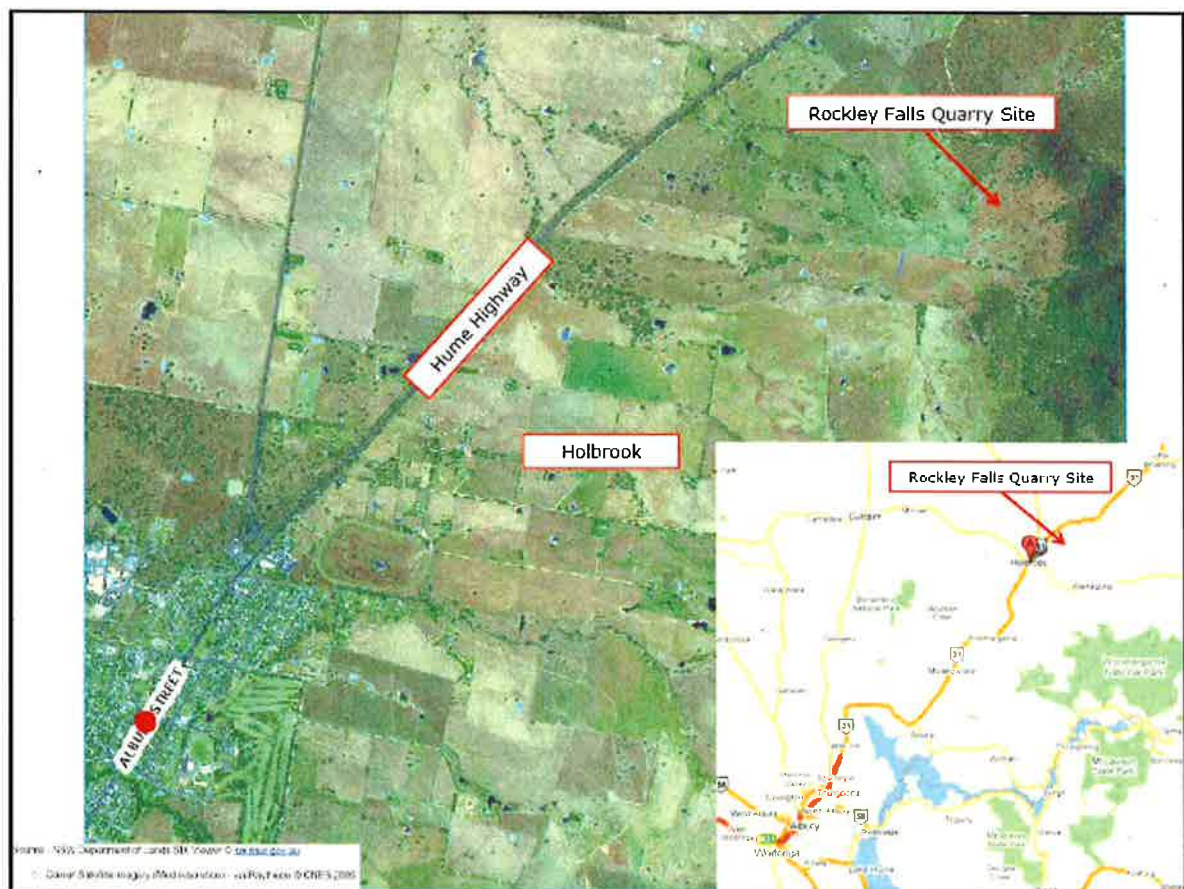


## ASSESSMENT REPORT

### Rockley Falls Quarry Extended Dry and Wet-Mix Batch Plants Operation Modification (07\_0078 MOD 6)

#### BACKGROUND

Abigroup Contractors Pty Limited (Abigroup) owns the Rockley Falls Quarry, located 4 kilometres (km) northeast of the village of Holbrook and 60 km north of Albury-Wodonga, in the Greater Hume local government area (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Rockley Falls Quarry local and regional context**

The quarry was approved by the Minister in June 2008 and was operated by the Hume Highway Woomargama Alliance (HHWA), a consortium consisting of Abigroup (the Proponent), the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS, formerly the Roads and Traffic Authority) and Sinclair Knight Merz. Extracted material was used by the HHWA to construct the Hume Highway duplication between the townships of Woomargama and Tabletop. This duplication was completed in late 2011.

The Minister's approval:

- allows production of up to 700,000 tonnes per annum (tpa) of hard rock quarry product until 2012 and 100,000 tpa from 2012 until 2028; and
- requires rehabilitation of the site post extraction.

Currently there are no extractive activities occurring at the quarry and Abigroup has indicated that it has no intentions to recommence extractive activities in the near future.

On 24 May 2010, the Minister approved a modification application under section 75W of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) for the establishment and use of a temporary dry-mix concrete batch plant to supply concrete for the construction of the Woomargama Bypass Project.

