Paterson Post Office - Phillip and Michele Ellicott

Martins Creek Quarry Project

Application No. SSD-6612

After consideration of the Department of Planning assessment and approval of this project we wish to lodge the following submission and objection to the application.

I wanted to be able to speak and present my submission at the public hearing earlier this week however as the Paterson Post Office owner and being a one person operation, it was not possible for me to attend. However I did have it on Livestream and watched between customers.

**Overview.**

We have owned the Paterson Licensed Post Office on the corner of King and Duke Sts for more than 14 years and lived in Paterson for over 35 years. We have had firsthand experience of what the applicant did to this town. The current Post Office building was established in 1885 - which predates the quarry by many years. We should have just as much right on a historical basis to be considered. The Post Office has over 170 P.O.Boxes, and on a weekly basis hand out over 500 parcels to customers and process up to 600 outgoing parcels.

Paterson is a rural village and as such we expect to have a variety of trucks passing through. These trucks include stock feed, chicken farm, milk tankers, heavy machinery and shop deliveries. These all benefit Paterson and the surrounding area – our roads should not be used as a super freeway for gravel trucks.

**Traffic.**

The applicant is proposing a maximum of 40 trucks per hour – 5 days per week with a maximum of 280 truck movements per day for up to 50 days then 200 truck movements per day after that. This will put an insurmountable strain on the road network all the way from Martins Creek to East Maitland.

The Department notes that Gostwyck Bridge – “A two-lane (single lane for heavy vehicles) steel truss and timber girder bridge supported by concrete piers spanning the Paterson River on Dungog Road.” This is not correct as for years a giveway sign has been in operation for all traffic. Therefore this is a single lane bridge.

With up to 40 extra truck movements per hour there has to be problems with queuing at Gostwyck Bridge, Paterson railway gates, the intersection at Bolwarra and most importantly Melbourne St East Maitland – yet the Department has used Umwelts assurances, data and statistics so come to the conclusion that this will not cause any additional lengthy delays – not acceptable.

The applicant proposes “to upgrade the Gresford Road and Dungog Road intersection and provide a sheltered right turn lane on Gresford Road and extend the existing south-bound acceleration lane on Gresford Road, reducing the potential for rear-end type accidents”. Have any owners of the land being used to widen end lengthen the intersection been approached or given approval to use their property?

We have had 5 accidents in front of the Paterson Historical Museum in the last 4 years, mainly due to speed approaching Paterson along Gresford Road, with rain making the corner dangerous. Also the blind intersection of Church Street and Gresford Road handles quite a lot of traffic coming from residents of Webbers Creek Road and Boulton Drive, along with those attending the public school and the preschool. With 40 additional truck movements per hour it will be much more difficult to safely exit onto Gresford Road.

A Service NSW van regularly attends Paterson and is parked in front of the Anglican church and is well patronised. How will 40 trucks per hour affect this service?

**Parking in Paterson.**

The application shows that they want to cut part of the corner of King and Duke Streets and remove the 10 minute parking space out the front of the Post Office. The Department considers this a road upgrade – it is not an upgrade – its a downgrade – as far Paterson is concerned.

In Umwelt’s report it states “The removal of the car parking space in front of the Post Office, at the King Street and Duke Street, was subject to an extensive consultation process with DSC and the local community of Paterson and the
surrounding area. The current design allows for the relocation of the existing driveway on the north side of the intersection slightly west, to improve the space allocation for parking on either side of the intersection and improve carparking capacity along the northern kerb line. While the carpark space will be relocated,
there is no loss of on-street parking at this intersection.” There is no mention in their submission that this is a specially designated 10 minute parking space. A representative from Umwelt came into the post office with the diagram of what Daracon wanted to do. I advised immediately that I was against their proposal. This is their idea of consultation with the community – disregard anything negative.

