

[REDACTED] NSW 2425

15 December 2023

New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

IPCN Submission

Ref Deep Creek Quarry (SSD-11591659) project.
IPCN email of 24 November 2023

My property reference [REDACTED] NSW 2425
Lot 2 DP 615302

I thank you for inviting a further submission on the project.

There is a large amount of information regarding this project through all stages, far too much with the limited resources I have to adequately assess every aspect. If I may, I would like to refer you to my submission made in 17/12/2021.

I refer you to the “Development Consent” (*The Document*) relating to the project dated 21/11/2023.

I wish to state that most of my concerns about the project have been addressed by *The Document*. I may not agree with some recommendations, but as they have been addressed by the relevant authorities and supposedly in compliance with various ACTs and regulations, it is beyond my resources in the available time to argue these in depth. I would still like to reiterate my views on a few of the issues:

Wildlife Habitat Loss

The Document recognises that there will be adverse biodiversity effects from the development and operation of the quarry. The DPIE puts considerable weight on the use of “Biodiversity Credits” to alleviate these affects.

The use of “Biodiversity Credits” in my opinion, seems like some sort of “smoke and mirrors” approach to sustaining biodiversity. Threatened species, especially the Koala, which we as long term residents know to be in the area, will still have just that much more of its habitat destroyed, or be forced away by the harsh industrial environment afforded by quarry operations.

It is their habitat and there is no where else to go.

Water drainage

The Document rightly addresses various waste water impact plan requirements such as “Surface Water Management Plan” and “Groundwater Management Plan”.

These plans may well comply with various guidelines and regulations but I believe that over the lifetime of the project, there will be numerous uncontrolled mine waste water discharges via Deep Creek into the marine protected waters of the Karuah River. There would also an added threat to the local downstream oyster aquaculture industry in the Karuah River

I find it unconscionable that in this age of heightened awareness of adverse marine pollution, we can allow a project such as this to potentially increase the risk to the marine environment, especially to an established protected area.

Bucketts Way Traffic

The Document calls for various steps to be undertaken to reduce the effects of the high volume of fully laden heavy vehicles including a Traffic Management Plan to be prepared in consultation with TfNSW, Council and Port Stephens Council.

It is documented that extensive use of “traffic models” were used to argue that the project is “unlikely to result in an unacceptable level of impact to road network capacity or intersection performance on the local or regional road network”.

With reference to The Bucketts Way and Pacific Highway intersection, the project assessment (State Significant Development Assessment SSD-11591659 November 2023 para 120) states:

1. Modelling indicated that the intersection would continue to operate satisfactorily during peak periods associated with the Project through to at least 2030, with the average delay, levels of service (LoS) and queue lengths for all movements remaining satisfactory
2. during the AM peaks there is no modelled deterioration in overall LoS for the intersection
3. in the PM peak the LoS drops from B to C, with average intersection delays predicted to increase by up to 18 seconds and queue lengths predicted to increase by less than 1 vehicle

As long time local residents using The Bucketts Way we have **actual real time experience** with the referenced intersection delays caused by even current high traffic periods (holiday periods especially).

Even now these effects are well beyond what the project assessment predicts. Delays at the intersection can increase by minutes and queue lengths increase by double digits in frequent Pacific Highway heavy traffic periods.

The main problem being infrequent random gaps in northbound Highway traffic to allow right turning traffic from The Bucketts Way to cross safely. Heavily laden larger and longer trucks with far lower acceleration can only exacerbate this situation. This could potentially lead to substantially increased frustration and “risk taking”.

The situation has been made worse by the more recent “upgrade” at the intersection comprising a left hand turn lane into The Bucketts Way from the Pacific Highway. Vehicles (trucks in particular) moving into that left hand turn lane block the vision of those waiting to turn right from The Bucketts Way. It is often difficult to see gaps in Pacific Highway traffic. Traffic “gaps” are often missed.

I believe that the project proponents traffic modelling is flawed especially in so far as the random Pacific Highway traffic “gaps” affect has not been fully taken into account.

The extra quarry traffic will significantly adversely affect The Bucketts Way traffic flow at the intersection.

Perhaps further restriction of the planned truck movements ought to be considered during weekdays with preferably no movements on weekends.

As most of *The Document* purports to have fully addressed these issues which appear to have been accepted by the relevant authorities, all I can do is again raise my concerns and request assurance that future reviews be undertaken to both ensure full compliance and enforcement of consent conditions.

However, there is one issue I feel that has not been fully addressed and I wish to reiterate my thoughts and concerns:

Silica Dust

Scientists have known for decades that prolonged and excessive exposure to crystalline silica dust in mining environments can cause silicosis, a noncancerous but potentially fatal lung disease (US Department of Interior). There are numerous references to “silica dust” and associated disease issues on the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care website.

There is no specific mention of silica dust in the “development Consent” document, but I reference “Air Quality Criteria (B19 page 12).

The quarry primary hard rock target is “Rhyolite” being the most silica rich of volcanic rocks (up to 75% to 78% silicon dioxide). It is inconceivable that during extraction, crushing and transport operations associated with the quarry that silica dust will not be an issue especially in windy conditions (the most common and strong winds in the area that can move this silica dust to my property are the autumn/winter W/ SW winds that can blow for days).

Currently there is no nearby mining or industrial operation that can exacerbate a silica dust problem - we currently enjoy a relatively low pollution environment and hope that it remains that way.

Silica dust size can range from much less than 10 micrometers diameter to larger than 10 micrometers. Safe Work Australia has agreed to a workplace exposure standard for respirable silica to 50 microgram/cubic meter over an averaged eight hour period.

The "Development Consent" document B19 table 4 criteria would seem to imply that silica dust particles fall under these criteria. However, as **“The Applicant must**

ensure that particulate matter emissions generated by the development do not cause exceedance of the criteria in Table 4 at any residence on privately owned land.” I question as to how that is to be ensured without having suitable silica dust particle detectors installed in at least the immediate surrounding properties. High airborne silica dust could be missed by “on site” monitors.

I respectfully request that should the project be approved, the consent conditions be amended to ensure that a real time silica dust monitor be installed at surrounding interested properties, or financial help be offered to allow the property owner to purchase or rent a monitor.

An example of one monitor being available is the SM-4000 Personal Silica Monitor by SKC. I am certain there are others available.

This approach would not only ease my concerns but allow the project managers to be informed if limits are exceeded before longer term problems occur. I see it as a low cost “win / win”.

I have no doubt the DPIE have considered that in their opinion the proposed development advantages outweigh the disadvantages. However, I request that in assessing the recommendations, consideration be again made in respect to

My comments regarding Wildlife Habitat Loss, Water Drainage, and The Bucketts Way Traffic.

My request regarding silica dust monitors.

Emphasis placed on compliance and enforcement of the “Development Consent” conditions.

Paul Spiller