

OBJECTION TO DEEP CREEK QUARRY

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my concerns and objections to the Deep Creek Quarry proposal. I have suggested conditions for consent should the Project be approved. I personally object to Project approval.

I am a resident of Gloucester and a committee member of the Gloucester Environment Group.

I do not believe the DPE has adequately or responsibly communicated their plans and aspirations for quarry development in our region to the general community.

The impacts of quarries extend far beyond their individual operational footprint. The environmental and social impacts of Deep Creek Quarry will be felt by Gloucester residents, yet we were not included in public meetings. No one expects the region to stay the same for ever, but in this day and age community consultation and planning for major developments, especially SSD projects, needs to be transparently explained, discussed and substantiated at a local level.

In all the material I have read about Deep Creek Quarry, the only reference I have found regarding the important, valuable ecological services (ie strategic ecological context) the subject land performs is in the 2021 MidCoast Council response to the DPE¹.

The Project does not reflect the aspirations of The Great Lakes LEP 2014² :

(k) to protect, enhance and provide for the long-term management of native biodiversity, including habitat linkages, threatened species populations and endangered ecological communities, and to identify and protect biodiversity links or corridors throughout the landscape.

- **The Project should not be approved until the risks of environmental impacts to regional wildlife corridors are fully considered.**

With regard to any proposed offset areas, Council called for the applicants to conduct further scientific analysis of the functional avenues of local or sub-regional wildlife connectivity for the proposed offset areas and their contribution to agency and community aspirations, including reference to key regional corridors, the climate change adaptation corridors projects, existing protected areas and aspirations by MidCoast Council.

Importantly, Council called for the offset area to be zoned immediately on project approval for the highest level of Environmental Conservation (C2), and that the applicant should facilitate this strategic process with MidCoast Council.

None of this has occurred.

¹ <https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=PAE-31981486%2120211224T005956.239%20GMT>

² <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/epi-2014-0176>

The DPE misleads everyone when they say neither Council has not objected to the Project.

The original 2021 submission made by MidCoast Council³, indicates the serious ecological impacts the Project will impose on what is deemed functional, natural vegetation important for regional connectivity now and into the future.

Commissioner Barlow asked Mr Berry at the Public Meeting if a covenant had been placed over remaining environmental lands, to which Mr Berry replied 'no' but he would look into it. (or words to that effect) Mr Berry stated at the public meeting that the whole hill contains saleable rock.

Perhaps without due thought to the implications, Mr Berry states to the Commissioners (transcript of meeting)-

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10 MR BERRY: And I suppose the only other thing I'd point out and it's probably worth pointing out, you'll notice the shape - somewhat unconventional shape of the stewardship area. What we've looked to do is have a look at the longer term potential in terms of what resource we know is in the area and look to say, O.K., well, look, it's not part of the application now, no plans for impact but it doesn't make sense to necessarily put this into conservation right now where there is potential down the track that that may be an option. Future generations, I guess, I don't think it's part of whether I'd ever be looking at that but it's certainly a space that we thought we don't want to lock that up if there is value still in that resource and that's why the shape of it is. That's why it is the shape it is".

If the proponents are genuine in their aspirations to both protect the environment and carry out their quarry development, then a condition of consent – in order to protect remaining habitat and vegetation within their land holding - should, as suggested by MidCoast Council, be zoned C2 prior to Quarry operations.

Quarries are long term operations where, modifications, expansions and extensions to original approvals follow.

For example Karuah East Quarry was allowed in 2022 to expand into their original offset area to accommodate new stockpile requirements, after 30 years Boral Seaham Quarry is applying to double their production, Martins Creek Quarry is fighting their refusal to expand, Brandy Hill Quarry saw to expansion into viable Koala Habitat.

Quarries are built where the material is located and is (hopefully) easy to deliver to market – it is in the proponent's economic interest to anticipate avenues for possible future expansion are not restricted. Such allowance does not bode well for the retention of significant regional environmental corridors⁴ or the future community.

³ <https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=PAE-31981486%2120211224T005956.239%20GMT>

⁴ **Connectivity Modelling of the Karuah-Myall Catchments**, NSW, Australia, December 2018

Authors: [Alex Lechner](#) Monash University (Indonesia) [Darrel Tiang](#) University of Nottingham, Malaysia Camp https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331195091_Connectivity_Modelling_of_the_Karuah-

- **If the Project is approved, as a condition of consent, lands proposed for environmental offsets and protection should be placed under an appropriate covenant that ensures protection in perpetuity, with clear future management measures in place that ensure the lands protection.**

The DPE opinion that the Project can be carried out in a manner that is compatible with surrounding conservation⁵, rural-residential and rural land uses, is meaningless without appropriate planning, safeguards and infrastructure in place prior to quarry operation. Otherwise the Project presents a potential, dangerous impost on the community.

