

The proposed Amended Development Application by Daracon to turn Martins Creek Quarry into a long term mega mining venture is completely untenable to most local community members and residents on the truck haul route.

It is clear to the community that the information supplied to the Department of Planning and Environment in the form of numerous community submissions opposing the amended project and the meetings with the Martins Creek Quarry Action Group on November 2016, 22 June 2021 and 22 June 2022, have simply fallen on deaf ears. The Department in their recommendation of Daracon's proposal, simply repeat the Daracon and Umwelt line and I quote "...that residual impacts are effectively minimised, offset and/or compensated for." This statement won't wash with the majority of the local community!

The changes made to the original project are nowhere near substantial enough to reduce the very real traffic risks, health and wellbeing impacts, social amenity impacts and environmental damage that would result from approval of this large scale quarry.

We have lived through very similar levels of massive quarrying operations during the years that Daracon (and Rail Corp before them) unlawfully expanded their operations. Our local communities were subjected to frequent high numbers of truck and dog movements in and out of the quarry and through our township where we work, shop and enjoy meals and social engagements with friends and families in the Paterson business and community hub.

Between 2009 and 2019, driving into Paterson from Vacy to take children to and from school, or to travel to work in Maitland, often resulted in being sandwiched between huge truck and dog vehicle convoys. The impacts on driver safety are a huge concern to me with three children now driving on our roads and the forth due to get his 'P' plates in 2025.

Shopping locally at the well patronised and busy local grocery store and butcher's shop became not just unpleasant (with the significant noise, fumes and dust generated) but also dangerous. Trying to get in and out of cars (and get children in and out of cars) required good timing and speed due to the constant procession of heavy vehicles travelling to and from the quarry. The traffic risk to school children getting on and off buses while quarry trucks are passing cannot be overstated.

The Department reported that Daracon's revised project has quote 'an implementation of reasonable and feasible mitigation measures' and they are quote '...satisfied that the project would pose an acceptable risk to road users including cyclists and pedestrians'. This is a **staggering** statement! The Department has clearly not witnessed (as parents, local business owners and other community members have) the traffic chaos that occurs when these huge trucks are moving through our town, past buses with children alighting and crossing the road to waiting cars. There is absolutely **no** visibility with these massive vehicles traversing Paterson. The safety risks are huge! The proposed truck movements of up to 280 per day are simply not compatible with road safety for pedestrians or road users through our rural townships. The previous unlawful movements both prior to 2012 and between 2012 and 2019 if allowed lawfully, will once again turn our beautiful village into a nightmare truck highway.

One of the proposed mitigations, to take away parking from outside local shops, remove part of the footpath and change the road marking, does not ameliorate the substantial safety and social impacts of using Paterson village as a primary haul route and it will instead have the effect of destroying the visual historical character of the township. It will also create an 'open slather' concept for the quarry truck drivers making it easier for a constant procession of trucks travelling both ways through the town. The knock on effect will be the destruction of the social fabric of our community and the

closure of local businesses as both locals and regular tourists coming to enjoy the peace and serenity of our local surrounds, will stop coming to Paterson. Why would you come to a historic rural setting and then have to contend with astonishing levels of heavy vehicle movements through the township? There is no recognition in the DPE report of the financial loss to local businesses which will be forced to close if the quarry expansion goes ahead.

Our rural property on Horns Crossing Road has a direct view of the west quarry pit which has been unlawfully cleared and worked by Daracon. When we moved to our property in 2009 we could not see the quarry as this area was still well forested. Large-scale clearing without approved consents had the two-fold effect of ruining visual amenity on the south eastern side of our property and increasing the noise impacts from blasting, from the crusher and from trucks moving and reversing on the roads created in this new barren void.

