Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

Our ref: Stone Ridge Quarry (SSD 10432)

Andrew Mills
Chair
NSW Independent Planning Commission
GPO Box 3415
Sydney NSW 2001

16 October 2024

Subject: Stone Ridge Quarry – Referral to the NSW Independent Planning Commission

Dear Mr Mills

The Department has completed its assessment of the merits of the application for the Stone Ridge Quarry (SDD 10432; the Project). The application is referred to the NSW Independent Planning Commission (the Commission) for determination as there were more than 50 unique public submissions objecting to the proposal.

Australian Resource Development Group Pty Limited (ARDG) proposes to develop a new State significant hard rock quarry to extract, process and transport up to 1.5 million tonnes per annum of hard rock material over a 30 year period. The Project is located within Wallaroo State Forest at Balickera NSW, within the Port Stephens local government area.

The Department publicly exhibited the Project from 22 June to 1 August 2023. In response to government and community feedback, ARDG amended the Project to reduce the disturbance footprint by approximately 11 hectares (ha) and revise the conceptual quarry layout and extraction staging. On 27 March 2024, ARDG submitted a Submissions Report and Amendment Report. The Submissions Report provided ARDG's consideration of issues raised in submissions and government agency advice whilst the Amendment Report provided further detailed assessment of the amended Project.

During the public exhibition of the Project, the Department received 162 public submissions, including 144 from individuals and 18 from special interest groups. A total of 139 submissions objected, 17 expressed support and six commented on the Project. Of the 139 objecting submissions, 134 were considered unique submissions.

The Department also received advice from nine State government agencies and Port Stephens Council. The Department carried out a site visit in June 2023.

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Given that the Project proposes the clearing of remnant vegetation within the Grahamstown Dam drinking water catchment, impacts to biodiversity and water resources were key assessment issues for the Department.

Due to the proposed road haulage of quarry products and concerns over the use of the Italia Road intersection with the Pacific Highway, impacts on the safety and efficiency of the road network was another focus of the Department's assessment. Lastly, owing to the Project's potential for amenity impacts on nearby residents, noise and air quality were key assessment issues for the Department.

The Department has carried out a detailed assessment of the merits of the Project, having regard to ARDG's project documentation, advice from NSW government agencies and all public submissions. The Department has also considered the objects of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* (EP&A Act) and relevant considerations under Section 4.15(1) of the EP&A Act.
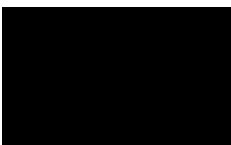
Based on this assessment, the Department considers that ARDG has designed the Project in a way that would achieve a practicable balance between maximising resource recovery and minimising associated impacts on the surrounding landholders and the environment.

The Department has carefully weighed the environmental impacts of the Project against the significance of the identified hard rock resource and the wider socio economic benefits associated with operating the quarry for 30 years under a contemporary development consent. On balance, the Department considers that the benefits of the Project outweigh its residual costs, the site is suitable, and that the Project is in the public interest and is approvable, subject to the recommended conditions of consent.

I have attached a copy of the Department's assessment report and recommended conditions of consent for the Commission's consideration.

If you have any questions, please contact me on ███████████ or via email at ██████████████████████

Yours sincerely,

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Jessie Evans

Director

Energy and Resource Assessments