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Re: Martins Creek Quarry Project  
Application No. SSD-6612

## **I OPPOSE THIS PROJECT**

I moved to the Paterson area from Sydney in early 2009, and purchased a home in the village of Paterson in early 2011. My daughter currently attends All Saints College in Maitland, and I am self-employed around the district several days per week.

As a resident of Paterson during the period 2011-2018, the main impacts on my household from quarrying operations at that time, were related to noise and safety from the volume of trucks on the road. The empty trucks passing through as early as 5.45am could be heard approaching for some time as they bounced along our 'rural' roads. Trying to exit my street to the main road by car, with often limited/obstructed views on either side was an exercise in patience. Travelling to work and/or other villages and having to be mindful of laden trucks not giving way on single-lane bridges was also testing. Shopping at the local businesses was sometimes a matter of how brave you felt in trying to park, sometimes reverse-park, into the limited parking spaces, knowing you had a truck on your tail.

The other significant impact at that time, which is harder to quantify, was the interruption to the sense of peace and quiet you would expect to find in a small, rural community. I grew up in the country but lived in Sydney and overseas for many years before arriving in Paterson. Having moved from the hustle and bustle of inner-city (Sydney) living, listening to the constant movement of laden and empty trucks as they accelerated out of or decelerated into Paterson was intrusive to the point that I would often close the doors and windows.

In September 2016 Daracon lodged an EIS to the then Department of Planning & Environment, which allowed 6 weeks for public exhibition, and in response I lodged an online submission in November 2016 opposing the proposed expansion of Martins Creek Quarry, setting out reasons for my opposition. My submission was one of some 878 individual submissions, of which 51% were from community members while 44% were from Daracon employees and contractors (submitting as individuals). Of the community member submissions, 80% came from the communities of Paterson, Bolwarra Heights, Martins Creek, Vacy, Bolwarra, Brandy Hill and Duns Creek, while the remaining 20% came from Other Localities. This statistical information comes from Daracon's Martins Creek Quarry Update Information Sheet 1, dated June 2018. In that same information sheet, we were advised that approximately 50% of the 878 submissions opposed the project and approximately 50% were in support, with a high number of those expressing support having an existing relationship with Daracon.

Following several court cases between Dungog Shire Council and Daracon, in which the courts found the latter to be operating outside their approved extraction limit of 330,000 tonnes per annum, Daracon closed the quarry in September 2019. The sense of peace was felt almost immediately, with the Paterson Progress Association noting in the December 2019 edition of the Paterson Psst that they had received many comments along those lines.

And now in June 2021, we are being invited to make a submission on the amended proposal for the expansion of Martins Creek Quarry, which includes extraction of 1.1 million tonnes per annum, with 500,000 tonnes of that being hauled by road, all passing through Paterson at the rate of up to 40 trucks per hour, plus conversely, empty trucks returning to the quarry supposedly at 40 movements per hour but that would depend on traffic conditions and length of the return route travelled prior to arriving and travelling through Paterson.

With that proposed level of trucks on the road, again the primary impacts for my household will be around noise and safety, along with disruption to peace and quiet you would expect to enjoy in a small rural community.

The sheer volume of reports/amendments to this revised proposal would take some considerable time to read/analyse and yet the public exhibition and time allowed to make a submission was initially just one month, then extended by a further 28 days. I have read through the amendment that relates to traffic so I can fathom how 40 trucks per hour, in each direction, is supposed to be acceptable for many small communities, as well as larger communities, on the haul route.

As noted at the start of this submission, my daughter now attends All Saints College in Maitland and most days of the week travels to and from school by bus, with an occasional drop-off at or pick-up from school by myself.

On weekday mornings I walk with my daughter some 100 metres to the intersection of Sloane Street and the main road and I wait on the corner (outside the Stockers and Partridge business) while my daughter crosses the road to an informal bus stop. The bus more or less pulls into a parking lane on the main road to collect a varying number of students, some days three, other days there can be six-plus. There is minimal spare room on the road and it not uncommon for cars following the bus to swing a bit wider on the main road to pass the bus. The bus travels along Tocal Road (the proposed Haul Route 1) until Flat Road, and then continues along Paterson Road to Lorn and beyond. The afternoon return bus travels through Lorn and then follows Paterson Road into Bolwarra/Largs, crossing Dunmore Bridge at Woodville and along Paterson Road, making its way into Duns Creek and then onto Paterson. My daughter gets off the bus at an informal bus stop outside Stockers & Partridge and then walks the short distance home. The morning and afternoon buses also collect/drop-off students adjacent Paterson Post Office at the intersection of Duke and King Streets.

After my daughter has caught the morning bus, I return home to commence my drive to work and, as indicated in my 2016 submission, I mostly need to turn right from Sloane Street onto the main road. This involves being patient and vigilant, with traffic approaching from my left only in view for some 50 metres prior due to the steep hill, and to my right, oncoming traffic is often substantially obscured by vehicles parked at a designated pull-in/parking bay for Stockers and Partridge. These parked vehicles range from cars right up to fuel tankers and large trucks. The alternate exit route onto the main road is via William Street, although that intersection is closer to the main road's speed limit change from 50km/hour to 100km/hour, and my experience is that vehicles in both directions are often travelling faster than the designated 50km/hour.

In the 2016 Census, it was recorded that Paterson's population was 892, which included 244 families. Of the 458 people who were employed at that time, 306 indicated that they drove a vehicle to work. The wider area, which includes Vacy and beyond, has grown since then but with the next Census not due to be conducted until August this year, I am relying on my lived experience over the past several years, being there is increased traffic on the road, and both my daughter and I are now often waiting longer periods of time before she is able to safely cross the road to the bus stop or I am able to safely drive out onto the main road, from either of Sloane or William Streets.

