

Martins Creek Quarry Public Meeting convened by the NSW Independent Planning Commission

Address to hearing by Cameron Archer, 7 November 2022

Good morning

I pay my respects to the traditional custodians on whose land on which we meet, elders past, present and emerging.

Commissioners – thank you for being in attendance in person for this meeting.

Thank you also for undertaking a thorough site inspection during October.

I speak to you today on behalf of Paterson Historical Society and Dungog Regional Tourism.

I have had a long association with the district including this institution serving as Principal for 28 years

I completed a PhD through the University of Newcastle on the Environment of the Paterson Valley.

I have written a book on the Paterson Valley

I am a member of the C B Alexander Foundation which holds in trust the Tocal property and Tocal Homestead.

I also am member of the Tocal Alumni committee and a former Chair of that Committee.

All of the organisations I speak for are extremely anxious regarding this matter.

If the project goes ahead as recommended by the Department it will have dire impacts on the wellbeing of all the people in this locality and the long-term viability of the village of Paterson.

Who would have ever thought that the people of Paterson would object to the long-term operation of Martins Creek quarry.

It has been part of the community for 100 years.

That all changed when Daracon took control of it. Long term contactors lost their contracts – the Presland family of Paterson had been operating in the quarry for 70 years and were squeezed out.

Then Daracon knowingly and wilfully operated the quarry illegally eventually having to be ordered to cease operations by a court.

Community acceptance of conditions of approval will be difficult given the tremendous mistrust of Daracon.

As well there have been various public meetings which have given the strong impression Daracon has used Umwelt to ride over community concerns time and time again.

The community consultations have been stage managed and issues raised were continually dismissed by Umwelt and Daracon.

Some community members left these meetings visibly distressed.

It is a distressing situation that we find ourselves in.

It has been a David vs Goliath battle to get us here.

Those opposing the quarry have had none of the resources to pay for consultants to prepare reports. This particularly applies to traffic studies – we believe the traffic studies were superficial and inadequate.

The cumulative impact of traffic volume and truck frequency has largely been overlooked.

The accumulation of trucks from Bandy Hill quarry on Paterson Road and Flat Road in Bolwarra will create unnecessary congestion at Melbourne Street.

This has not been adequately addressed.

Tocal road bisects the Tocal campus and farm:

- There is pedestrian traffic over Tocal Road at the College
- Tocal Road bisects Tocal's farmlands and tractors and farm machinery regularly move along Tocal Road as part of normal farm operations.
- Tocal Homestead hosts over 60 weddings per year many in the afternoons, often Thursdays and the noise of trucks continually on the road detracts from the value of the site.

Commissioners, I now turn to the impacts in Paterson which have been ignored by Daracon and the Department.

The Post Office corner is the busiest part of Paterson. Daracon has proposed to alter it to somehow to accommodate trucks and dog trailers – solves nothing.

The Post Office:

- Has 170 Post Boxes and there is a demand for about 20 more
- About an extra 15 people also pick up their mail at the Post Office.
- About 600 parcels are delivered through the PO each week and about 600 go out from various small businesses each week

It is a very busy corner with much pedestrian and foot traffic.

Over the road is a popular BnB and café in the former CBC bank with outdoor seating within 3 metres of the proposed haul route.

The same situation exists outside the nearby Paterson Country Café.

Other hospitality businesses impacted directly in this location are the Paterson Servo Café and the Court House Hotel. There is also a hairdresser, bottle shop, clothing store, doctors' surgery and pharmacy.

One of them has about 200 walk-ins per day early in the week and around 300 later in the week with about 400 on weekends.

Many of these businesses operate on a visitor economy seven days a week – not just weekends.

Most are in well cared for heritage buildings, preserved because the businesses are commercially viable.

Section 4.12.10 (Historic Heritage) of Daracon's response demonstrates that the Paterson Historical Society was never consulted at any time as to the impact of the project.

The Society's submission on impacts history and heritage have not been addressed.

The Historical Society has a popular village walk brochure and a web-based version.

The Society has been doing these things for decades.

The Society hosts groups who visit the village – they then dine at local hospitality establishments or picnic in the park.

Tucker Park is one of the regions most loved parks and is popular on weekdays as well as weekends.

With more flexible working hours and working from home weekend style recreation now occurs throughout the week so proposing that truck movements during the week has less impact is not true.

The conditions of consent seem to imply that nothing really happens in Paterson during the week and 280 trucks a day can go through it without any impact. This is incorrect.

There are visitors in the village every day of the week.

Duke Street is part of the proposed haul route.

The village's school bus transit location is in Duke Street. It is a very convenient location adjacent to the Post Office and ought to remain. There are ideas of it being moved to a remote location to accommodate trucks.

