

Dear IPCN

## **Objection to SSD 1159-1659 Deep Creek Quarry**

I am writing to object to the Deep Creek Quarry (SSD 11591659).

A quarry in the Deep Creek area is going to adversely affect the surrounding landholders, the environment, biodiversity, native wildlife, aquatic life, food resources, local community, health and safety, tourism and traffic. The impacts will affect not just the local Limeburners Creek area, but the Karuah National Park and Great Lakes Marine Park - Port Stephens, and the broader community.

### **Does our region need another quarry?**

There is no data to support the DPE's claim that there is or will be a shortage of hard rock material in NSW. In fact the 2022 Federal Government's Infrastructure Market Capacity Report states that Sydney has sufficient capacity to meet upcoming quarry demand.

Our region has already done the heavy lifting for the state with regard to quarries and mines.

Our region has no overall strategic plan for quarry or other developments. Ad hoc approval of quarries such as Deep Creek, have a cumulatively and combined negative impact on landowners, wildlife and traffic in the region.

### **The Assessment Report**

The Assessment Report refers to 32 'unlikely' adverse situations that may occur as a result of the Project. I argue this large number of 'unlikely' situations underestimates and understates the possible negative impacts of the Project.

The Report, published in November 2023, also claims the Limeburners Creek Bridge is 'likely' to be completed by the end of December. As at 20 December 2023, the bridge is nowhere near finished. In November, to even a casual observer, there was no chance it was ever 'likely' to be completed by the end of December.

The Assessment Report's prediction of 'likely' or 'unlikely' has consequently been proven unreliable. The predictions and recommendations in the Report should not be taken at face value.

Further, an 'unlikely' outcome is one thing, but what if an 'unlikely' situation actually occurs. What happens then? The environment, the water resources, Port Stephens Marine Park, the people affected by the noise and pollution, the koalas and other endangered species, the people affected by increased traffic will be the ones impacted.

## **Project Accountability**

A major concern, especially with so many 'unlikely' potential situations, is that the Project will be self-regulating, self monitoring, and self reporting. What steps will the Project take to prevent an 'unlikely' occurrence. What penalties will be applied and what mitigating and remediation action will be required should an adverse 'unlikely' event occur.

## **Tourism, the Community, Social and other Impacts**

Tourism, which will be significantly adversely impacted by the Project, has a far greater economic and social benefit to both the region and state government, than any purported benefit of this Project.

The local community has suffered enough with development. We live sustainably. We are on tank water, most have solar, most grow our own food, we have septic, live with busy potholed roads, and ask less from the state than other tax payers. Some of us grow beef or other food for the region and state. Given the zoning, we don't have the ability to capitalise the land we have worked so hard for, for housing – because we are considered an agricultural area.

And that is fine, this area is magic - And so, we happily absorb into our area the tourists, the businesses, the koalas and other wildlife who have had their habitat removed by other local and not so local developments.

So, what will the quarry mean for us? It will compromise agricultural opportunities. It will compromise local business development, especially in the eco-tourism space. It will affect our health and our quality of life.

Regular blasting. Dust on our roof – our tank water contaminated. Our dams silted. Our solar panels dirtied. Our vegetables suffocating requiring more (tank!) water to rinse off the blasting dust. Our stock constantly on edge with the blasting, and devalued at market due to their stress. Our potholed roads rendered virtually impassable with the passage of the additional trucks per day – for 30 years - And that's without any extension.

Added to this are the very real concerns of increased traffic accidents. The Bucketts Way is in diabolical condition. Accidents are frequent, and vehicles damaged due to the appalling condition of the road are a regular occurrence.

Most importantly the cumulative effects of other quarries and mines in this region, and the development of nearby communities must be considered as a whole, and not as individual projects.

Our area has already done the heavy lifting for the state. The remaining amenity and community expectation must be respected.

## **Koalas**

Koalas were listed as endangered in February 2022. In a single decade, koalas have now gone from no-listing, to vulnerable to endangered. Koala numbers have halved in 20 years, and habitat destruction is a major cause.

The habitat the Project wishes to destroy is a proven koala habitat, and is an increasingly important habitat for koalas already compromised by other developments.

The Commonwealth's Koala Habitat Assessment Tool rates the area targeted for removal by the Project as '**habitat critical to the survival of the species**'.

The Assessment Report states that the local koala population is not considered an 'important population'.

On the basis that Koalas are endangered and sliding toward extinction, and the habitat declared critical to the survival of the species, the Report's claim that koalas in the target area are not important, is astonishing. To avoid extinction, each koala and their habitat must be preserved at all costs.

## **Marine Park and Zoned Protected Creek**

Enormous work has been done to preserve and manage the Port Stephens Marine Park and the Park protects some of the state's most precious marine creatures and their habitats. The Park is carefully managed and protects marine habitats and species while catering for a wide range of sustainable tourism and recreational activities.

