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OBJECT

Submission ID: 216717

Organisation: <i>EcoNetwork Port Stephens</i>	Key issues: <i>Biodiversity, Water resources, Traffic, Air quality, Noise, Other issues</i>
Location: <i>New South Wales</i>	
Attachment: <i>Attached overleaf</i>	

Submission date: 11/21/2024 2:27:45 PM

See attached submission



EcoNetwork – Port Stephens Inc.

All correspondence to: Secretary PO Box 97 Nelson Bay NSW 2315 secretary@econetworkps.org

21 November 2024

Independent Planning Commission of NSW

Supplementary Submission: SSD-10432 Stone Ridge Quarry Project, Italia Road, Balickera

About EcoNetwork Port Stephens

EcoNetwork Port Stephens is a not-for-profit, politically unaligned, 100% volunteer-run conservation organisation with a membership base of over 30 community groups and businesses, and many more individuals. We acknowledge the Worimi People as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and water where we live, work and learn. We have a vision for ecologically sustainable communities existing in harmony with the natural environment. Our purpose is to support our members to advocate on environmental issues that impact Port Stephens communities.

Submission

EcoNetwork-Port Stephens made a submission on 20 July 2023, objecting to this proposal. On 23 October 2024, we were invited to make any supplementary submission for consideration by the IPC panel now determining the application.

We stand by our original objections and the Assessment Report and its recommendations fail to alleviate our concerns. While we did not seek to be heard at the recent public meeting (14 November), we viewed most of the meeting online, and wish to strongly endorse the evidence given by several members of the local community and concerned environment groups.

This proposal is particularly concerning as it is located in Wallaroo State Forest. We submit that the proposed quarry is incompatible with the sustainability objectives and principles set out in legislation for the Forestry Corporation – the landowner in this case.

We also challenge the assertions by the proponent and landowner (Forestry Corp) of net benefits and lack of alternatives. We submit that there clearly are alternative sources of suitable materials, if not the high quality and presumably more profitable product that this quarry would yield.

The benefits will largely accrue to the Quarry operators and to Forestry Corp and not to the community. In contrast, there are many adverse impacts, including:

Permanent destruction of native flora and fauna and loss of their habitat.

Fragmentation of climate refugia for wildlife

30+ years of adverse impacts and stress on residents with regard to:

- Drinking water quality
- Noise emissions from crushing and transport
- Noise and vibration from blasting
- Loss of ambience and character
- Loss of a community asset for sporting and leisure pursuits

A major concern is the danger on the road system for the residents and the wider community who use Italia Rd and the Pacific Highway, not only from the Stone Ridge quarry traffic itself but also from the compounding cumulative effect of multiple existing and proposed quarries (including 3 within a 1 Km radius) using the Pacific Highway as a haulage route with inadequate interchanges at Medowie Rd and The Bucketts Way as well as at Italia Road.

Traffic assessments in support of the proposal are unreliable as they are outdated and not based on observations in peak holiday times.

If Stone Ridge is approved and Seaham/Boral quarry is also given consent to expand to 2mtpa, and with Eagleton already approved, the combined output would be 4mtpa from 3 quarries, all being transported via Italia Rd and the Pacific Highway, and requiring nearly 1000 truck movements per day.

It seems that the Department (DPHI) regards the potential traffic volumes as quite acceptable. We challenge this assessment as clearly contrary to the on-the-ground reality and the lived experience of local people with the existing traffic which is less than half the predicted volume.

The IPC panel members sought clarification on the issue of 'queuing' of haulage trucks before opening of the quarry gates. We submit that the assurances given by the proponents cannot be relied on to prevent the unacceptable noise of idling trucks well outside the permitted operating hours, in particular early morning. Experience suggests it is very difficult if not impossible to enforce traffic conditions. Local residents cannot reasonably be expected to monitor and record non-compliance, and experience also suggests that little if any action is taken on complaints.

Dust and noise of operations as well as blasting noise and damage are to be monitored and reported to EPA by the Operators. However, these results are often published well after the event and are therefore historic data rather than real time. The Community is not confident that there will be the consequences for the quarry if permitted limits are exceeded.

Conclusion

We submit that the community costs and risks of this project far outweigh the largely private benefits. The proposal is not in the public interest and should be rejected.

We have no objection to this submission being published in full and unredacted.

EcoNetwork Port Stephens Inc.

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