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OBJECT

Submission ID: 213513

Organisation: <i>Gloucester Environment Group Inc.</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>	

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Gloucester Environment's Submission of Objection is attached.

IPCN November 2024 Stone Ridge Quarry SSD 10432 Port Stephens

Preamble

This submission is written on the Traditional Lands of the Gathang speaking people, Biripi and Worimi Country.

Gloucester Environment Group (GEG) is an incorporated volunteer organisation with over 120 members who reside in or near the Gloucester Township in the MidCoast Council region.

Like our neighbours in the Port Stephens Council Hinterland region, we value our unique and shared landscape which is rich in natural diversity and areas of state, national and international significance. Our natural environment shapes the character of our rural towns and villages.

We believe the Stone Ridge quarry Project in the Wallaroo State Forest should be refused.

Introduction:

Currently there are nine either operational or proposed hard rock quarry developments within a 25km radius of the proposed Stone Ridge Quarry Project, the tenth - Karuah Quarry having now entered into closure phase.

A regional planning strategy to properly address the cumulative impact of extremely large, environmentally damaging and long lasting quarry proposals such as Stone Ridge Quarry should be in place, but it is not. This disadvantages residents and landholders of Port Stephens and MidCoast Council regions and the quarry industry.

Spurred on by the announcement that Wallaroo State Forest could become another regional quarry, community groups, of which GEG is but one, have attempted to communicate with Government Ministers and the DPHI on many occasions regarding the urgent need for strategic and conservation planning for hard rock quarries in our region¹². Despite Minister Scully's view that DPHI has a good understanding of the issues of community concern, we people on the ground beg to differ.

The Wallaroo State Forest – a public asset, managed by the Forestry Corporation NSW (FCNSW) to sustain NSW's native forest estate - should not be sacrificed when alternative quarries and sites exist.

The Extractive Industries Quarries, NSW EIS Guide³⁴, identifies factors to be considered, including the level of the significance of issues on the environment. Included in those issues are cumulative issues and justification for the proposal. This submission focuses on those two key areas, as reason to refuse the Stone Ridge Quarry (the Project):

¹ Letter (email) to Jessie Evans DPHI September 2024 attached to this document (no response received)

² Lower Hunter Hard Rock Quarry Strategic and Conservation Planning Feb 2024

³ <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-02/extractive-industries-quarries-eis-guideline.pdf>

⁴ Note: Minister Scully advised community groups in correspondence MDPE24/1496 25/8/24 to refer to the EIS Guidelines with regard to cumulative impacts from quarry development

Cumulative Issues:

Issues to consider that relate to extractive proposals include:

- a) identifying other existing extractive industries in the area or on the site within the last five years; identifying other forms of industry in the vicinity*
- b) the extent to which the surrounding environment is already stressed by existing development; the potential for cumulative impacts from:

 - i) other existing extractive industry activities in the area/region*
 - ii) other activities with similar impacts*
 - c) any advantages or disadvantages from clustering industry in the area considering the environmental characteristics*
 - d) any likely long-term and short-term cumulative impacts having regard to air-quality, noise or traffic disturbance, visual impacts, surface water and groundwater issues, public health or loss of heritage items, vegetation or fauna habitat*
 - e) consideration of the receiving environment's ability to achieve and maintain environmental objectives**

and,

H. Justification for the proposal

The sustainability of the proposal should be outlined in terms of the ability of the proposal to
b) demonstrate efficiency and sound environmental performance in resource management to meet the short and long-term community requirements for extractive material
including – What will the consequences be of not carrying out the Project

CUMULATIVE ISSUES:

The extent to which the surrounding environment is already stressed by existing development; the potential cumulative impacts from –

- a) Identifying other existing extractive industries in the area or on the site within the last five years; identifying other forms of industry in the vicinity**

other existing extractive industry activities in the area/region (located in Hinterland area west of Pacific Highway)