If the expansion is approved at the proposed levels, the safety risk for my daughter crossing the main road in the morning multiplies substantially as both individuals and trucks jostle to get to their destination quickly, and no doubt I will likely be faced with always having to exit Paterson via William Street during the Monday-Friday working week from a pure safety point of view.

By way of example of my concerns around safety, and without the increased trucks on the road, on Thursday 24 June 2021, my daughter just missed the morning bus and so we followed it with the intention of being able to join the bus at the second but informal bus stop in Bolwarra, which is just south of the junction of Tocal and Paterson Roads. As the bus pulled into the first designated Bolwarra bus stop, just south of Maitland Vale Road, a second school bus was pulling out from that stop and I slowed to allow it to proceed ahead of my vehicle. It then indicated it was turning left into a side street (Wesley Street) and I slowed down but had to come to a complete stop because the bus could not complete the turn and was stopped half in the side street and half on the main (Tocal) road. Eventually I and two vehicles behind me had to go around the bus and I continued toward the desired bus stop. I had to again be mindful of a vehicle trying to exit the BP Service Station (on the corner of Tocal and Paterson Roads), while also monitoring the vehicle coming from Paterson Road which had sped up in order to get ahead of me in the merging process of Paterson and Tocal Roads. I then had to safely pull over below the informal bus stop just as the bus was arriving behind me. I pride myself on being a safe and mindful driver but all the while I was thinking about this scenario occurring in a future which may include not only trucks from Brandy Hill Quarry coming along Paterson Road through Largs/Bolwarra but also trucks from an expanded Martins Creek Quarry travelling into Bolwarra along Tocal Road. And then I thought about all those vehicles that also need to exit out of the Hunterglenn Estate in Bolwarra onto this main thoroughfare. The mind just boggles at the concept.

Another example of my concerns occurred on Friday 9 July (school holidays), where a two-vehicle accident on the main road in Paterson (adjacent Tucker Park) resulted in traffic being diverted off the main road and along my street (Sloane Street). Aside from increased traffic of individual vehicles, there were multiple vehicles towing caravans, semi-trailers, tour bus and trailer, and truck-and-dog combination all travelling along Sloane Street in either direction and at a fair speed, and I can honestly say I was relieved I did not have to reverse out of my driveway for the two-hour period that the main road was closed. If an incident of this nature was to occur in a future which included the hourly rate of 40 trucks in each direction, can we be honestly expected to believe Martins Creek Quarry would put a halt on their trucks until the main road was clear again?

Also in the past month, there have been two separate incidents north of Paterson which have each required six-plus emergency service vehicles, all having to travel at speed from Maitland along Tocal Road and through Paterson. Both incidents (including one involving a collision between a train and vehicle) happened in the late afternoon/early evening at a time when many vehicles are travelling that route on return from place of work. There are very limited opportunities to safely overtake and again, imagine a future where these emergency services have to contend with multiple trucks.

Living in the village of Paterson, I continue to do the bulk of my grocery shopping at the Paterson Friendly Grocer and the Paterson Butchery, and almost exclusively purchase fuel at the Paterson Service Station. I regularly go to the Paterson Post Office to collect mail, both for myself and for the Paterson Valley Swimming Club, and also visit the Paterson Chemist when needed, and have on several occasions attended the Paterson Medical Centre. For a small rural village, we are lucky to have such an array of businesses, and there are others I haven't included but have supported at various times in the past.

I do wonder how it will be possible for them all to continue to operate in a meaningful way if the Quarry is approved to expand in line with the current application. The level of heavy traffic will surely deter many from stopping outside the shops, which in turn will impact the services these businesses offer the local and wider communities, not to mention the opportunities for employment of local people, of all ages. That latter aspect would then surely negate a fair chunk of one of the 'key benefits of the revised project ... employment of approximately 22 full time equivalent employees', as noted in Daracon's Martins Creek Quarry Update Information Sheet 3, dated May 2021. The local businesses of Paterson already employ well in excess of 22 people.

I haven't yet considered the impact of an expanded Quarry on the value of my property, and for the foreseeable future, am not intending to sell. I do make the observation though that over the past 12 months, there has been a flurry of property sales around the general district, sometimes within less than a week of listing. Some of this activity is no doubt related to people escaping the city because of Covid-19 but it does beg the question: How often do real estate brochures talk about the 'idyllic rural lifestyle'? What will be idyllic about 40 trucks an hour passing through your 'rural lifestyle'?

It goes without saying that if the Quarry is approved to operate at this amended level, the sense of peace and quiet you would expect in a small rural village will disappear, something which was very much experienced during the years 2011-2018 but which was a huge relief to have return in late 2019.

I don't make any apology for the length of this submission because the outcome of the proposed application potentially affects my household, along with so many households in the many surrounding communities, for the next 25 years.

And finally, I have not made any reportable political donations in either the past two years or at any other time in my voting life. Further, in the recent Upper Hunter by-election, I did not vote for either of the two major political parties (National Party and Labor). By voting for an independent candidate, I was fully aware it would be unlikely they would garner enough votes to win the seat but I felt that voting for someone prepared to run on a platform which addressed local issues was a better option than voting for a representative of the bigger political parties who may or may not be truly listening to the concerns of their electorate.

Thank you for your consideration.

25 July 2021