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Nelson Bay
NSW 2315

31 January 2019

The Department of Planning NSW

SUBMISSION TO APPLICATION No SSD 6395 BOBS FARM QUARRY

We strongly object to this planning proposal in our region on the basis of:

- Its destruction of valuable Koala habitat,
- its deleterious effect on local residents through health impacts, noise, and traffic, and
- the impact on other fauna.

The Destruction of Koala Habitat

We are both members of Port Stephens Koalas and have relevant knowledge relating to the care and rescue of these animals. The loss of habitat and food sources for koalas in the Port Stephens area over recent years has been completely inconsistent with State policy on preservation of these animals. Port Stephens Council has in many cases failed to enforce habitat loss preventative measures under the Conservation of Koalas Plan of Management (CKPoM) through its approvals of DAs and lack of enforcement of conditions of consent.

Habitat loss now severely threatens the future sustainability of the Koala population on the Peninsula. This recent ABC Radio interview sums up the situation pretty well:

<https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/pm/koalas-are-in-danger-of-becoming-extinct-wwf-warns/10628492>

This mine proposal is another very significant threat to this ongoing destruction of habitat. The impact on valuable koala habitat is completely understated by the EIS. It fails to describe the full food loss, relies on old studies and incomplete information. The mitigation measures it proposes are on the whole a joke. They are either totally impractical or show little understanding of the impact of noise, lights, dust and clearance of vegetation on the health and wellbeing of koalas.

The mine would remove all of some 26ha of Supplementary Habitat for koalas, which the CKPoM regards as requiring a high level of importance for preservation. The EIS virtually dismisses this habitat as valueless.

While the EIS is a substantial document and one which no doubt cost the applicant a substantial amount to have conducted, it has the general weakness of all such documents that are funded by the applicant. It contains a mixture of facts, selective facts and opinion.

The latter two invariably are slanted to satisfy their client. A good example of this sort of reporting is the statements in relation to the narrowing of the vegetation corridor. It suggests only a loss of a third of the corridor, when in fact it is effectively between an 80% to 90% loss, leaving a useless token strip of no value to fauna.

Impact on Local Community

The extensive negative impact of this mine on the local human population is remarkable. The proximity of a huge rate of heavy traffic movements adjacent to the local school, the silicosis health threat to children at the school and local residents, the traffic noise and increase of traffic on the Nelson Bay Road are all of a level and quantum that would of themselves make such a proposal unable to be contemplated. But it seems commercial greed knows no bounds.

The proposed heavy traffic arrangements for entry onto Nelson Bay Road also deserve mention. They, in themselves, acknowledge the potential traffic disruption that would be caused by this proposal on what is already a very busy road, particularly during the tourist season, which effectively runs from November to April. The token mitigation arrangements that requires trucks to turn left and proceed a substantial way towards Nelson Bay before turning, will never be universally adhered to or effectively enforced. Even if it were, it sends a phenomenal number of heavy vehicles each day down a largely single lane carriageway with heavy daily local and visitor traffic. The impact on road surface wear is also not a factor and cost that has been considered as an impact on to local ratepayers and residents.

These many negative consequences need to be seriously considered by those making a decision on this proposal. In doing so they should put themselves in the position of local residents. Would they tolerate this sort of threat to what is essentially a country lifestyle if they were living at Bob's Farm?

Impact on other Fauna

The Koala is not alone in being threatened by this proposal and the EIS has listed nine other threatened species that would be affected. The part of EIS dealing with these impacts makes some remarkably biased, and fanciful statements to excuse admitted significant impact on the habitat by the proposal.

With respect to such animals as the sea eagle and most of the other species it suggests that the impact is acceptable as the mining activity is 'unlikely to drive the species to extinction'. This is an astonishing statement to describe an acceptable decision threshold for accepting the habitat loss and disturbance that would be caused.

Of particular note is also the quite fanciful statement to justify the impact on the squirrel glider. After acknowledging an extensive and significant loss of habitat and movement corridors for this creature, it constructs an untested, highly questionable scenario for its ability to glide over the highway to its nearest alternative habitat. Here the report transparently clasps at straws to sustain its argument of the acceptable nature of the proposed destruction.

Its arguments on the flying foxes and bats affected are equally formed from half-truths and lack of context. It fails to refer to the losses of these creatures from the local effects of climate change. The populations of flying foxes have been decimated over recent years through bushfires, drought and heat waves. Any further challenges to their viability in the area must be rigorously avoided.

Finally, the section in relation to the Powerful Owl. (p598), simply fails completely to even offer a mitigating argument, however tenuous as in the cases of the previously mentioned species. In effect, it admits the owls are present and the mining will effectively ensure their local extinction (pity about that!).

CONCLUSION

As residents of the Tomaree Peninsula we are strongly opposed to the sand mine in question for reasons related to:

the consequent eradication of valuable Supplementary koala habitat,

the inadequate and unrealistic mitigation measures proposed during and after its operation,

the high probability of negative impact on other threatened fauna species,

the unacceptable quality of life and health threats to the local community, which are inevitable, and

The unacceptable traffic congestion that would be caused on Nelson Bay Road.



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Sharon Gardy

31 January 2019