As we own the Post Office licence this will directly affect our business and it is critical that it remains in place where it is. It is used by our customers, many elderly, to get their P.O. box mail, pay a bill or post a parcel. Armaguard security van utilises this space to enable cash delivery and pickup from our office. As stated before we process in excess of 1,100 parcels a week and this 10 minute parking space where it is currently located is vital. This parking space is also used by patrons of the newsagent/cafe across the road to quickly pick up their newspapers, bread or coffee. Putting an extra space across the road is not acceptable.

Daracon purchased a block of land in the business district some time ago. It is a greatly sloped block down to the river and they are convinced that it can be used for extra parking. The entrance to this block is right on the edge of the intersection of King and Duke sts. Entry and exit to this so called off street parking would appear to be extremely dangerous.

What right does the applicant have to detrimentally affect our business and other business’s in Paterson just for their benefit? Daracon is not the consent authority for parking in Paterson yet they seem to have convinced the Department that it will be done for them.

**Financial Benefit.**

I can see no financial benefit to Paterson – only to Daracon. When the quarry was operational, businesses in Paterson received little or no patronage from quarry operations; in fact they attract a lot more clients at the moment with it closed down.

A promise to provide new footpaths – where? – and fund crossings – where? If they are talking about pedestrian crossings – RMS has already ruled these out.

All the businesses in Paterson are family owned and run with more staff involved than the 22 FTE working at the quarry (when in full production) Don’t our existing staff matter? How many of the staff who will work at the quarry live in the Martins Creek / Paterson area ?

In the last 18 months Paterson has flourished as more people came to shop and utilise the centre’s facilities – with the disappearance of the large number of quarry trucks that used to pass through. If this application is successful in its current form Paterson will once again suffer the brunt of the massive amount of trucks through the village.

**Other Objections.**

It is noted in the Departments assessment report and says that Dungog Council did not object to the project. That is strictly not correct – Dungog Council required a maximum of 150,000 tpa via road with a limit of 30 laden truck per day for approval.

**Other Options.**

The applicant should be made to stay with what they currently are legally allowed ie 150,000 tonnes per annum by road and make use of the existing rail siding to transport any increase in tonnage granted. The current rail siding at Bloomfield Colliery in East Maitland could be used as an unloading point and this has direct access to the New England Highway.

**Departments Statements and Conclusions.**

“The Department acknowledges that there is some uncertainty regarding the road haulage limits that have applied to the quarry at various points over its life. There is also evidence that the quarry has at times operated outside of the conditions of its approvals. However, the Department’s role at this stage is not to prosecute potential historical non-compliances but to assess the Project as proposed, including the traffic impacts.” **Response** – I understand that the Department cannot use past non-compliance as part of its assessment – so neither can any submission use it.

“The Department also recognises that the proposed annual road haulage limit of 500,000 tpa represents a rate that is not dissimilar to historical road transportation rates undertaken by the quarry over an approximate 18-year period between 2002 and 2019, including a period of approximately 10 years when the quarry was operated by NSW Government through Railcorp.” **Response** – as seen in the previous statement the Department cannot use past non-compliance but in this section it is now using it to help justify approval in the sense that the area should be use to this --so it’s OK.

“Subject to conditions, the Department considers that the traffic and transport impacts of the Project are acceptable.” **Response** - Up to 280 trucks per day and 40 trucks per hour is absolutely not acceptable.

“On balance, the Department considers that the benefits of the Project outweigh its residual costs and that the Project is in the public interest and is approvable, subject to strict conditions of consent.” **Response:** What balance ? Whose benefits ? The Department does not live in this area – the owners of Daracon do not live here. I do not think the Department has put any weight on the more than 90% of submissions of the locals opposing this application who will be most affected by this proposal.

**Our Conclusion.**

Allowing the proposed expansion in the way that Daracon wants will have a detrimental effect on our business and that of other businesses in Paterson and the surrounding communities in general. Truck movements will dramatically increase, parking will be lost and businesses will suffer because customers will not stop in Paterson anymore due to traffic and the only entity benefiting is Daracon.

We strongly urge the commission to reject this application.

Phillip and Michele Ellicott

Paterson Licensed Post Office

10th November, 2022.