.

#### Acid Sulfate Soil (ASS)

The majority of the mine site is classified as Class 4 ASS risk, and as so any works beyond 2m below natural ground surface pose an environmental risk. There is evidence of potential acid sulfate soil, as well as actual acid sulfate soil. In order for an adequate groundwater assessment to be carried out ASSMAC requires a site of the proposed size is to have 80 sampling boreholes. Soil samples were collected from just five boreholes, of which only some samples from boreholes three to five were sent for formal testing. This was deemed adequate for preliminary testing only. A number of soil samples collected from below the water table that were grey or black in colour (a characteristic of ASS) were not tested. Therefore we propose that the Preliminary Groundwater Assessment is not sufficient to determine the true impacts to ASS and groundwater.

The above points are just a few of the numerous negative impacts that this mine will have and are those that are of particular interest to us. We trust that the review of this proposal will be fair and that the impacts mentioned above and by others will be given due consideration and not be overlooked.

Yours Faithfully

Dan and Priscilla Morgan