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### **Stone Ridge Quarry in Wallaroo State Forest - IPC presentation speech**

**Stone Ridge is the worst of the 10 quarries slated for this area, because it is within Wallaroo State Forest.** It will be 140 times the volume of other quarries operating in our state forests. Blasting rock, crushing it onsite and taking it away on heavily laden trucks for 30 years will have much more severe impacts than logging. Recognised Fauna Corridors will be destroyed because the forest will never grow back.

The maps show the 3 quarries on Italia Road are very close, and so are Kings Hill housing proposals. There are 7 other hard rock quarries nearby.

Balickera canal is an open channel that goes underground for just 1.2kms near the proposed entries to these 3 quarries. The historical, but still dangerous route of wildlife crossing above the Balickera tunnel, will barely remain. Both the width and the location of remaining pinchpoints across the road are insufficient as possible crossings.

Koalas may not be able to safely evade the lethal activity at all these developments. Lethal because stress generates deadly chlamydia symptoms, and lethal for aged and young koalas; unable to fight for a new home range.

Kings Hill (KHURA) studies and the publicly available OWAD report into Port Stephens koala populations (with WWF), prove that koalas are not only present and actively breeding west of the Pacific Highway, but are genetically more allelic rich and deserve protection.

We refute that Stone Ridge quarry operations will not impact the Balickera tunnel and the bats roosting there.

Balickera tunnel is integral to local water supply. Failure would be catastrophic.

Back in 2020 Boral's modification was refused by Council because more development on Italia Road was deemed unsafe for the local community. Boral, Eagleton and Stone Ridge then proposed a minor upgrade to the intersection with the Pacific Highway, making it safer to turn left, in and out of Italia Road.

Balickera residents are still worried about the risks from increased road haulage and the Italia Road junction. Our meetings with TfNSW suggest there is no funding or plans available to build flyovers at Italia Road, or Medowie Road, or Bucketts Way; putting many more people at risk.

To reduce the risk of vehicle collisions, recent consent conditions preclude trucks from turning right out of Italia Road onto the highway, where they will cross all lanes to slowly gain speed over the hill to go south. Just 3 months later, Eagleton and Boral are already seeking to remove these traffic safety conditions, that should be imposed on all quarries here. Quarries should wait for a road upgrade to be built to avoid catastrophic impact risks. Our Councillors support this position (recorded in the minutes of 23/7/24 on pp 360-1 and 351+).

DPHI's Assessment does not validly weigh up the cumulative impacts, nor adhere to the Hunter Regional Plan's environmental objectives. Cumulative Assessment Guidelines have not been rigorously applied.

- All wildlife will be subject to greater roadkill risks on Italia Road, the Pacific Highway, and on Newline Road with precincts 6, 7 and 8 of Kings Hill already under consideration.
- The impacts of increased traffic on threatened and endangered wildlife have not resulted in satisfactory avoidance or mitigation plans with no fauna underpasses or overpasses for Italia Rd.
- Too much weight is placed on the forest being Marginal Koala Habitat by the CKPoM of 2002, when recent surveys show many koala food trees here, and koala sightings.
- TECs on ~~both western and~~ <sup>the</sup> eastern sides of Stone Ridge have not been avoided.
- Economic arguments have been given too much weight, in comparison to the community's health and wellbeing, biodiversity and need for action on climate change.
- Koalas and other threatened species south of Italia Road are at risk of being trapped.
- Over 300 ha of koala habitat will be removed by 10 hard rock quarries near here:
  1. Stone Ridge in Wallaroo State Forest ~~79~~ <sup>68</sup> ha – the largest!
  2. Hanson Brandy Hill Quarry 45.8 ha
  3. Boral Italia Rd, Balickera 26.74 ha
  4. Martins Creek 21.61 ha
  5. Eagleton 11.19 ha
  6. Hunter Quarries Karuah East 30.68 ha
  7. Wedge Rock PL Karuah South 11.12 ha
  8. Karuah 10.8 ha
  9. Deep Creek Limeburners Creek 29.15 ha
  10. Hillview at Booral 48 ha

The NSW Koala Strategy provides public funds to create koala habitat on the one hand, while healthy koala habitat may be destroyed in a state forest; in clear conflict.

If Stone Ridge hard rock quarry in a State Forest (opposite two others on privately owned land) is approved by the IPC, the serious and irreversible impacts on actively breeding koalas in an Area of Regional Koala Significance (ARKS) may result in local extinctions, and certainly reduced occupancy.

We must hope ~~and~~ trust that the IPC will ~~carry out its purpose and weigh~~ up the policies and the expected outcomes of these quarry proposals with rigour, with respect for the local communities, and the environment.

Please do not quickly assess and approve Stone Ridge quarry. It is not in the public interest.