

Sand Mine Submission

My name is Shirley Davis and I live directly across from the entrance to the proposed sand quarry.

I have read thoroughly the proposal and the answers the Williamtown Sand Syndicate have given to many of the problems that we have foreseen; - the seed banks, wildlife corridors, dust monitors, buffer zones, passing verge, the drivers' "code of conduct", which all sound very nice in theory but in reality?

I lost my belief in all things mystical a long time before someone decided to paint the properties around here RED.

In reality there will be dust and with the strong winds we get here particularly the north westerlies in winter we will suffer. We all noticed the increase in dust after the 2013 bushfire which denuded the area, same area that will be dug for sand. To say leaving a buffer zone of 20mtrs of light bush will reduce airborne materials and noise is ludicrous. Considering that will only be along part of the mine footage, as the entrance has to be large enough to accommodate turning trucks, trucks leaving, "safety" verge, leaving, I guess at least half of the frontage basically bare. That bush cover also, according to the RAAF provides a significant sound barrier from airport noise. Most of the bush cover that now exists will disappear with the entrance, the roads inwards, the removal at digging sites and so on. The Williamtown Sand Syndicate told us they would provide additional sound protection for the people opposite, but I cannot find it mentioned now.

Obviously they are also greatly in tune with nature if they expect to redirect what wildlife is left onto other paths. Perhaps they also know how to change the breeding paths for migrating birds and turtles. The bushland is a continually evolving ecosystem. We have noticed the changes in plant species after the bushfires as many can not cope and invader plants take over. Its called succession, I believe. The bush there now is very different from what it was even 10 years ago. You could collect as many seeds as you like, and remember that can only happen when plants have seeds which varies throughout the year with different species, but you cannot recreate the habitat, particularly when you change it's chemistry and topography.

As for the truck numbers. We all know about the methods used by sand mining companies around here to "fudge" their numbers eg. If the same truck is used three times a day; that's only 2 truck movements not the 6 movements (in and out) that is actually occurring. Not to mention if the people over the road, US, don't object they could start at 5.00am instead of later each morning. Surely, they realise we do not want the mine at all let alone agree to having it start even earlier.

Cabbage Tree Road is very busy and as I sit here writing this at 5.00am the traffic is passing at the rate of (at least) 20 vehicles a minute. It will get even busier throughout the day, and if you remember that in November the airport is supposed to go International, this being the most direct route to the Central Coast and Sydney. Can it really handle the effects of truck both empty and full moving up and back all day long? The roundabout at Nelson Bay Road is already taxed. The only road to link Newcastle to Nelson Bay and surrounding townships.

Pity no one was monitoring it when we had an accident on Hexham Bridge recently and its traffic mainly diverted through Kooragang and onto Cabbage Tree Road, Nelson Bay Road. It took me 8 minutes to negotiate the jam just at the roundabout itself. A nightmare.

Did I mention speed? Imagine the scenario – at 90km/ph mixed traffic (buses, cars, trucks) all headed east; truck in front starts to slow and move left, reason unknown to drivers behind not familiar to the road, possibly to avoid (silly) person trying to cross the road into their home, only to be presented with fully loaded truck suddenly appearing at about 60km/ph entering the road on a lane that ends very quickly. Who wins, who merges, does the truck getting up speed slam on brakes or do other drivers give way (or panic)? Maybe a roadside phone to call 000? Well the phone lines actually at the moment are lying under the proposed lane the truck is on.

The people who judged that this proposal had merit and a positive effect are deluding themselves. The only gain to be for profit for the Syndicate members, royalties for Port Stephens Council (who should never have allowed the site to be released for industrial use in the middle of a semi-rural community) and a few jobs for truck drivers (probably not locals). For the community itself, nothing but more heartache and hassles.

The final joke as I see it. Presumably they are going to source underground water from spearpoints I believe have been drilled. So I and my neighbours who have been told not to use the bore water because it maybe contaminated (or the chickens, eggs, meat, vegetables that formed so much a part of life around here) and don't dare move soil etc from our properties and being told that our properties are presumably worthless, this mining mob can dig up the sand, wet it with bore water and cart it off to who knows where. What sort of justice is that!! NO SAND MINE – EVER!

Shirley Davis