Duke Steet has three well used public facilities – St Pauls Church, Church Hall and School of Arts. These can be used on any day of the week especially in the daytime.

Also on Duke Street is the Paterson Grocer and Butchery – both are busy, well patronised and popular retail outlets. Shoppers regularly cross Duke Street with heavy bags of purchased supplies from both shops.

Everything about this proposal focuses on sacrificing the inherent cultural and civic values of Paterson for the expansion of the quarry.

We estimate that the village of Paterson is the service centre for over 1,000 people in addition to the hundreds who visit it on a weekly basis.

There are at least 13 small businesses within this central area of Paterson. They would not be there if they were not well patronised.

Will these businesses be viable, can the owners look to the future with confidence?

What ought to be the outcome?

We are not saying no quarry – we accept that the quarry ought to continue but under past operating rules.

Daracon always says it will not be viable without expansion but never gives any firm details.

But they are seeking to operate for 25 years with an option for another 25 years?

The ballast ought to be transported out by rail – it is a railway quarry – built to service the railway.

We have lived through the following experiences in the past:

- Quarry trucks bumper to bumper through the town both ways
- Quarry trucks parked up in laybys at Tocal and the Paterson lagoon waiting for the quarry to open
- Quarry trucks stopping in Paterson during busy times
- Noisy empty quarry trucks banging through the village early in the morning
- Quarry trucks using other routes that are unsuitable for haulage – eg Paterson Road
- Paterson grid locked by quarry trucks when rail gates close
- Traffic incidents side swipes, collisions and losses of loads causing property damage

The draft conditions state that the applicant must prepare a traffic management plan to the satisfaction of the Planning Secretary.

This is too late. That plan ought to be now available for scrutiny by Commission.

The draft conditions of consent states that Daracon must prepare a Social Impact Management plan to be approved by the Department.

This is too late. That plan ought to be available for scrutiny by the Commission.

We have seen what Daracon's community consultation is like – stage managed and arranged to obtain a predetermined outcome.

Would the proposed Community Consultation Committee be allowed to be representative of community feelings and impact.

We fear it will be manipulated for a predetermined outcome driven by consultants who are paid by the applicant to obtain what the applicant desires.

There seem to very few if any sanctions that smart lawyers, expert witnesses and lobbyists cannot get around.

Will community members have monitor and report and then provide evidence to the Department?

I refer back again to David and Goliath.

An Independent Environmental Audit is to be commissioned and paid for by Daracon - apparent oversight by the Department.

We know how cash strapped the Public Service is when it comes to oversight.

I refer you to the recent inquiries into casinos.

Our fear is that if these conditions of consent are adopted as it is there will be no effective oversight and sanctions.

Will there be an independent audit of Social Impact?

We believe the horse will have bolted and there is good reason to think that based upon the recent casino issue where after years of noncompliance all has been revealed.

The operator being deemed unfit to operate.

We heard this morning from the Department that if there are any problems the operator can come to the Department and fix them up.

Commissioners I now refer to the proposed community contributions.

The impact of all these trucks on these country roads cannot be compensated by a paltry \$180,000 payment each year. It is an insult to the Council, the ratepayers and road users.

Any amount of funds eventually set as part of this process needs to be indexed.

Given that both Maitland City Council and Dungog Shire Council have lodged objections to this proposal – I believe for good reason.

The draft conditions of consent record that \$40,000 will be paid to a Community Benefits and Well Being fund.

Is \$40,000 going ameliorate the impact of these trucks on the wellbeing of the people of Paterson.

There are Six Dimensions of Wellness:

- Emotional – how will that payment change an emotional response
- Occupational – how will that change the decline of a local small hospitality business impacted by trucks
- Physical – how will it improve local physical well being
- Social – how will it improve social well being
- Intellectual – How will improve intellectual well being and mental health?
- Spiritual – how will it improve spiritual wellbeing with 280 trucks per day grinding past the local church

Commissioners – the idea of paying \$40,000 to compensate this community for the impact of these trucks is an insult.

The draft conditions of consent states:

The Applicant must keep accurate records of all laden truck publish a summary of these records on its website every 6 months.

What use is that?

What about empty trucks?

There must be real time monitoring accessible to all. This technically very easy to do and can be live on a website.

If it goes ahead in its current form the village of Paterson will be sacrificed for a quarry.

Road haulage of coal was replaced many years ago by upgrading rail infrastructure.

Surely a 50-year life span of the quarry would allow long term infrastructure be put in place to take out the majority of product by rail and stockpile it for road transport. I understand this is practiced elsewhere.

In conclusion

It seems to me that the Department has waved through this application by publishing a totally unacceptable set of draft conditions of consent for you as Commissioners to sort out.

I thank you for the opportunity to address you in person and I have confidence that you are hearing our concerns.

I look forward to the outcome of your deliberations

Thank you