The DPE's conclusion that the Project would not conflict with extractive industries in the locality, ignores the combined impacts from other and proposed regional quarries on wildlife corridors and community safety. The Project will compound issues.

The DPE is irresponsibly ignoring the cumulative impacts quarries will have on the region⁶.

- **The Project should not be approved until strategic regional planning for quarry development is carried out so that the cumulative risks of proposed and operational regional quarries are clearly examined and articulated.**

It is unacceptable for the DPE to rely on the number of quarry applications before them, as the basis for assuming there is critical demand for quarry materials⁷. The economic justification for the Project is speculative at best.

- **The Project should not be approved until independent economic justification is established.**

The DPE has consistently ignored community representation regarding traffic impacts, clearly evidenced in the meeting notes with the Commission⁸ – which indicates, again, that the DPE rely on anecdotal evidence of the Bucketts Way and Pacific Highway suitability for haulage trucks.

[Myall Catchments NSW Australia](#) *The analysis identified that there are certain regions in the catchments which have no protection status yet are important for connecting the landscape. In addition, the assessment of the contribution of the Karuah catchment to the GER suggests that it provides important connections from north to south. In addition, the Karuah catchment appears to also connect the coastal forested areas in the Myall Lakes catchment to the vegetation in the GER. Critically, this connection is dependent on number of key patches and linkages in the north (Figure 8b).*

While the Karuah-Myall catchments appear to be well connected for a cleared pasture dominated agricultural landscape, east-west linkages across the cleared valley floors should be prioritised to preserve connectivity to ensure future connectivity. In addition, it appears as though both catchments value for connectivity is not only for biodiversity within the catchments but beyond the catchments as part of the GER. (ref: Great Eastern Range Initiative)

⁵ E2.1 SEPP (Resources and Energy) 2021 (Resources and Energy SEPP) 2.17 p66 DPE Assessment Report

⁶ As above 2.19 p67 DPE Assessment Report

⁷ IPC MEETING 29.11.2023 P-4 Line 40 *So while it is difficult to quantify the amount of hard rock material required over the next few years this recent influx that the Department has seen of applications for hard rock quarries in the region does point to a strong demand in the short to medium term for these products.*

⁸ IPC MEETING 29.11.2023 P-13 Line 30-40

Both MidCoast Council⁹ and Port Stephens Council¹⁰ have called for overpasses at Buckets Way and Medowie Road intersections – a simple desktop search would have indicated the existing public concern regarding these intersections.

It is unacceptable, impractical and unsafe for the DPE to suggest traffic management issues can be managed post approval¹¹.

It is likely traffic will use Limeburners Road to avoid the intersection and go the back way to Raymond Terrace, or to the Hunter expressway if the Project is approved.

The DPE, the Proponent, TfNSW and our Councils need to plan and build a safe intersection suited to accommodate extra haulage trucks and the quarry's associated traffic before the Project commences operation. The Project aims to operate for 30 years. As the DPE has pointed out, there will be an increase in residential population in this region.

- **Cumulative impacts from regional quarries on traffic conditions needs to be assessed and planned for.**

The Project will contribute to the problems already facing the community. A predicted daily 1,000+ haulage trucks from Italia Road are expected to traverse the intersection.

The cost and maintenance of a safe haulage route needs to be factored into the Project's business case.

Conditions of consent should require:

- **Quarry operations will not commence until the Bucketts Way and Pacific Highway intersection is upgraded**
- **(Please note, if an overpass is constructed, consideration will need to be given to the 1,000+ haulage trucks traveling north from Italia Road quarries - as undoubtedly, those trucks will use the shorter route/overpass to exit the Highway to travel south to their markets).**
- **Specific traffic routes which prohibit haulage trucks and associated quarry traffic from using regional roads to carry out "short cuts" to their market destination, must be clearly defined.**

We live in a time of climate emergency and biodiversity loss. Operational models and expectations will have to change. Environmental protection measures and safeguards will have to improve if we are to stabilise global warming and reduce the impacts from land use change on ecosystems.

The DPE's recommended approval of the Project disregards the principles of Ecological Sustainable Development on a regional scale. Community objections to the proposed

⁹ <https://www.manningrivertimes.com.au/story/8098726/midcoast-council-pushes-for-the-bucketts-way-overpass-on-pacific-highway/>

¹⁰ <https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/news/2023/council-seeks-state-government-support>

¹¹ IPC MEETING 29.11.2023 P-15 above Line 10

regional quarries, in the main, site the DPE's proclivity to understate the risks the proposals present to both social amenity and environmental impacts.

Along with other quarries, the Project will result in net environmental decline. The principle of intergenerational equity – that the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations - is overlooked.

I trust the Commissioners will fully examine the likely impacts of Deep Creek Quarry and consider the combined, damaging impacts the Project presents and shares with other regional quarry operations and applications when making your consideration.

Yours faithfully,

Megan Benson.