- Eagleton Quarry approximately 2km south-east (Land and Environment Court 2025 – Traffic Issues)
- Boral Seaham Quarry approximately (disputing traffic issues with Council) (new application to expand)
- Brandy Hill Quarry 10km west -north
- Deep Creek Quarry, 14km north-west
- Karuah East Quarry, 20km north
- Martins Creek Quarry, 20km west-north (Land and Environment Court 2025 – traffic issues)

Preparing EIS/addressing submissions

- Hillview Quarry, 25km north-west
- Karuah South Quarry, 20km north

other forms of industry in the vicinity

- Port Stephens Gardenland, 1.8km south-east
- Ringwood Park Motorsport Complex, 1km southeast
- Circuit Italia, progressively developed approximately 1.5km south-east
- Hunter Valley Paintball, 2km southeast
- Kings Hill residential development approximately 3 km south (including Monarch's Rise)
- Brandy Hill Battery Energy Storage System 6km west-north (EIS preparation) 5km west-north
- Stratford Pumped Hydro and Solar Project, Critical State Development, 61km north-west (will rely on shared road network EIS public comment)
- Regional tourism – eg Seaham Swamp Nature Reserve 5 kms west
- Wallaroo National Park (adjoins)
- Rural residential allotments, small farms, grazing property
- Eagleton Ridge Respite, 3km south

b) the extent to which the surrounding environment is already stressed by existing development; the potential for cumulative impacts:

CUMULATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

The DPHI notes the 139ha Project area comprises “only” 4% of the total area of Wallaroo State Forest that will be utilised for the Project, referring to this area as “remnant vegetation” within the Grahamstown Dam drinking water catchment. The final quarry pit void could possibly be used for emergency fire-fighting water supply, and the surrounding landform will be rehabilitated with pockets of woodland species to provide wildlife habitat.

As identified in the EIS, Koalas, Squirrel Gliders, and Brush-tailed Phascogales are present within the project disturbance area. A total of ten Matters of National Environmental Significance are identified, including three listed Migratory species. There will likely be significant impacts to the Grey-headed flying fox, Coastal Swamp Sclerophyll Forest of NSW and SE Queensland. The Swift Parrot, Spotted-tail quoll, Yellow-bellied glider, New Holland Mouse and South-eastern Glossy Black Cockatoo may be significantly impacted by the Project.

The Department's recommended conditions of consent are inadequate involving either undetailed offsets or a fall back option of purchasing offset credits.

The Project Assessment notes for Stone Ridge Quarry issued by DCCEEW in 2022⁵ clearly states, *It is a requirement that offsets directly contribute to the ongoing viability of the specific protected matter impacted by a proposed action ie 'like for like'.*

Like for like includes protection of native vegetation that is the same ecological community or habitat being impacts (preferably in the same region where the impact occurs), or funding to provide a direct benefit to the matter being impacted eg threat abatement, breeding and propagation programs or other relevant conservation measures.

There is no requirement that offsets will be confined to the local area. The proffered idea that perhaps a deal can be struck with State Forests to secure an offset site with the remaining

⁵ Kathy Colgan A/g Director Northern Assessments Environment Assessments (NSW, ACT) Branch 2022

Forest is without any tangible foundation. The Forest is (meant to be) protected and managed for biodiversity already.

The fact remains, **it will be impossible to replace the critically important north-south existing habitat connection that maintains genetic diversity for local populations of threatened species (eg Kings Hill Koala Hub population) as the Project is within a corridor that is already impacted by both Eagleton and Boral Seaham quarries and that corridor narrows down to a “pinch point” beside Balickera Canal which the development will restrict.**

Key, likely and irreversible biodiversity impacts include –

Disruption of the roosting microbats in the Balickera Tunnel – including the removal of their foraging habitat and vibration impacts to breeding roosting habitats

Habitat connectivity loss and cumulative removal of foraging habitat for the local Kings Hill Koala Hub population

Groundwater drawdown – indirect impacts to Endangered Ecological Communities,

Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems and threatened species

The strategic importance of Wallaroo State Forest to function as a wildlife refuge cannot be understated. It should be recognised that the Forest’s ability to function as a wildlife corridor is already threatened by surrounding development.