On 6 April 2011, the Minister approved another modification application under section 75W of the EP&A Act for the establishment and use of a temporary wet-mix concrete batch plant until 30 July 2011. The modification also extended operation of the quarry and the wet-mix batch plant for an hour each side of the previously approved operating hours, to 6am to 7pm, Monday to Friday, over this period.

### PROPOSED MODIFICATION

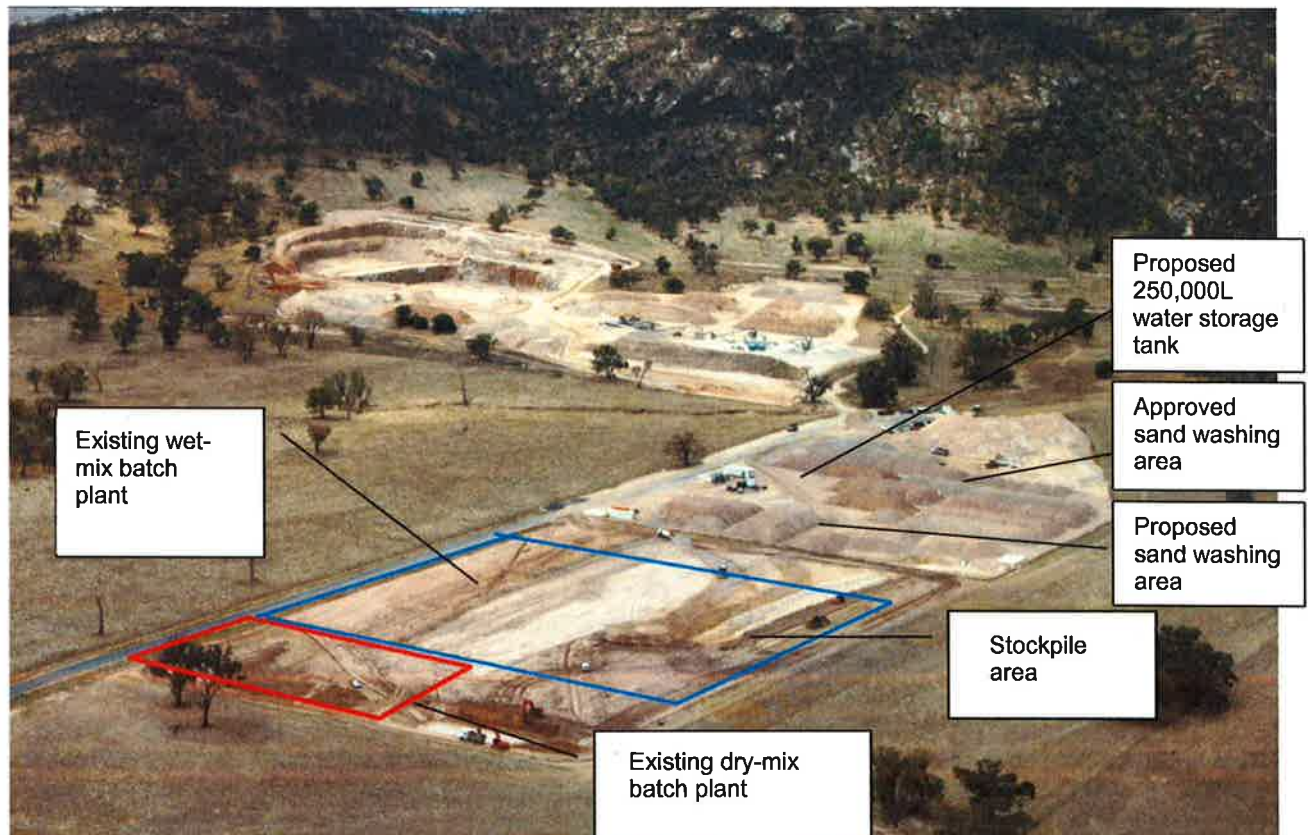
Abigroup is now asking the Minister to modify the project approval under section 75W of the EP&A Act, to use the existing batch plants to supply concrete for the construction of the Holbrook Bypass Project, which commenced in late 2011. Abigroup proposes to operate the two plants until October 2013 and to extend the operating hours (from the project's originally approved 7am – 6pm Monday to Friday and 8am – 1pm Saturday) to:

- 5am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 5am to 1pm on Saturday, until 30 September 2012 and between 1 June 2013 and 31 October 2013; and
- 4am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 4am to 1pm on Saturday, between 1 October 2012 and 31 May 2013.

The extended hours of batch plant operation and concrete haulage are sought to enable the delivery of concrete in the early morning and late afternoon, as RMS specifications prevent the placement of concrete when the ambient air temperature is below 5° C or above 32° C. It is therefore necessary to undertake paving in the early evening and into the night during summer period and in the early morning during winter period (to allow sufficient time for the poured concrete to set).

