



Hunter Environment Lobby Inc.

202 High St
East Maitland NSW 2323
7/11/2022

Martins Creek Quarry - Objection

Hunter Environment Lobby Inc. (HEL) is a regional community-based environmental organization that has been active for over 20 years on the issues of cumulative impacts of environmental degradation involving species and habitat loss, climate change and effects on ground water and rivers

HEL is concerned about the expansion of Martins Creek Quarry which has been an ongoing issue following the involvement of the Dungog Shire Council in fighting Daracon's application to extend its operations over many years in the Land and Environment Court.

One of the issues about the quarry that abruptly closed in 2019 was that its owners made more than \$100 million since 2012 and a "significant amount" was "unlawfully obtained", a Land and Environment Court judge was told.

But Dungog Shire Council, which won its case against Daracon over the unlawful operations, said Daracon had extracted up to 900,000 tonnes of material per year for many years, or more than three times the 300,000 tonnes allowed under formal approvals.

The unlawful extraction had left the small shire struggling to maintain roads for years, with no approval conditions to accommodate the movement of hundreds of trucks through villages including Paterson. Under an interim approval after the council won its case Daracon was required to pay a per tonne fee to the council for roadworks, and the quarry was limited to 90 laden truck movements per day.

HEL's primary concerns are about the impacts its operations has on habitat of endangered animals. We believe that 21 HA of endangered Spotted Tailed Quoll habitat will be destroyed, we also believe that there have been koala sightings and scat findings in the vicinity.

We believe that it is these issues alone that should weigh in the balance of permission to destroy habitat or not, as both these species are a beacon to showing whether our environment is sustainable or not.

The Department most recently publicly exhibited the Project for a period of 60 days 2021. The Submissions Report included several additional mitigation measures, including the installation of a noise barrier in Martins Creek and a commitment to constructing the new access road and rail spur extension within two years of any development consent rather than within four years, as previously proposed.

Due to the Project's proximity to Martins Creek and Daracon's proposed use of 28 km of local roads between Martins Creek and East Maitland (including through Paterson) for road haulage of quarry products, the Department considered that the key assessment issues relate to traffic and transportation, noise, air quality, and social impacts. Given it is an extractive industry proposal involving vegetation removal and the ongoing establishment of voids in the landscape, the Department also said it considers that potential water, biodiversity, and rehabilitation and final landform impacts are also important assessment issues for the Project. However we see no evidence of that in the conclusions.

The other issues surrounding this quarry are increased air quality degradation and noise as well as traffic issues which will also weigh heavily into the debate, we believe that the precautionary principle should apply when weighing the benefits or not of development applications.

Previously Daracon were seeking to expand the facility from what was a 300,000 tonne per annum railway ballast production to one which is seeking to increase the scale to 1.1 million tonnes per annum. The main problem is that the increase will be trucked not railed to its destination.

At that point, we understand the plan is for all trucks to go via Bolwarra to the Highway at Melbourne St East Maitland, so Butterwick Rd/ Brandy Hill Dr would only be used for local destinations on those roads.

However, if you travel to Paterson or Maitland, you will have experienced how much, when that quarry was operating illegally, that the quarry truck traffic adversely impacted on the residents, businesses and other road users on that route.

The Martins Creek quarry truck volumes under this plan will be similar to then. The growth of Maitland since, means traffic queues and congestion in Maitland and East Maitland in particular are now much much worse, without any Martins Creek quarry trucks. With the planned Brandy Hill quarry expansion sending 25% of trucks also via Maitland, the future traffic noise, congestion and impacts in the future will be amplified.

Quarry operator Daracon wants to triple its annual output, increasing the number of freight vehicles and trains moving through the region. HEL has not objected to the moving of needed rail ballast by rail, but we object to this over development and destruction of habitat needlessly which endangers the health of local populations at the same time.

In 2021 residents of Martins Creek, Paterson, Vacy, Gresford, Bolwarra and Maitland and East Maitland assembled at Tocal College to express concerns about the potential impact on heritage, road condition, noise and air pollution, property values and the environment.

It is time to give us all a measure of certainty and faith in the systems of government which we need to look after our health and the health of our precious environment.

Yours in trust,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Smith', written over a faint, illegible stamp or background.

Jan Davis
President Hunter Environment Lobby Inc.