The DPHI conclusion that the Project is not predicted to significantly impact any of the identified threatened species and communities identified on the Project site, except for the Koala, Grey-headed Flying -fox and the Subtropical eucalypt floodplain forest and woodland of the NSW North Coast and Southeast Queensland EEC, is made without scientific rigour⁶.

Occupied Koala habitat needs long term protection to recover the species. The Project will unavoidably generate further direct threats to Koalas and other species including habitat loss, and fragmentation. In full consideration of the Biodiversity and Conservation Act, the Project does not avoid impacts on the Koala and other threatened species. Certainly, **no suitable offsets have been identified**. Offset Principle 8⁷ advises offsets must have transparent governance arrangements, including being able to be readily measured, monitored, audited and enforced.

Wallaroo State Forest provides essential services that can act to arrest the biodiversity loss and prevent species extinction from land clearing taking place with surrounding development at that locality.

With respect, it is recommended that Project **approval should be deferred at least until such time as the Project has been referred by the Department to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Water for determination under the EPBC Act whereby the community has further opportunity to have input into Matters of National Environmental Significance.**

⁶ Matthew Bailey, Bolwarra Environmental Service P/L 11th November 2024 Submission to IPC Stone Ridge Quarry

⁷<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/epbc/approvals/offsets/guidance/offset-policy-principles>

CUMULATIVE TRAFFIC AND ROAD NETWORK IMPACTS:

Whatever happens at the Italia Road junction to the Pacific Highway will impact on the safe operation of Bucketts Way and Pacific Highway junction, the Tarean overpass providing the U-turn for haulage trucks and the Medowie Road and Pacific Highway junction.

Cumulative traffic concerns are raised with each quarry development application. It is the community contention that if the Department is justified in their assertion that the Project is necessary, then the necessary road infrastructure should be provided up front and prior to project approval.

It is unacceptable for DPHI to consistently back the aspirations of individual quarry developers despite the stated concerns of the local community and both Port Stephens and MidCoast Councils about the safe operation of the three junctions to the Pacific Highway between Raymond Terrace and Karuah. **These concerns relate to the cumulative impacts of hard rock quarry expansion in our region in the absence of adequate and safe road infrastructure.**

MidCoast Council advised GEG⁸ that:

*In 2023, the Federal Government commissioned a review of major project funding through Infrastructure Australia. This funding review confirmed support for \$7.2 million that has been allocated in the budget to progress the planning for a grade separation solution to improve safety, travel times, network efficiency and reliability along the Pacific Highway between Raymond Terrace and Karuah. The State Government has committed a further \$1.8M to allow Transport for NSW to develop **a final business case that will determine a preferred option to grade separate the three primary intersections (Italia Road, Medowie Road and the Bucketts Way) to compete for delivery funding.** Unfortunately, this is not anticipated to be completed before 2025.*

The DPHI says it has consulted with Port Stephens Council and TfNSW during its assessment of the Project's traffic impacts. I can assure the Commissioners, so did a number of community groups.

Most tellingly, we were advised by TfNSW that the DPHI, in order to meet timeframes “*have been pushing more items to be worked through post consent*”⁹.

Port Stephens Council¹⁰ recently, unanimously endorsed a motion which agreed “*the elected body of Port Stephens Council will not support any future traffic solution associated with new quarry development applications or modifications at the Italia Road/M1 intersection unless it is a grade separated, fly-over interchange, and encourages you in any and all of your assessments to adopt this same approach in order to protect the health and safety of locals in Port Stephens*”

Port Stephens Council requested the IPC for Eagleton Quarry to defer Project consent until the proposed Italia Road Upgrade had been approved. This request was ignored, with the

⁸ Email correspondence Ref ECM16833768 4 April 2024

⁹ TfNSW Response to Appendix of Issues – Questions for TfNSW 3 June 2024 EcoNetwork Port Stephens, Gloucester Environment Group, Voices of Wallalong and Woodville, KKEPS, Save Balickera Inc.

