Myself and my family members are totally opposed to the proposed expansion of Martins Creek Quarry. I find it totally unbelievable that the Department of Planning and Environment has approved this expansion. With the many significant issues and impacts that have been raised and identified to simply say that these can be significant impacts can managed, mitigated and minimised is absurd.

We moved from East Maitland to the Paterson area 28 years ago to bring up our young family in the quite peaceful rural village of Paterson. My home is at the very end of Mowbray Lane South 1 ½ kms from the corner of Dungog Road and Gresford Road. A quiet location beside the Paterson River where you can hear the wind in the trees and birds abound. We have enjoyed the great local community that exists in the Paterson area and been actively involved with it. Our kids attended Paterson Preschool and Primary School and then Dungog High School. And my daughter and son-in-law have now built here and are bringing up their children to enjoy the same great lifestyle and community.

During our time living here we have experienced the quarry changing hands from State Rail to Daracon and lived with the **nightmare that then began**.

The volume of trucks just exploded and our country roads started to fall apart. The noisy trucks bounce and thunder over the potholes and damaged road pavement. No sooner would council make repairs and it would fall apart again – what a waste of rate payer’s money. Daracon profits at our expense.

I’ve had numerous cracked windscreens from rocks flying from quarry trucks. I’ve followed the trucks from the corner of Dungog Road and Gresford Road into Paterson regularly and watched the truck and dogs in front of me swerving into the middle of the road to avoid the damage on the edge of the roads, only moving back for oncoming traffic. They regularly exceeded the speed limits along this section of road and when entering the Paterson village.

**My main concerns for the expansion are**

* Quarry operating from 7am-6pm Monday to Friday, 8am -1pm Saturday - So Sunday will be our only day of the week when there will be no quarry operation noise.
* Train loading 24/7 - will mean I will have noise all night as well.
* 280 truck movements per day – equates to 1 truck every 1 1/2 minutes on average. Crazy!!!

With the location of the quarry and the shape of the Paterson Valley it acts like an amphitheatre. Noise echos in the valley. Not just the quarry operation but also the movement of large trucks engine breaking and accelerating. This is amplified at night when there is less other noise.

**Issues that currently impact me**

**1. Noise and vibrations at home from the quarry’s operation**

I live 4.8 kms by road from Martins Creeks Quarry and 2 kms in a direct line. Since moving there the noise level from quarry operations has increased dramatically, particularly since 2013 when Daracon took over the quarry. Prior to Daracon, the noise from the quarry could rarely be heard. Since 2013 the noise of quarry operations has increased to the point where it can be a constant background noise all day. There are sudden loud booming noises and strong vibrations that shake the whole house and can be felt when out in the yard or paddock. It is obvious from my experience that Daracon are operating the quarry quite differently to how it was operated by State Rail. Whether it be the location of the quarry operations, the explosive methods now be used or the quarry equipment being bigger and louder. A mega quarry of 1.1 mtpa will far far worse. Yes the quarry has been there for 100 years **BUT it wasn’t operating like it is now or with the number of people that now live in the area. And the expansion is going to be almost 4 times the current approved production volume (300,000 tpa to 1.1 mtpa). RIDICULOUS!!!**

**2. Truck movement impacts**

Since 2013 the number of truck movements has increased dramatically and highlighted the impacts the quarry is having on the local community and Paterson village. Paterson village is where I shop for most of my needs including the Post Office for mail collection, IGA, butcher, chemist, service station, country café, Stockers and Partridge for farm items, Courthouse bottleshop and Paterson Tavern. Should these businesses be impacted to the point of closure then it would mean travelling ½ hr into either Maitland or Dungog instead of my current 5 minute trip. Also the cumulative trucking impacts with Brandy Hill quarry on the primary haulage route in Bolwarra and East Maitland is just ludicrous. Currently there are significant delays at peak traffic times from 8am – 9.30am at both the intersections of Pitnecree Road and Melbourne Street, as well as on Belmore Road through Lorn. This traffic congestion can only get much much worse as more housing development occurs in the Paterson and Bolwarra areas, and trucking volumes increase. There are no alternate road networks to spread this traffic volume.