Despite Daracon's and Umwelt's commissioned technical reports on noise and blasting which suggest that noise levels are acceptable, this is not our lived experience! The blasts that we were subjected to by the quarry operations between 2012 and 2019 were loud, unexpected, unsettling and caused stress and anxiety to my husband and I, my children and our animals. We completed a knockdown-rebuild in 2019 but prior to that our old farmhouse would shake, the windows would rattle, the floor would vibrate and new cracks formed in the walls and ceilings. The frustration, anxiety, and powerlessness felt when this occurred, is difficult to describe. Each blast to me, was also a reminder of the environmental destruction occurring right on our doorstep.

Umwelt's commissioned Social Impact Assessment was a 500 page largely incomprehensible document with matrix scores assigned to different social impacts and then reassigned a lower score based on Daracon's supposed mitigations. The small numbers of community members who managed to find out about and attend one of the two CAF's in 2021 gave direct feedback to Daracon and Umwelt that these scores were farcical and scores should remain at 'extreme' for many of the social impacts that were listed. Despite this, the conclusions that the Department have come to are that with suggested mitigations in place, quote '... the project would not significantly impact the community.' This statement is clearly ludicrous and does not consider the fact that we have lived through very similar levels of quarrying, and trucking movements and they were horrifying. This proposed project is an immense enterprise and it will have serious, long term negative implications for thousands of community members (including local businesses) around the quarry, in Paterson and along the haul route. It is laughable to suggest that long-term serious negative social, property damage and health and wellbeing impacts to thousands of affected residents will be mitigated by strategies such as 'a Community Contributions and Sponsorship Program' or a 'Community Engagement Strategy'.

The Department also preposterously suggests that The Land and Environment ruling restricting extraction to 500,000 tonnes and road transportation to be not more than 30% of this level (or 150,000 tonnes) allows extrapolation to 30% road transport from a massively inflated 1.1 million tonnes and therefore 500,000 tonnes per annum is an acceptable level to shift by road. This is clearly ridiculous as is their implication that because the quarry has operated unlawfully quote '...at a trucking rate close to or above 500,000 tonnes per annum for a period of approximately eighteen years' we are somehow used to it and therefore should be able to continue to endure these levels for another 25 years.

The environmental impacts on biodiversity in the area in and around the quarry are extreme and cannot be compensated for by offsets or impact credits. Daracon want to increase their excavation of rock into another 52 acres of native bushland by excavating quote '...rock resource beneath a

forested landscape.’ The total footprint of damage would then be 163 acres. This is the size of 97 NRL football fields! If this immense quarry expansion project is allowed to go ahead, a **further 2,287** slaty redgum trees (prime koala feed trees and a threatened flora species) will be destroyed. We know that koalas are now on the endangered list with habitat loss leading to a 62% decline in NSW koala populations in the last twenty years. This fact alone should be enough to stop the project. Perhaps koalas, like residents in the Paterson Valley are just collateral damage for Daracon?

Since the cessation of unlawful large-scale quarrying operations at Martins Creek Quarry in 2019, we have seen an increase in native animal sightings on this area, including koalas, quolls and brush-tailed phascogales. If this expansion is granted final approval, the result will be catastrophic for our flora and fauna. If this expansion is granted final approval, the result will be catastrophic for our flora and fauna. There will be a generational inequity as well where future generations living in this area will be exposed to the physical, emotional and environmental damage caused by decisions made generations earlier.

The Department states quote ‘...there is a strategic need for hard rock quarry materials in the Lower Hunter region and considers the site to be **well-suited** for the project.’ This astonishing comment makes a mockery of the many opposing community submissions supplied to the Department for consideration and the meetings the Department had with concerned community groups. Surely the **site** of the quarry, embedded in a rural residential area and 28 kilometres away from an arterial road, could barely be worse!

The need for hard rock can be easily sourced from the mix of other approved hard rock quarries in the Hunter area. These quarries are not embedded in local rural communities and don’t have a haul route through rural townships. The Department reiterate Daracon’s claim that they are limited in the amounts of gravel they can transport by rail as there are quote ‘**Several competing quarries** using the road system as a more commercially viable and flexible supply to service the same markets.’ Precisely! This highlights the fact that the push to get this quarry expansion approved is not based on the real need for quarry materials but the financial gain for one huge company.

