Martins Creek Quarry Project - Objection to Proposal
BACKGROUND - Having lived and worked in the Paterson area for 60 of my 70 years I have seen many changes in the social fabric of the surrounding communities and utilisation of the resources of the area. Although now not living close to the proposed haul route or the quarry we feel the effects of major increases as proposed through our community interaction and access to businesses and facilities within the town. We also see the anguish created for those more directly affected and speak on their behalf as well.

THE QUARRY - The Martins Creek Quarry was initially established to supply rail ballast for NSW railways and fulfilled that role until the early 90's when NSW Railways considered it unviable to continue operations due to conditions placed upon it by Dungog Shire Council and the operation was eventually sold to Daracon Pty. Initially operations continued with little change apart from an increase in road transport traffic which until recent times was considered tolerable by most of the population.

Daracon is a very successful and aggressive competitor in many major projects in and around the Hunter area and in 2016-17 secured a contract for a very large contract in the region which required a huge increase in output from the quarry of which a large part was transported by road. This saw an increase in the number of heavy vehicle movements through Paterson and Martins Creek increase to a point that was clearly dangerous and intolerable to those residents living close to the main thoroughfare through the villages. Use of Gresford Road and Maitland Road for any recreational purpose ie walking, running or cycling was clearly too dangerous and out of the question.

THE PROPOSED QUARRY UPGRADE - I understand at the time of high output in 2016-17 that the output of the quarry was similar to that proposed in the current submission 23104167. If approved this will have the direct effect of formalising the conditions that the community were forced to endure at that time. The noise for those living along the haulage route was beyond belief along with the dust, fumes and physical danger of the vehicles. For others living further away and not exposed to the direct effects of the haulage traffic it became a challenge to drive through the village and must have had a severe impact on the several businesses within the town. Even after the haulage hours were reduced due to complaints the number of truck movements did not change and the frequency of movements increased given the shorter timeframe available. It should be noted here that Daracon were operating illegally through this whole period well outside the development consent.
Residents therefore have "lived" experience of the effects of the quarry working at its proposed output.

DUST AND NOISE - Dust and noise pollution are at a high level and traffic congestion is clearly evident especially around the King St and Duke St intersection which has a tight turning circle requiring a truck and dog combination travelling towards Martins Creek to swing wide of the kerb and well across the opposite lane to negotiate the corner. During peak periods the trucks are bumper to bumper so the effect in this section is magnified manifold.

**Daracons assertion that “the Revised Project is not expected to have any adverse impacts on the safety of the road network or other road users” needs to be taken with a very large grain of salt. It is unrealistic to expect that an increase in heavy vehicle traffic on the scale proposed will have no effect on either safety or social amenity.**

BUILDINGS - There are many historical buildings in this area as well and the effect of vibration have resulted in building damage. None of these buildings have been constructed to deal with this environment in terms of structural suitability of occupant comfort. Additionally many are placed very close to the main thoroughfare having been built up to 100 years ago when this type of threat was never envisaged.

SOCIAL AMMENITY - The quiet rural atmosphere of the place has, over the last couple of decades, attracted many families to the area and helped to build a strong community with schools and community organisations experiencing growth and vibrancy. The social amenity of the area is important, and I feel, will be put at risk if this development is allowed to proceed. Although a small community the main business area of Paterson is a very busy hub on most days and becoming more so. The proposed increase in heavy vehicle movements will exacerbate an already stretched ability to cope with even local small vehicle traffic.

**In both Daracon’s response to submissions and also in the Department of Planning recommendation the social impact on individuals and businesses appears to have been largely ignored.**

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS - The quarry expansion will be felt most directly by the residents of Martins Creek and close surrounding areas although there is to be some road upgrade works to lessen the direct effects of truck movements on the village proper. The dust and noise however will be problematic and although EPA requirements for dust control will (or should) be implemented it is unlikely that no increase in airborne dust will occur for those close to the site. Noise is another matter and an increase in vehicular traffic, machinery operation and frequency of blasting within the quarry site will virtually guarantee an increase in noise continuity and volume. The proposal includes the clearing of some 40ha of woodland. This is never without consequence for plant, animal and birdlife and should be condemned in this age of environmental sensitivity. Noise dust and vibration will be an ongoing concern both in proximity to the quarry and along the entire haulage route.

CONCLUSION - The community has at no stage sought the closure of the quarry but simply that the effects on the community be maintained at a level that the available infrastructure and the community at large can deal with. As far as the development being of "State Significance" is concerned there are many quarries producing large quantities of the andesite product within the state with some quite close by and it is suggested that the project be relabelled "Daracon Significant". In virtually all cases where major quarry production upgrades have been allowed to proceed there have been major upgrades in infrastructure undertaken to address environmental concerns and lessen the effects on nearby communities. The Road infrastructure in Dungog Shire is already in an appalling state due to lack of funding and cannot be expected to handle the massive increase in heavy traffic that will be created if the development is allowed to proceed. The meagre road improvements that Daracon have proposed will do little to address the concerns and fears of those affected. The "improvements" at the King and Duke St intersection will involve some uptake of existing pedestrian space and bring the traffic even closer to two valuable heritage assets. The effects of traffic increase further along the proposed haul route(s) will also be significant through residential areas and several school zones on roads not designed for this purpose.
The effect on real estate values along the entire haul route will also not be insignificant particularly in the closer proximity areas such as Paterson and Martins Creek and compensation to those effected should be considered mandatory.
In my view If approval for the production increase is granted it should only be under the following conditions:
1. That the major proportion of the production increase be transported by rail rather than road or that a purpose built haul road be constructed to convey the materials that will not disrupt local communities
2. That the residents close to the quarry site be offered compensation or relocation.
End of Submission