**Noise** - high volume of loud truck and dog trucks is deafening when in the village. It makes it impossible to talk to people on footpaths and even in the shops. You have to stop your conversation and wait for them to go past. Sitting outside the Country Café to eat and chat is just **horrendous**. There are a quite a number of businesses that have outdoor eating areas on the primary haulage route in Paterson village that would be significantly impacted by increasing the volume of heavy loud haulage trucks. These include the Paterson Country Café, Paterson CBC Lodge, Paterson Courthouse Pub, Paterson Tavern and Paterson Service Station. Not only are these businesses impacted but everyone that visits these businesses is impacted. Paterson is a thriving village for locals and tourists throughout the week. Not solely on a weekends or public holidays. It is ridiculous to think that the DPE thinks this noise can be managed or mitigated by any of the proposed mitigation and management strategies. None of the strategies proposed will provide any relief from this huge noise impact. How can any of the proposed strategies such as increasing council contributions, a wellbeing fund, Community Liaison Representative, a Community Consultative Committee (CCC) reduce the truck noise?

Outside of the village you have the constant roar of the quarry trucks, particularly when they are slowing down and speeding up at corners and particularly at Gostwyck bridge and when entering and exiting Dungog Road. The trucks often come in conveys of 4 or 5, which amplifies the noise even more. The heavy haulage trucks can be heard in the Paterson valley from kilometres away.

**Road Safety** – a higher number of trucks driving through the Paterson village is very dangerous for pedestrians, and those shopping and using the village businesses and amenities. It is already extremely difficult and dangerous to get in and out of your car when there is a constant flow of traffic and large trucks going past. The roads are not that wide so when there are cars parked on both sides of the street and traffic is going passed in both directions its extremely dangerous. Add to that there are many families with young children. When my children were young, I was quite concerned and nervous just getting from my car parked in front of the IGA into the IGA and butcher shops when the quarry trucks were thundering past. With the proposed expansion and increase in truck volumes this will definitely be far worse.

Most of the quarry trucks travelling past the shops travel at speeds which would not allow them to stop in an emergency. Many of the quarry trucks do not adhere to the current 50 km speed limits so I have little faith that a reducing the speed limit to 40km will improve road safety. Nor will Daracon implementing a Drivers’ Code of Conduct have any improvement in safety, I would have thought that should already exist. And how would they police this or other trucking contractors.

I have had a number of near misses where quarry trucks have failed to slow down enough to take the corner at the Paterson Post Office, they regularly drive onto the wrong side of the road to get around the corner at Duke and King Street, and have almost run me off the road a number of times except that I have fully braked to allow them to take the corner.

This is already a busy traffic area and will be made far more dangerous with increased truck volumes. The traffic at the Paterson Courthouse Pub has also increased significantly in the last couple of years with new ownership and the increase patronage and the services it provides, including a bottleshop, barber and herbalist. There is significant local traffic entering and exiting its premises. The post office also has traffic entering and exiting its premise for the delivery and pickup of mail and parcels.

When the railway gates are down there is even more traffic congestion in this area of the village. The bottleneck in this area will definitely be far worse, it is also where the Rural Fire Brigade, Paterson Public School and Paterson Preschool traffic all pass. There is no other access to these premises.

Gostwyck bridge is not a two-lane (single lane for heavy vehicles) bridge. It is only a one way bridge, which for a number of years had repairs and maintenance primarily due to damage from the heavy haulage trucks. Listed in the NSW State Heritage Inventory, the Dungog LEP and TfNSW’s Section 170 Heritage Register. The bridge is considered to have a high heritage significance at a local level. The proposed changes to supposedly improve the safety at the bridge do not make any sense. To increase the curvature of the road coming off the bridge to the quarry would in fact be more dangerous, it also moves the road closer to an existing house already adjacent to the road.

