

Good Afternoon Commissioners, thank you for allowing me the time to speak today. My name is Fiona Baker, I reside in [REDACTED] adjacent to the railway station. Behind me is the reserve, I can view Tocal/Maitland Road from my backyard and hear traffic noise. I will be impacted both via rail and road by the proposed expansion. I won't be speaking on what has already been stated today, I will provide a separate written submission with my analysis of the proposal before it closes. Today I am speaking as a resident, commuter, consumer, friend and most importantly a mother.

To start, I would like to state that I do not wholly oppose the operation of the quarry, I can clearly see the economic value it brings to the region. Local jobs and the product extracted for use by Council on infrastructure improvement will no doubt be of benefit to our Shire and we cannot dismiss that we lived in harmony with the quarry for many years. However, the proposal that has been put forth and conditionally approved places the local community in an impossible situation. We are told to not have an emotional response here but there are very relevant safety concerns for those of us who reside in the village, by both pedestrians and road users. I have a son who travels on the school bus to Dungog every day, his bus stop is located at Stockers & Partridge on Tocal/Maitland Road, and he travels along the route which these trucks will travel. This bus stops at least 3 times on the roadway between Paterson and the turn off to the quarry. I have witnessed near incidents many times over the years as there are multiple school buses travelling both ways on the roads in these peak times. As a mum how can I not have an emotional response?

The assessment report noted that a bypass of the village of Paterson would likely require extensive road upgrades, involve travel over a longer distance and not necessarily achieve substantial reductions in traffic. It also stated the requested 500,000 tonne per annum via road is a rate not dissimilar to historical transportation rates between 2002 and 2019, it was my understanding that the 1991 approval was for 300,000tpa with 70% by rail and 30% via road, this equates to 90,000tpa with 24 trucks per day (48 movements) how is this even close? With all the evidence that has been put forth today, surely you cannot agree to that statement in the report?

Anyone who lives in the Shire knows the Council struggle with road funding, our roads are already under constant repair, with the continual filling of potholes especially after weather events. I would ask how the increased measure of movement is not going to adversely affect the road users and wider community. My immediate concern is for the safety of my family & friends and their welfare and well-being.

If you talk to any community member they will honestly respond with details of noise, near misses and infrastructure decline which has been detrimental to the mental health and safety for anyone who resides or travels within the specified route.

The current proposal does not provide any confidence within the community that they truly care for our safety and well-being, historically their response to our concerns have not been ideal. The new proposal approved has special conditions and reductions from the original, however it still does not address the true impacts on residents & local business other than the proposed surface fixes (so to speak). You cannot analyse these on paper, the changes do not alleviate my concerns it increases them. I have a daughter who is on her P plates, as do many other parents in our region, we have Tocal college just up the road along the route and they are also younger less experienced drivers who use these roads at peak times. Some intersections in town cannot cope with the current amount of traffic, if you have ever tried to negotiate the left turn from Prince St onto Duke St you would know it is a blind intersection and we cannot see the traffic coming, it doesn't allow time for a reaction if a truck will be coming through at the proposed rate which equates to every 1.5 minutes at peak times! I use this intersection daily!

The impact of this decision has greatly affected the wider community and I have witnessed a decline in mental health of many people whom I call friends, as well as myself. This is not an over exaggeration; we are still recovering from an unprecedented few year's of disaster. We suffered through drought, followed by devastating fires, floods and the Pandemic which saw the whole of the world suffer. Our local beekeepers are now struggling with the impact of Varroa Mite, and the whole country is struggling with cost-of-living pressure and inflation, rising interest rates and the real threat of more floods this season. In this time, local business has suffered yet still found a way to operate to serve our community. This is how we cope as a regional village; we support each other in tough times. No submission on paper can truly capture our spirit, nor can it understand the daily challenges we face negotiating our roads and poorly maintained infrastructure. The DPE Assessment states there will not be an excessive effect on this aspect of the project!! Ask anyone who travels through here daily and they will state honestly from a position of experience that our roads are not good enough and the amounts proposed to Council will definitely not make enough of an impact to maintain them for this rate of movement.

We have lived in harmony with the quarry for many years and realise it is there and has been for a long time. I would ask the current proposal be rejected and that Daracon go back and propose a smaller expansion in stages, limiting road movement similar to that which we did live with for years from the 1991 approval which equated to 24 trucks per day. I would ask they work with residents surrounding the quarry to continually monitor and report on real time noise levels for blasting schedules which will not have a greater impact on the surrounding residents of Martins Creek. I would request they propose even more rail movement as this is the safest way to move forward for all of us. There can be better negotiation with the community which really addresses our concerns. The submissions opposing the quarry speak for themselves and you cannot request the community to speak without emotion as they are living a very real experience. We also feel as if these concerns have been dismissed by the proponent and the relevant Departments assessing this expansion proposal.

Finally, I would like to address the very real aspect of the decline in mental health this will cause on an entire community of people, myself included. I ask you how much is even 1 life worth? Certainly it cannot be worth the revenue generation the quarry proposes (that will not necessarily be spent in this region) The real prospect of a road accident happening (not if but when), or the stress that may be put on a member of the community who has struggled far too much over the last few years. Add to this the very real concerns on the decline in the value of their property, all the while interest rates continue to rise, and life seems to get a harder each year. These are very real and raw concerns.

Nothing that has been put forth so far is good enough to protect the lives of my children, so I ask again how much are our lives and mental health worth? Once again, I reiterate, I live adjacent to the Railway station, it is incredibly noisy yet I would still rather suffer through this as it is the safest option for our community.

Once again thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak and I hope you do take into consideration everyone who has either taken the time to put forth a written or verbal submission.