¹⁰ <https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/council-meetings/council-agendas-and-minutes/council-agendas-and-minutes-2024> 23 July 2024

Commissioners instead directing the Proponent to follow new traffic conditions which the Proponents are now challenging in the Land and Environment Court¹¹.

A number of community groups, including GEG, have a planned meeting with The Hon Jenny Aitchison MP Minister for Regional Transport and Roads later this month. We wish to make clear to the Minister our belief that road safety should be given a higher and more realistic priority in the assessment for quarry projects.

The continuation of limited, individual solutions presented by proponents and the DPHI for each quarry development need to be seriously challenged by Government, not accepted at face value. Without a strategic approach to the cumulative impacts of combined haulage movements, that accounts for all likely traffic movement in the next decade, public safety is seriously jeopardised.

In 2023, The DPHI was advised by Port Stephens Council¹² that cumulative impacts from the Project's truck volumes, congestion, noise, road safety and road maintenance required further assessment. Council suggested alternative design options for the Italia Road and Pacific Highway junction should be reinvestigated in order to justify the Proponent's selected intersection design including a grade separated interchange.

The DPHI spuriously states that the Project will improve the efficiency and safety of the Italia Road intersection, ignoring the fact that the proposed intersection Upgrade - to be financed equally and used by the three Italia Road three quarries – is only a 'medium term' solution, it is not yet approved, and that the community is opposed to the proposal on the basis of the unavoidable wider road network impacts to the other road junctions requiring access to the Pacific Highway.

With respect, it is recommended that Project approval be deferred at least until such time as approval of the Italia Road Upgrade proposal is secured, noting this represents an unsatisfactory and short term solution to the pressing regional need of expediting State Government funding for grade separated interchanges at the current at-grade intersections to the Highway.

CUMULATIVE SOCIAL IMPACTS

The DPHI identifies key concerns regarding social issues related to potential impacts on the amenity of local residents and potential conflicts of recreational land uses in the local area. This summary is both understated and biased in favour of the Project and seriously disadvantages the well-being of our region.

A third hard rock quarry operating within the Balickera locality will destroy the area's amenity with some residents suffering more than others from the myriad of issues that arise from the cumulative impacts arising from unavoidable air quality, noise, blasting, traffic, visual impacts, loss of and changes to their local environment. The operation of three hard rock quarries will dominate the Balickera locality of which the natural environment of the State Forest is a critical component.

¹¹ <https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/cases/2024/04/eagleton-quarry>

¹² Port Stephens Council ref 25-2023-10-1, 2 August 2023

Glenn A Albrecht PhD¹³, presented his submission to the Brandy Hill Quarry expansion¹⁴ in 2020.

He explained -

Solastalgia is the lived experience of negative environmental change (Albrecht 2005). As a psychoterratic (psyche-earth) experience and emotion, solastalgia is now well established in the global literature on place and its transformation in relation to human mental health (Galway et al 2019). I have defined solastalgia as: ... the pain or distress caused by the loss of, or inability to derive, solace connected to the negatively perceived state of one's home environment. Solastalgia exists when there is the lived experience of the physical desolation of home (Albrecht et al 2007: 96).

Other than acknowledging the considerable public interest in the Project, and in particular the community's concerns regarding the potential biodiversity, traffic, noise, and air quality impacts from the Project, the Department gives no consideration to the social impacts a third hard rock quarry will likely affect in a small community.

The following excerpt from Prof. Albrecht's submission explains the range of social impacts caused by solastalgia, using case law to highlight specific issues related to the community's loss of sense of place.

The judge, Justice Preston, agreed with me. In rejecting the expansion of the mine, he concluded:

In relation to social impacts, I find that the Project's impacts in terms of noise, dust and visual impacts and the adverse change in the composition of the community by reason of the acquisition of noise and air quality affected properties, are likely to cause adverse social impacts on individuals and the community of Bulga. The Project's impacts would exacerbate the loss of sense of place, and materially and adversely change the sense of community, of the residents of Bulga and the surrounding countryside. (NSW L&EC 2013)

The key elements of the Bulga decision regarding social impacts were incorporated into the case of Gloucester Resources Limited v Minister for Planning (2019) where Justice Preston again argued:

In this case, the exploitation of the coal resource in the Gloucester valley would not be a sustainable use and would cause substantial environmental and social harm....