Deep Creek is a Zoned Protected Creek of Karuah River, which is part of the Great Lakes Marine Park Port Stephens.

As a permanent creek, any change in water course, removal of bushland forest mountains, and quarry infrastructure will affect natural springs and creek systems, wildlife habitat and have a detrimental flow on affect to the marine park. This will have a catastrophic effect on wildlife species, including aquatic wildlife.

It is unimaginable that an already Zoned Protected Creek can be compromised for a quarry.

## **Traffic and Road Conditions**

I dispute many claims of the Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA), noting the TIA was completed on 21 February 2019. I have resided on The Bucketts Way since 2007 and both regular and holiday traffic has increased enormously since 2019. The report was completed before the 'improvements' to The Bucketts Way and Pacific Highway intersection. The report was completed before the Medowie subdivisions and opening of Catherine McAuley Catholic School.

This report is out of date and factually incorrect:

- a TIA determined The Bucketts Way is overall in good condition with satisfactory road pavement conditions.
  - The Bucketts Way was recently declared by the NRMA to be one of the 10 worst roads in NSW. The road is full of potholes – some currently repaired – but with traffic and rainfall the road deteriorates. It comes to the point where motorists drive in the middle of the road to avoid the enormous potholes – and frequently end up with near-misses avoiding oncoming traffic. There is nearly always a Council sign warning of potholes or damaged road surface.
  - The additional heavy vehicles will significantly deteriorate an already disgraceful road. The repairs that will be required will only add to traffic delays.
  - The Bucketts Way is a declared tourist route
- It could be argued that peak times are holidays, but as a local resident I can assure you it is not just holiday times. The camping and caravan vehicles that use The Bucketts Way is increasing every month. This brings much needed funds to the local area and is a conduit to regions further up The Bucketts Way.
- the TIA's comments about 'improvements' at the intersection of The Bucketts Way and Pacific Highway. The TIA suggests that there are no safety or traffic delay issues at this intersection.

**This is factually incorrect:**

- The fact is, that changes to this intersection have dramatically worsened the ability of a motorist to turn from The Bucketts Way onto the Pacific Highway, as when a vehicle is turning left from the highway, vision of oncoming traffic is compromised. When a heavy vehicle is turning left into The Bucketts Way vision of oncoming traffic is completely obscured.
- This is a major safety issue that also creates further delays turning onto the Pacific Highway.
- the predicted added burden of 252 vehicle trips per day will significantly increase delays, particularly travelling towards the Pacific Highway, on an already overburdened road, especially as the heavy vehicles require more time to turn safely onto the Pacific Highway
- The claim that the existing road network is currently operating at a good level of efficiency with little or no delays.

**This is factually incorrect:**

- There are frequent significant delays on The Bucketts Way, and lengthy queues of a kilometre or more, to turn onto the Pacific Highway are a regular occurrence. I am happy to provide further video evidence and detail personal experiences.
- Road safety in particular with school buses.
  - The report does not address the large number of children who are picked up/dropped off by school buses at intersections and driveways along The Bucketts Way. The addition of 50 heavy vehicles per hour will significantly impact the safety of school children.
  - The TIA was finalised in 2019, before the Catherine McAuley Catholic School opened in Medowie in 2021, and before the Medowie sub-divisions. School buses and other traffic to this school and to Medowie itself has increased traffic on The Bucketts Way.

**The TIA report is inaccurate and out of date.**

### **Purported Benefits of the Project**

If the Project goes ahead, they claim 10 jobs will be created. There is no guarantee that locals will be employed, and if/how they will contribute to the local economy.

If the Project goes ahead, the community fund is capped at \$50,000pa. This must be indexed against CPI and the revenue of the Project.

The Project's proposal to contribute \$333,000 per annum over the life of the quarry for maintenance of The Bucketts Way is grossly insufficient. The road is already behind in maintenance, and the additional truck movements will further deteriorate an already dangerous road.

Concerningly, the very real possibility, should this Project be approved, is that the conditions of consent can be manipulated, reworded or removed by various government agencies, no matter their 'independence'. All agencies should be tasked with upholding conditions of consent, not varying them.

I request IPCN refuse the application for the proposed Deep Creek Quarry for the following reasons:

- inadequate infrastructure
- out of date Traffic Impact Assessment
- no assessment of cumulative effects of other quarries and mines in the region
- negative impact on wildlife, environment, biodiversity and aquatic life
- health and safety due to noise and air pollution
- unsuitability of The Bucketts Way as a quarry transport route
- increased traffic and road condition implications
- decreased road safety
- uncertainty and likely underestimation of potential negative impacts

- community dissatisfaction with the Project
- loss of social amenity
- compromised local business opportunities

and most importantly

- Inadequate assessment of the current local koala population
- The confirmed negative impact of koala habitat destruction.

Yours faithfully

Amanda Jones