

Director – Resource Assessments

Planning and Assessment

Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

Locked Bag 5022

PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

Submission via Portal

Dear Sir / Madam,

RE: SUBMISSION OPPOSING THE PROPOSED MARTIN'S CREEK QUARRY EXPANSION

I am writing to express significant concern regarding Daracon Group's proposal to expand operations at the Martin's Creek Quarry.

Personally, I was traumatised by their previous operations, waking up every morning to the roar of the first truck of the day and coming home from work in the afternoon, waiting for the last one to finish so we could relax and enjoy our home. I was able to handle the stress of the noise from Daracon's operations only because I believed that they would eventually held to account for their illegal and unconscionable behaviour. They are now seeking to 'undo' the relief we have experienced following them being held to account for that behaviour by requesting approval to recommence operations and specifically truck movements to unacceptable levels. I feel sick at the thought of a return to the previous level of operations by Daracon, after now experiencing living with normal levels and a more balanced mix of traffic along Tocal rd.

Daracon's submission asserts that they have adequately considered and addressed the community and environmental concerns which would be created by their proposed activities, however their proposal fails to adequately address social, community, economic and environmental issues and fails to allay my anxiety at their potential return to our streets.

Social and Community Issues

- Truck Route and movements: Daracon has reduced the proposed number of truck movements from their initial proposal, however by also amending their previous proposal to remove alternate routes and direct the full impact of their truck activity through one path, the communities impacted by their operations will be still unfairly targeted by their operations. All of the impact being felt in one community means that any reduction in road throughput is offset by a disproportionate impact on certain communities.
- Since Daracon first operated illegally in our community, the number of residential properties which also use the route to commute has also significantly increased. There are already major traffic issues at the existing Hunterglenn estate at Bolwarra Heights, at the East Maitland end of the Flat Road, on to the New England Highway and past Greenhills, and also on the Belmore Road intersection at Lorn. The

additional heavy vehicle movements will significantly impact myself and other residents by increasing travel time for those of us just wanting to commute across our home town to work. Traffic is frequently queued for unacceptable times at key parts of the day and this activity will cause significant further issues. There are no plans for any additional roads in this part of Maitland, and localised traffic has the road fully utilised. The geography of our area, involving rail lines and the river means that additional lanes and roads across Maitland have huge barriers. The lack of adequate road access to the national highway network along the route proposed by Daracon means that this proposal is completely unsuitable for the area. A fully funded link road, directly to the Pacific Highway from Martin's Creek would be the only acceptable solution to the traffic issues that this project will create, which I understand is not currently likely.

- I recognise that Daracon is proposing to enable their rail siding, however the residual road traffic is still unacceptable.
- Noise levels: One truck movement approximately every 90 seconds, will mean that noise levels from Tocal and Paterson roads will be in a constant state of flux. Rather than the current occasional noise from a heavy vehicle, the significant fluctuations in noise will be extremely distressing for residents along the route. Having lived through the trauma of Daracon's previous operations, this noise level and variation is debilitating to the mental health of those unlucky enough to have been subjected to their operations in the past. The noise from their trucks on country roads were clearly and loudly audible from inside houses.
- Hours of Operation: Daracon is currently committing to truck operations from 7am to 6pm, however this is still an 11 hour day, 5-6 days per week. Again, constant noise for this length of time per week is unacceptable. Further, experience from their previous operations has made clear that their likely intent will be to have these hours approved as a baseline and then consistently request extensions to take larger and larger contracts, starting as early as 5:30am. They were willing to operate like this knowingly illegally for many years, so I do not believe that they will be happy with any reduction in their hours longer term.
- Trust: Daracon have demonstrated that they will continue to pursue their private company profits at any cost to the community, including operating illegally if that was what it took. As residents, if this project is approved, we will live in constant fear of the next request and the next expansion, as they have clearly demonstrated their complete disdain for the community in which they exist. They have breached the community's trust again and again, and have only complied after multiple courts demanded they comply with their own restrictions, and only after wasting significant court time and bringing a local government to its knees while defending its position, which thankfully was eventually justified. This is not an entity who can be trusted and their behaviour should not be rewarded with ratification of any future activities which subject residents, the council area which they operate in, and also the authorities who will need to constantly monitor their actions to ensure that they are not breaching their requirements (again).