The Project will have significant negative social impacts on people's way of life; community; access to and use of infrastructure, services and facilities; culture; health and wellbeing; surroundings; and fears and aspirations.

The Project will cause distributive inequity, both within the current generation and between the current and future generations. (NSW L&EC 2019).

In addition, Justice Preston included considerations of solastalgia in his sustainability assessments of the social impact of negative change on residents. He reported, regarding the community's expert witness on social impacts:

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glenn_Albrecht

¹⁴ <https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/resources/pac/media/files/pac/project-submissions/2020/05/brandy-hill-quarry-expansion-project-ssd-5899/20200605t100701/brandy-hill-and-solastalgia.pdf>

*Dr Askland observed that the proposed mitigation strategies in the social impact assessment will do nothing to address the social impacts of topophilia and solastalgia. **The mitigation strategies are based on a logic that disregards the lived experience of place and the strong emotional bonds that individuals form to their physical environments.** Dr Askland considered that the mitigation strategies will in themselves be detrimental in terms of social impacts related to amenity, scenery and sense of place (Askland report, [142]). (NSW L&EC 2019).*

The Department wilfully ignores Port Stephens Council stated aspirations on behalf of Port Stephens Hinterland residents.

The Port Stephens Hinterland Plan¹⁵ states: *Protection and conservation of our environment Hinterland communities place a high value on their local natural environment, **in fact it's the thing they care most about.... Overdevelopment and clearing is a concern for residents, specifically the disposal of waste from housing fill, destruction of koala habitat, quarry activities, air quality and flooding....** The Hinterland's character is defined by its working farms and its beautiful natural landscape that features rolling hills, deep rivers, views of mountain ranges and a feeling of open space. The community values the unique identity of the villages that make the Hinterland. **The community want to protect this for future generations through careful management of land, appropriate planning controls and the protection of habitat corridors.***

For the wider community, the Project represents the further, and permanent, demise of their Native State Forest estate, undermining the operation of their regional road network, and regretfully accepting that another of the Hunter's rural villages has been consumed by extractive industry.

c) any advantages or disadvantages from clustering industry in the area considering the environmental characteristics

Potential Advantage - Economically established for the Proponents and FCNSW who will receive considerable financial returns and royalties over the life of the quarry.

Potential Disadvantage – see below (d)

d) any likely long-term and short-term cumulative impacts having regard to air-quality, noise or traffic disturbance, visual impacts, surface water and groundwater issues, public health or loss of heritage items, vegetation or fauna habitat

Although quarries are “permissible” developments, the high number of regional quarries within a 25km radius, all in rural locations, with some in close proximity to each other will create immediate short term and permanent cumulative impacts, directly impacting on our rural and highly biodiverse region. There has been no regional strategic and conservation planning for quarry developments, despite community efforts to secure a “wide picture approach” to safely accommodate such development.

¹⁵ Pages 12-14 <https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/development/place-plans/hinterland-place-plan#:~:text=The%20Hinterland%20of%20Port%20Stephens,Duns%20Creek%20in%20the%20west.>

The ad-hoc quarry development currently occurring does not align with local Council Strategic planning policies nor the expectations of residents. Both the Port Stephens and MidCoast hinterland regions are valued for their existing scenic and social amenity that our highly biodiverse environment provides. There will be direct impacts to the future of the area and changes to the demographics and social cohesion that currently exists in the rural towns and villages because of quarry development.

The Natural Resources Commission 2022 ‘NSW Forest Monitoring and Improvement Program Insights for NSW forest outcomes and management’ notes:

Recent natural disasters have highlighted the central role of the environment in human well-being, and there is increasing community demand for leadership and investment in environmental management to protect our natural resources and the associated benefits and services they provide.

