

Chantal Parslow Redman
Co Campaign Manager Save Port Stephens Koalas

30 July 2021

Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
c/-James McDonough

RE: Submission: Martin's Creek Quarry Project Proposal

I submit this letter as Co-Campaign Manager of "Save Port Stephens Koalas" and as a local resident in **objection** to Daracon's Amended Development Application, number SSD-6612. This application includes the expansion of the existing quarry site, a significant increase in extraction and freight and clearing of 21 hectares of native vegetation, including threatened wildlife habitat.

Community members and action groups have been vocal in their objection to the application, predicting that the development will decrease local amenity, property values and business activity for tourism, hospitality and events industries as well as increased noise, dust and toxic air pollutants. Finally, of great concern are the impacts to native wildlife, particularly the resident koala populations on site. Residents have documented evidence of an active local population of koalas and other threatened species.

The Biodiversity Assessment Report prepared by Conacher Consulting Pty Ltd in May 2021 indicates that a number of threatened species will be 'significantly impacted', including koalas, Regent Honeyeaters, Swift Parrots and Spotted-tailed Quolls. The site area is within the Barrington Area of Regional Koala Significance and koalas have been detected within the project area by several different environmental consultants' assessments since 2007. The report states: *"the site is also likely to contain Core Koala Habitat as a resident population of the Koala is considered to be present, as evidenced by recent sightings and historical records of a Koala population"*.

Last year, myself and Victoria Jack mounted a highly successful grass-roots environmental campaign that raised awareness of the impact of the expansion of the Brandy Hill Quarry and other developments will have on koalas and koala

habitat locally and within Port Stephens. As one of the last remaining inland core koala habitat areas, it is of fundamental importance that our local koalas are protected. Our campaign was so successful that as a group and as an individual, we were nominated for local Community Awards on Australia Day.

The Brandy Hill Quarry is only a stones-throw away from Martin's Creek Quarry.

In the several months that we campaigned in 2020, our facebook group grew to over 5500 concerned locals, national and international members. We featured in over 220 media sources, including interviews on all major news channels, twice on The Project, breakfast and afternoon radio, multiple front-page print media, and international media articles. Our voice and concern for our local wildlife habitat was heard around the world. Our koalas were under the spotlight.

Our campaign was so successful in raising awareness of the threats of habitat destruction on our local wildlife and the rising tide of community opposition, that we garnered celebrity support and endorsement by a wide variety of actors, comedians, singers and influencers including Olivia Newton-John, Jimmy Barnes, Colin Hay and Magda Szubanski, to name just a few.

The mounting opposition and public outcry caused Sussan Ley MP, Federal Environment Minister to delay her decision regarding the Brandy Hill Quarry expansion several times. The Minister and her key Advisors meet with our group and discussed the situation in detail. The community opposition against granting this quarry an additional licence grew so intense that the Parliamentary email system "crashed". The server could not cope with the flood of opposing emails. Sussan Ley MP's office was inundated with phone calls of concern.

Despite the success and breadth of our campaign, the Brandy Hill Quarry was granted approval to expand under a 30-year licence, but with significant caveats as an outcome of our local wildlife campaign. The IPC also flagged serious areas of concern and constraints with current ineffective environmental law. 52 hectares of core koala habitat has been granted approval to be cleared, but only after 74 hectares of pasture to the south of the site is rehabilitated and replanted with koala feed trees. Work can only begin on Stage 2 when these trees are of a suitable age and size. This type of restriction to work and operate is a new concept. The Brandy Hill Quarry Representatives are also in the process of talks with the University of Newcastle Koala experts to create a possible research project and track the validity and viability of trying to re-

establish koala habitat – a process that has never been achieved before. The community is watching.

Last year, an NSW Upper House Inquiry found that, without urgent government intervention, koalas would be extinct by 2050 and “fragmentation and loss of habitat poses the most serious threat to koala populations in New South Wales”. The core koala habitat at Brandy Hill Quarry has already been flagged for destruction. The Martin’s Creek Quarry expansion proposes a further unacceptable loss and degradation of core koala habitat. These are koala populations that have already suffered the devastating effects of drought, bushfires and land clearing. Enough is enough.

In 2019, the NSW Land and Environment Court found that Daracon had been conducting unlawful operations on the site since 2012. This decision does not imbue confidence that Daracon has the capacity to successfully undertake the delicate task of conserving koala habitat within their project area. Regardless, the edge effects of blasting, extraction, processing and freight are likely to negate any efforts to retain a healthy koala population in the area should the application succeed.

“Save Port Stephens Koalas” object to this proposal based on strong community opposition and the unacceptable impacts that further loss of core koala habitat will have on the remaining local populations. Our local koala population simply cannot sustain any further habitat destruction.

As my three young children have asked me, “The koalas need trees to live. Why are these rocks more important than our koalas?”

Yours Sincerely

Chantal Parslow Redman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chantal Parslow Redman', with a stylized, flowing script.

Local Resident and Co-Campaign Manager of “Save Port Stephens Koalas”

Member of Koala Koalition EcoNetwork Port Stephens and VOWW (Voice of Wallalong, Woodville and Surrounds)