- Anti social behaviour: Living adjacent to Tocal Road, and a council reserve, I witnessed haulage drivers relieving themselves near my open wire back fence during lunch / bathroom breaks. I had to call our council and, on one occasion, police because this behaviour was so distressing in full view of my back yard, where my young daughters and I were home. This is the level of disdain that Daracon and their contractors have for the community. They believed that we do not deserve even basic consideration that our children will not be subjected to public urination in full view of my house. I have requested that my address be withheld from this submission. When local residents commented online during the previous discussions regarding the Daracon Quarry operations, they were subjected to comments from quarry truck drivers such as “just wait until we give them a taste of our air brakes on our way through town”. I therefore am fearful as to retribution by bullying truck drivers and Daracon representatives.
- Incremental Quarry Production around Maitland: In the intervening time since Daracon was forced to stop operations, another quarry has had their operations approved to expand. The Maitland roads and community already have an incremental increase in impacts from quarry operations. Our community is already experiencing the limit of what we can cope with in terms of local quarry operations, in place to benefit other parts of the state. Further incremental increases in local quarry road operations has a disproportionate impact on the communities to the immediate North of Maitland and is not necessary.
- Safety: Bolwarra Heights is a significant residential suburb, having expanded more since the previous Daracon operations. Our children board and alight school buses, walk along the edge of Tocal rd and frequently have to cross the rd. There are no crossings, traffic lights or guides to stop traffic and allow safe passage. Tocal rd also has a long stretch where there is little to no space to move off the road for cyclists or school children who need to wait off the side of the road until it is safe to cross. The significant increase in truck movements will cause a safety concern for my children.

Economic

Daracon will employ a very small number of people. Its operations will contribute little to the local economy, but please consider the cost.

Our rural communities provide significant resources to the local area. Communities such as Tocal and Paterson have amazing natural utility. River systems, stunning views and rural landscapes close to cities mean that we have opportunities for cottage industry, tourism opportunities, function venues, food and farm production and rural accommodation in our area. This has been on hold and not able to be properly utilised, because of the constant fear that one quarry, Daracon’s Martin’s Creek, will re-appear, completely removing any chance of any business of this type being successful. No tourist wants to be woken early on a Saturday to the roar of trucks every minute. The cost to the potential of this area, is simply unacceptable.

Environmental

Daracon proposes to clear native bushland and operate up to 12 hours per day.

Quarry operations by their nature create significant amounts of dust and noise. This area is home to large populations of the endangered lower Hunter spotty gum, immense bird life, echidnas, koalas and numerous other native species. Aside from the complete decimation of the immediate area in which they will operate, and the resulting dust and noise impacts, Daracon's road activities will cause high levels of noise in the bird and wildlife corridors which run through and around the communities through which they propose to plough 280 truck movements per day.

I have personally witnessed local echidnas travelling across Bolwarra heights roads on an annual basis. Constant truck movements and vibration will significantly impact our local wildlife.

The dust impact is also not localised to the actual quarry. The roads between the Martin's Creek Quarry and the New England Highway are comparatively narrow, country roads. They are not built to be major haulage routes, so potholes (increasing noise further) and dust from road edges are a major problem. Further, also as previously highlighted the haulage drivers frequently stop the trucks along the road for their breaks. I have had clouds of dust blow over my washing in my yard, suffered hay fever and watched dust blow across my yard as a haulage truck from the quarry brakes near my yard to pull over. Thankfully, this has stopped since the quarry operations ceased, but I live in dread of the possibility of this returning.

Summary

In summary, the social impact of Daracon's activities will be dire. Their previous behaviour and complete disregard of community impacts in the past demonstrates that they are driven purely by the promise of profit for their private company, which employs a meagre couple of dozen permanent local workers, to the detriment all of those of us in the communities of Paterson, Bolwarra Heights, Bolwarra, Martin's Creek and even to Lorn and East Maitland. If the truck movements of this quarry are permitted, thousands of people will be negatively impacted for the rest of their lives, for the profit of a very select few. Our house values will drop, we will worry about our children's safety and suffer with additional dust and less wildlife. Changes in the local community, other recent quarry expansion approvals and existing road issues mean that this proposal is not appropriate.

I implore you to set an example to other companies who may seek to blatantly ignore legal approval limits and community concerns, only to turn around and request another chance, after having to be held to account for abusing their previous position and using significant government and legal resources fighting to maintain their conduct.

Yours Faithfully,

Kristen Gadd