The NSW Biodiversity Outlook Report 2024 notes FCNSW’s native forest logging have a professed aim to ensure forests are managed in an ecologically sustainable way in perpetuity – to “grow” the value of the forest estate and manage the range of identified values including environmental conservation, tourism and recreation and renewable timber production while also supporting rich biodiversity and wildlife populations.

Stone Ridge Quarry will result in irretrievable social, habitat and biodiversity loss. Considering the impacts to wildlife already caused by adjoining quarries and southern developments, and the inevitable social impacts (including increased traffic) the Project will cause to residents of Balickera, it is inevitable there will be both social and environmental dislocation.

The State Forest should not be quarried, it has a key role in maintaining the environment and social cohesion of Balickera in the first instance. Secondly, the NSW community values State Forests. They should not be viewed as an expendable piece of real estate by any government department or private developer.

e) consideration of the receiving environment’s ability to achieve and maintain environmental objectives

Refer to all previous comments above which indicate the current social and environmental paradigms will be unacceptably and detrimentally altered with Project approval.

Further, it should be noted the DPHI misguidedly rests its case for removal of Koala Habitat on the basis of the 2002 CKPoM, stating the habitat loss would be minor in the context of the large expanse of forest vegetation to the south and east.

The CKPoM is a document considered outdated, is currently under review and was not designed to be used as a site specific reference document. It is not a document that should be used for contemporary Koala impact assessment purposes, other than, perhaps, reference to koala feed tree species impacted by the proposal

The NSW National Recovery Plan for the Koala clearly states that Koala habitat is critical to the species survival:

It is clear that in order to halt decline and promote recovery of the listed Koala, the following should be avoided:

- *Clearing of habitat used by Koalas for feeding and resting*
- *Reducing connectivity between patches of habitat used by Koalas for feeding, resting, commuting and dispersing (either by clearing of vegetation or by the erection of barriers to passage)*
- *Clearing of habitat used by Koalas during extreme events (heat waves, drought/fire refuge)*
- *Avoiding activities that will expose Koalas to additional threats (eg dogs, cars) in places where Koalas must use the ground to move between resting and feeding trees*

The DPHI repeats the false assumption they have used with other regional quarry projects, that a “small loss of habitat” will be of little consequence given the large expanse of surrounding forest, commenting that low activity numbers and a perceived absence of evidence of breeding are justification for clearing; in this instance, 68 ha of Koala habitat within the Project’s 139ha footprint. The fact remains the Koala is at risk of extinction in the wild due to progressive, continued habitat loss, and every time the Department uses that reasoning, they are effectively sounding the death knell for local Koalas.

The DPHI has a responsibility to refer to the latest scientific evidence, and respect directives from other Government Departments, and Council environmental officers who advised the Department in 2023¹⁶ –

A cumulative impact assessment is required to address all known projects that have the potential to impact on the local population of koalas. This includes, but is not limited to, the following projects:

Seaham Quarry expansion SSD

Eagleton Quarry SSD

Deep Creek Quarry SSD

Kings Hill Development and associated infrastructure

Balickera Canal and Pacific Highway

The impacts from the Project on the Kings Hill Koala Hub cannot be predicted without consideration of the current and surrounding environmental stressors, and establishing the extent of the likely severing of connectivity caused by the Project. Continued removal and impacts to existing habitat in the absence of current data is irresponsible.

The Department refers to larger areas of suitable Koala habit in the locality, including the Karuah National Park – on the other side of the Bucketts Way at Twelve Mile, and the Medowie State Conservation Area – on the other side of the Pacific Highway. Clearly, major roads are identified as major barriers for koala movement, with vehicle strike likely.

It is considered essential for the **Project to be referred by the Department to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Water for determination under the EPBC Act before a decision is granted.** It is hoped such referral will identify flaws in the DPHI’s environmental assessment of the Project.