The changes proposed to the interaction of Dungog Road/Gresford Road are superficial as there is already existing lanes that they are proposing, yes they would be improving these lanes and extending the merging lane which would primarily mean the trucks don’t have to slow down as much to merge which would probably make it more dangerous. The intersection particularly dangerous when turning right to go to Vacy for visibility reasons and when there are school bus es stopping on Dungog Road to pickup and drop off school children at the entrance to Mowbray Lane South. These children are also dropped off and picked up by parents in cars further increasing the volume of traffic at this interection.

The new quarry entrance being proposed coming off Dungog would actually be more dangerous than the current entrance because it is closer to the top of the hill and visibility would be more restricted. There also 2 new homes that have been built just prior to the proposed new entrance that would bear the worst of all trucks now going passed their properties on Dungog Road.

The Department states that it “understands that the Paterson locality is a popular destination for tourists, including cycling enthusiasts, and that these activities are mostly undertaken during weekends and on public holidays.” This is simply not true. Whether it be the increased number of families now living in the area or the after effects of Covid, with people craving to get out to the country. There are many more groups of people visiting Paterson village throughout the week including motorcyclists, cyclists, mountain bikers on their way to Dungog Mountain Bike Park, Vintage car groups, retirees, mother’s groups, tourists travelling.

**School buses stops** – there are at least 4 different school bus pickup and drop off locations on the main road through Paterson. These are busy traffic spot areas with parents dropping off and picking up their children in cars. Also the corner of Gresford Road and Dungog Road is a school bus pickup and drop off location with parents in cars coming and going. And it is not just a single school bus that uses these locations but multiple buses going to various schools in the Paterson, Maitland and Dungog areas. This is the main haulage route for the quarry trucks.

**Dust and rocks** – When driving I have had rocks fly out from quarry trucks chipping windscreens.

**Damage to roads and local infrastructure** – The increased volume of heavy trucks our road surfaces are damaged far more quickly, decreasing safety for others using the roads, increasing costs to Dungog Council for road repairs. It was quite evident that the road from the quarry into Paterson deteriorated far more quickly than other roads, particularly during wet weather. I have had to have tyres repaired following damage to wheels due to potholes.

**Destroys Village Environment and tourist appeal** – Paterson is a quiet scenic country village - a lovely place for locals and tourists, however a high volume of loud quarry trucks destroys this. An expansion of the quarry will definitely impact our local businesses negatively.

Since moving here the Paterson area has grown drastically with many new rural residential subdivisions opening in the Paterson and Vacy area. Many families have moved here for a better lifestyle and enjoy the peace and amentity of a quiet rural lifestyle. To attend our local schools, have their kids play local sport, shop locally and relax. And there are another 2 new rural residential subdivisions being developed at Vacy. There is much growth and so there will also be impact on a greater number of people.

The services available in the village has also grown dramatically to meet this demand of people moving here. 28 yrs ago the village was quieter with less people and traffic Monday to Friday. Saturday morning was the busy day in Paterson village. Now the village is busy and vibrate throughout the week. Existing businesses have expanded to cater for the increase in families living here and tourists who now visit throughout the week. Many new businesses have opened in the Paterson village including a chemist, Drs, CBC Lodge for meals and accommodation, bottleshop, barbers, herbalist, hairdresser, country clothing shop and flower shop. Existing parking now is quite limited and crossing the road to the shops can be difficult at times. With the expansion of the quarry it will just be **impossible and crazy**.

Tocal now hosts weddings Thursday, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays on most weekends. Tucker Park is also a very popular location for wedding ceremonies and a popular picnic area for locals and tourists throughout the week. I take my grandchildren to Tucker Park most Thursdays and there is usually others using the facilities, including car clubs and travelling tourists.

The statement that “the Department considers that, with the implementation of these reasonable and feasible mitigation measures, risks to pedestrian safety from the Project can be appropriately managed. The Department is satisfied that the Project would pose an acceptable level of risk to road users, including cyclists and pedestrians.” I totally disagree with the Department that the mitigation measures will be effective in reducing the risk to an acceptable level.

