

Nigel Waters

31 July 2021

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

RE: Objection: Martin's Creek Quarry Project Proposal SSD-6612

I submit this letter as a resident of Port Stephens LGA, which borders the site of this proposal, and as an active member of several local environmental groups.

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 predict that the development would decrease local amenity, and lead to increased noise, dust and toxic air pollutants. A major is the impact on native wildlife, particularly the resident koala populations on the 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, 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". These are koala populations that have already suffered the devastating effects of drought, bushfires and land clearing. .

The Martin's Creek Quarry expansion proposes a further unacceptable loss and degradation of core koala habitat.

I understand that in 2019, the NSW Land and Environment Court found that Daracon had been conducting unlawful operations on the site since 2012. This finding does not give the community any 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.

The proposal also has unacceptable implications for safety and noise from the additional heavy truck traffic it would generate on already overloaded and inadequate roads. I understand Maitland Council has objected to the proposal on these grounds and support their concerns.

Enough is enough – **this expansion should not be approved.**

This proposal raises similar issues to those raised by the Brandy Hill Quarry, nearby, a major expansion of which was approved last year. As a result of a major community campaign, the Brandy Hill Quarry approval was subject to significant caveats and conditions, including a novel new requirement to only commence later stages of the quarrying after koala feed trees to be planted on rehabilitated land have reached sufficient maturity to be effective wildlife habitat.

At the very least, if any expansion of the Martins Creek Quarry is approved, it should be subject to similar conditions as the Brandy Hill Quarry.

I have no objection to this submission being published in full and unredacted.

Nigel Waters

Member of Koala Coalition EcoNetwork Port Stephens and Port Stephens Koalas
Executive Committee member, EcoNetwork Port Stephens
Port Stephens Environmental Citizen of the Year 2019