The haulage of concrete from the batch plants during October 2012 – May 2013 would be undertaken between 5am and 7pm Monday to Friday and 5am and 1pm on Saturday. During the same period, Abigroup proposes the 24-hour delivery of materials (primarily cement) to the batch plants Monday – Friday, however night-time deliveries (between 10pm and 7am Monday to Friday) would be limited to a total of 5 heavy vehicles.

Abigroup is also seeking to relocate the approved sand washing activities from its current location adjacent to the quarry extraction area to a new location closer to the batch plants, which is also in close proximity to existing stockpiles of manufactured sand (see Figure 2). No change in sand washing hours is proposed.



**Figure 2:** Existing batch plants and stockpile areas and the proposed sand washing location



## STATUTORY CONTEXT

### Part 3A

The project approval was granted by the Minister under Part 3A of the EP&A Act. In accordance with clause 3 of Schedule 6A of the EP&A Act, section 75W of the Act as in force immediately before its repeal on 1 October 2011 and as modified by Schedule 64, continues to apply to transitional Part 3A projects, such as the Rockley Falls Quarry. Consequently, this report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of section 75W of the Act.

### Approval Authority

Under section 75W, the Minister is the approval authority for the modification application. However, the Director, Mining and Industry Projects may determine the application under the Minister's delegation of 14 September 2011 as:

- the relevant local council has not objected to the proposal;
- Abigroup has not made any reportable political donations; and
- there are less than 10 public submissions in the nature of objections.

### Modification

The proposed modification does not involve major changes to the currently approved project. The temporary operation of the two plants was previously approved to supply concrete for the construction of the Woomargama Bypass Project and a section of the Hume Highway Duplication Project. The subject modification seeks to extend the operation of the two plants already established at the site to supply concrete for a subsequent stage of the Hume Highway upgrade.

The Department is satisfied that the proposed modification and associated environmental impacts are consistent with those previously approved. Therefore, the Department is satisfied that the proposed modification falls within the scope of Section 75W of the EP&A Act and may be determined.

### Consultation

Under Section 75W of the EP&A Act, the Department is not required to exhibit the modification application or undertake consultation. Notwithstanding, the Department referred the modification application to the RMS, the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) and Greater Hume Shire Council. None of the agencies object to the proposal.

## CONSIDERATION OF ISSUES

The Department has assessed the modification application in accordance with the relevant requirements of the EP&A Act. The key environmental issues for the application are discussed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Consideration of Environmental Issues**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Consideration</b>
<b>Noise</b>	<p>The proposed modification would potentially increase the noise from the site due to the extended operating hours and operation of the dry and wet-mix batch plants, which includes loading and handling of aggregate and additional heavy vehicle movements associated with product delivery.</p> <p>Activities to be undertaken during the extended hours of operation would consist of operating the two batch plants, sand washing, supplying the concrete to the Holbrook Bypass Project and supplying materials to the batch plants. The EA notes that extraction and crushing operations at the quarry are currently not being undertaken and are not likely to recommence in the near future. Abigroup has indicated that it already has sufficient crushed material to supply the highway upgrade site and batch plants.</p> <p>Notwithstanding, the EA includes noise modelling of all elements of the proposed modified project, including both approved extraction and proposed concrete batching activities. This modelling found that the proposed modification would not result in any exceedances of the project's noise criteria. The increase in noise levels as a result of the modification is therefore not considered to have a significant impact on noise levels at surrounding residences.</p> <p>The Department is satisfied that the proposal is unlikely to result in any significant noise-related impacts at surrounding sensitive receivers.</p>
<b>Air Quality</b>	<p>The proposed modification would potentially increase the generation of airborne particulates through the handling of raw materials which feed the batch plant, and the movement of vehicles. No additional surface disturbance is proposed.</p> <p>These activities are far enough away from surrounding sensitive receivers (the nearest residence is <i>Beerly</i>, at 1400 metres (m) distance) that any increase in dust would be insignificant.</p> <p>As noted above, there are no extraction and crushing activities currently occurring at the quarry and Abigroup has indicated that it has no intentions to recommence these activities in the near future.</p> <p>The quarry currently implements a dust management plan and monitors dust levels at a number of locations around the quarry. Air quality modelling predicts that the proposal is not likely to increase dust</p>