**Water Run off concerns**

Living on the Paterson River I have noticed during heavy rain events water running from a creek opposite my property flowing into the Paterson River being white in colour. This seems odd to me as runoff water is normally brownish in colour. This creek if followed up stream would begin somewhere in the vicinity of Martins Creek quarry. I have since spoke to locals that have photo evidence of milky white water flowing from the quarry. I have also been told there have been dead platypus in this creek. So I have great concerns that the quarry is currently having significant impacts on the aquatic environment which will obviously increase dramatically should the quarry expand from its current approved 300,000 tpa to 1.1 mtpa.

**Air Quality Concerns**

Like many of the rural residents in the Paterson and Vacy area I rely on tank water for my drinking and domestic purposes. I have serious concerns of dust impacting my drinking water from the quarry expansion. I also rely on water from the Paterson river for other domestic purposes and stock purposes.

**Biodiversity and Environment**

I am also against the expansion of the quarry for Biodiversity and Environment reasons. The fact that the Commonwealth determined that the Project is a likely to have a significant impact on four EPBC Act-listed threatened fauna species (Koala, Regent Honeyeater, Swift Parrot and Spotted-Tailed Quoll), and one listed threatened flora species (Slaty Red Gum) again only emphasises the unsuitably of expanding the quarry. Following the catastrophic impact of bushfires on flaura and fauna in 2019 and 2022 it is totally unthinkable that we would accept consciously destroying further koala and other endangered species and habitat. There is no buffer zone surrounding the quarry to minimise any impact to surrounding properties – huge vibration, dust, noise. I am 2 kms in a direct line from away from the quarry and my neighbour had a koala taking refuge in their carport. Their home is not surrounded by bush and trees. It is open rural farmland. I would question why a koala would choose to travel from the supposed safety of their bush to find safety in a relatively open environment with domestic dogs.

Also I have major concerns the following species identified as being impacted by the Project, including the:

• Large-eared Pied Bat (Chalinolobus dwyeri);

• Regent Honeyeater (Anthochaera Phrygia);

• Swift Parrot (Lathamas discolor);

• Spotted-tailed Quoll (Dasyurus maculatus);

• Phascolarctos cinereus (Koala);

• Anthochaera phrygia (Regent Honeyeater);

• Lathamas discolor (Swift Parrot);

• Dasyurus maculatus maculatus (Spotted-tailed Quoll) – south eastern mainland population;

• Petaroides Volans (Greater Glider); and

• Eucalyptus glaucina (Slaty Red Gum).The BAR identified that the Project would remove 21.13 ha of Koala habitat.

Also when the quarry was operating with higher trucking volumes there were many dead kangaroo and wallaby bodies littering the sides of the main haulage route into Bolwarra. They didn’t even both to remove the bodies off the road, creating safety issues for other vehicles particularly when travelling at night.

Finally I haveread many of the submissions supporting the expansion of the quarry. Many of these submissions are from Daracon employees that **DO NOT live in the local area**, but rather surrounding areas such as Newcastle, Port Stephens, Singleton and Central Coast.

It is also quite obvious from the similarity of their wording and main points in their submissions that they have been provided with a list of reasons to support the expansion. Job security – there is no shortage of work for truck drivers. Martins Creek Quarry is not special or the only quarry in our hunter region with suitable hard rock product. There are 6 **alternate hard rock quarries and they are** **MUCH MORE closely located to existing major road networks. Not 27km away from the New England Highway. Martin’s Creek Quarry is special in that it is by far the furtherest from existing major road networks and goes through a number of residential housing areas – making it the least feasible to be expanded.**

In the referral letter to the IPC The DPE state “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 the recommended conditions of consent.” **The residual costs are all worn by the people that have to live with the impacts of the quarry.**

**It just does NOT make any logical sense to approve the expansion.**

**If it is not viable for Daracon to operate at the approved 300,000 tpa level then they should not have bought the quarry.**

**To say the impacts of the quarry expansion can be managed and mitigated is not true.**

**If the expansion is approved it will definitely destroy the Paterson village and our community.**