In the DPE’s evaluation, page 74 276, they state ‘...there has been some uncertainty regarding the scale and nature of the activities deemed to be permissible under the existing consents, licences and other approvals for the quarry. The Department considers that a contemporary SSD consent for the quarry would provide an opportunity to address this uncertainty by clearly defining the Project’s parameters ...’ It is true that uncertainty would be removed. This consent, if granted will provide **certainty** of the wholesale destruction of the Townships of Paterson and Martins Creek, all the properties within a close proximity to the Quarry and all the properties along the haul route. It would provide **certainty** of the wholesale destruction of endangered, vulnerable and at-risk flora and fauna in this area. It would provide **certainty** of the pollution of our local water catchments. It would provide **certainty** of physical and mental health problems for local people. It would provide **certainty** of loss of tourism and local business closures. It would provide **certainty** of irreparable damage to the previously rocky, forested landscape. It would provide **certainty** of loss of rural amenity in our villages. On top of this, it would provide **certainty** of intergenerational loss of all the above over a timescale well beyond the set 25 years of the life of the quarry.

Daracon should operate at the current levels of consent or shut the quarry down. Please recognise the intergenerational injustice that will be served on our communities if this project is approved and finally call a halt to Daracon’s quest to legalise large-scale quarrying in an area totally unsuited to it.

Additional Comments on the IPC Public Meeting

The IPC Public Meeting which was held at Tocal Hall over two days on 7th and 8th of November 2022 illustrated just how insubstantial Daracon's and the DPE's arguments in defence of the Quarry expansion are. Daracon support was represented by only four people at the Commission Hearing. Otherwise the hall was full of concerned community members in opposition to this proposal.

The DPE representative did not even stay at the meeting on Monday to hear from the many community members whose lives will be destroyed if the expansion gets final approval. Yet again illustrating a 'don't care' approach to the communities they ruin in the Department's willingness to approve any money-making proposal regardless of the consequences. The DPE only managed to appear via video link at the end of the meeting to answer any questions put by the IPC commissioners. The Team Leader of the DPE did not respond to questions, leaving it to more junior team members to provide completely inadequate reiterations of the assessment report which is clearly full of holes and contains incorrect and misleading information. To be fair, they are trying to defend the indefensible so their inability to adequately and clearly answer the questions put to them by the Chair, is perhaps to be expected. However the DPE's claim that they haven't assessed whether this 'need' for quarry products can be supplied by other quarries, as they can only assess what is provided by the proponent, is completely unpardonable and demonstrates a deeply flawed system. Surely with so many objections to this completely unacceptable quarry expansion application, it would be the Departments duty to investigate supply and demand statistics before recommending the approval of yet another large-scale quarry in the Hunter Region. Instead they are relying on the **proponents** evidence. This is simply not good enough.

The Department reproduced misleading information supplied by Daracon in regards to the original project submissions (see 5.3 Summary of agency advice and submissions). They state 'A total of 873 public submissions were received in response to the exhibition of the original Project. Of these, 419 objected, 447 expressed support and seven commented on the original project.' Even Daracon, in its community information sheet June 2018, had to admit that of supporting submissions: 'A high number of those expressing support were from stakeholders with an existing relationship with Daracon, such as employees, contractors and suppliers.' In fact 384 of the quoted 447, while 'submitting as individuals'.

This is no doubt also the case with the current 'smoke and mirrors' behaviour from Daracon whereby the current submissions in support of the project expanded after the IPC meeting with many one-line responses offering reasons such as: a) jobs – 22 local jobs. (This is nothing to the number of jobs and local businesses that will be lost if the project goes ahead). B) Need for hard rock. (This can be easily supplied elsewhere by the 'several competing quarries' in the area). C) Financial benefit to the public. (The local communities will get no benefit. The bulk of the benefit will be to one large private company).