Issue	Consideration
	<p>levels above the relevant criteria included in the project approval and that the existing air quality criteria remain appropriate.</p> <p>The OEH agrees that the modification is unlikely to increase dust related impacts from the site. The Department is therefore satisfied that impacts on air quality as a result of the proposed modification would be minimal and can be managed using the existing conditions of approval.</p>
Traffic	<p>The extended operation of dry and wet-mix batch plants would result in a maximum of 32 hourly inbound and outbound truck movements, which is an increase of 12 hourly movements above the maximum predicted in the original EA. However, these truck movements would be offset by dispatches no longer undertaken of crushed aggregate, sand and dry mix for use in off-site concrete production for the Highway duplication project.</p> <p>The haulage of concrete from the batch plants would be limited to 5am to 7pm Monday to Friday and 5am to 1pm on Saturday from October 2012 until May 2013, even though both plants would be operational from 4am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 4am to 1pm on Saturday during the same period. The operation of the two plants is also planned to be temporary, until the completion of the Holbrook Bypass Project in October 2013.</p> <p>The RMS and the Department are satisfied that the modification would not result in any significant increases in traffic-related impacts compared with the approved operations.</p>
Water	<p>The EA predicts the operation of the wet-mix batch plant would require between 75,000 and 130,000 litres/day of additional water, whereas the dry-mix batch plant would require approximately 25,000 litres/day of additional water. This water would be sourced from the quarry's existing licensed bore and stored in a new 250,000 litre tank located between the existing stockpiles of manufactured sand. The EA found that the total volume of water used on-site would remain below the licensed allocation of the bore.</p> <p>The concrete batching process would generate approximately 2000 litres/day of waste water, with additional wastewater generated from truck washing. Abigroup proposes to install additional controls to capture and treat this water for recycling and/or release into the existing sedimentation basin on site. OEH in its submission noted that any water to be discharged would need to comply with the limits in the site's existing environment protection licence.</p> <p>Abigroup has proposed that the existing management plans applying to landforms on site, including the Erosion and Sediment Control Plan, would be reviewed and, if necessary, updated to reflect the modification, which is consistent with the requirements of the existing project approval.</p> <p>The Department and OEH are satisfied that the application contains sufficient assessment of potential water management issues and that any water related impacts would be minimal.</p>
Visual	<p>The temporary operation of the wet and dry-mix batch plants was previously approved to supply concrete for the construction of the Woomargama Bypass Project and a section of the Hume Highway Duplication Project. This modification seeks the temporary continued operation of the two plants already established at the site, consistent with the previously approved modifications.</p> <p>The two plants, including the existing stockpile area, are visible from the <i>Tumbarook, Quambatook, Beenly and Rockley Falls 1 and 2</i> residences. Visibility from the Hume Highway is considered to be minimal due to the low-lying nature of the site and the presence of trees between the quarry and the Highway.</p> <p>The existing aggregate stockpile area where the batch plants are located is up to 5 m in height and the dry-mix batch plant is approximately 10 m high and 30 m long. The wet-mix batch plant is approximately 24 m high and 60 m long.</p> <p>The proposal to extend the hours of operation would potentially increase impacts due to night lighting of the site, particularly as the two plants would operate 24 hours per day, Monday – Friday, during the October 2012 – May 2013 period.</p> <p>The current project approval includes a requirement for Abigroup to take all practical measures to mitigate off-site lighting impacts from the project to the satisfaction of the Director-General. Abigroup proposes to continue to implement a number of measures to reduce potential lighting impacts on surrounding receivers, including use of screening vegetation, appropriately locating lighting equipment, consultation with potentially-affected residents and the use of directional and low level lighting where appropriate.</p> <p>Due to the level of disturbance and existing machinery used in the area, the distance from sensitive receivers, and the proposed lighting management, the Department is satisfied that any visual impacts associated with the continued use of the batch plants would be minimal.</p> <p>The Department has recommended a condition requiring Abigroup to dismantle and remove the two batch plants following cessation of operation, including the requirement to rehabilitate the site consistent with existing conditions of approval.</p>
Other Issues	<p>The Department is satisfied that other issues associated with the proposal are minor and can be effectively managed under the existing conditions of approval.</p>

## RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

The Department is satisfied that the existing conditions of approval for the project are generally adequate to manage the development as modified by the application.

The Department has recommended additional conditions, including hours of operation of the batch plants and materials transport, removal of the batch plants and rehabilitation of the site following cessation of operation, as well as administrative updates of certain other conditions.

Abigroup does not object to the proposed conditions.

## CONCLUSION

The Department has assessed the application in accordance with the relevant requirements of the EP&A Act. The proposed modification would:

- allow for the production of concrete to be supplied for the Holbrook Bypass Project efficiently and cost-effectively;
- not cause any significant additional environmental impacts for the approved project.

The Department therefore considers that the modification is in the public interest and should be approved, subject to conditions.

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Director Mining and Industry Projects:

- **consider** the findings and recommendations of this report;
- **determine** that the proposed modification falls within the scope of section 75W of the EP&A Act;
- **approve** the proposed modification under Section 75W of the EP&A Act; and
- **sign** the attached Notice of Modification.



Kane Winwood  
Senior Planner

6/2/12



Howard Reed

A/Director, Mining & Industry Projects

6.2.12