¹⁶ Port Stephens Council Ref 25-2023-10-1

H. Justification for the proposal

The sustainability of the proposal should be outlined in terms of the ability of the proposal to

b) demonstrate efficiency and sound environmental performance in resource management to meet the short and long-term community requirements for extractive material

including – What will the consequences be of not carrying out the Project

Undoubtedly, the quarry will provide an economic boost to FCNSW and provide material to the construction industry for however long the quarry operates at a profit, however, such benefit will not extend to the region and it will not compensate for continued loss of regional scale public amenity.

It is accepted the Government has committed to supporting the construction industry, but because there has been no attempt to transparently justify the Project above any other operational quarry that is able to service the same anticipated market as Stone Ridge, the DPHI is failing in their duty of care to our community. To continue to rely on the anecdotal evidence from individual quarry Proponents that another quarry is warranted is simply not good enough reason for approval.

Obviously, individual Proponents are motivated to progress their business interest and economic prosperity, whereas the local residents are motivated to protect their homes, lifestyles and community.

The community knows that once hard rock quarries gain approval, there will inevitably be modifications and expansions to follow. This lengthens timelines and enlarges development footprints – with the consequence of prolonging and expanding environmental impacts.

There are no regional environmental gains through offsets because there is no planning to compensate for the environmental impacts in any formal way that would see to regional environmental benefit. Cumulatively, and at a regional level these hard rock quarries are one by one destroying the most valued asset of our region – our once healthy natural environment.

The rapid, unplanned expansion of hard-rock quarries in this region will see the safety of all road users jeopardised. The Stone Ridge Quarry will add to an already unsustainable expansion of the industry and will impose costs on all road users in terms of remediation, lost time and inconvenience.

Any reasonable person would sympathise particularly with Balickera residents. Not only will a third quarry drastically, directly impact and adversely affect their way of life, but it will also affect their economic stability through the demise of real estate values in that locality.

The DPHI dismisses this issue as it is not a consideration requirement of the EPBC Act. However, in terms of intergenerational equity, why should a small community have to directly carry the economic loss of having unplanned, unwanted, quarry development in their once rural location?

Infrastructure Australia¹⁷ advises quarry capacity in Mid North Coast NSW is a growing risk to Coffs Harbour Bypass investments, and there appears a lack of quarries that serve the regional and remote areas due to a lack of logistics and capacity approvals. The quarries noted in this submission are all located in the Lower Hunter Region and not slated to supply materials to northern markets. One can assume the high transportation costs would likely affect the Proponent's ability or willingness to service the Coffs Harbour Bypass, especially since there are large operational hard rock quarries in the Taree area north of Balickera.

At any rate, the Stone Ridge Quarry plans to supply the Lower Hunter, Central Coast and northern Sydney construction markets (also Brandy Hill Quarry's and Eagleton's market, the Boral Seaham Quarry primarily servicing the Hunter and Port Stephens), providing no details as to any perceived urgent requirement for quarry product for one destination above any other. Certainly, the areas of Port Stephens, Hunter, Central Coast and Sydney construction markets are not identified in Infrastructure Australia's 2023 Market Capacity Report as being at risk of seeing a shortfall in quarry materials.

The consequence of not proceeding with the Project will primarily fall on FCNSW who are expecting considerable royalty payments of a value far greater than the return from Native Forest logging and reduced costs in managing part of their estate.

It is acknowledged the Proponents will have lost a considerable investment opportunity with Project refusal, but that investment opportunity could only be realised at community expense by the unconscionable release of part of Wallaroo State Forest into private hands to develop into a hard-rock quarry. (Noting that arrangement was conditional upon meeting all environmental requirements).

There is no evidence of community consultation taking place before or during the 2018 agreement between the then Minister, FCNSW and the Proponent which would have given the community a chance to endorse or reject such a contract. No cost benefit analysis has been produced to establish as to whether the Project is in the best interests of the citizens of NSW.

Native State Forests are valued for their environmental services, and social and recreational benefits, including tourism and the public's general understanding is that State Forests are to be protected and shared equally with future generations.

Because the Project is proposed in a Native State Forest, the highest level of reasons for justification should be enacted by government. We know the Forestry Act provides for quarries in State Forests, but this Project is way larger than any other previously approved quarry. The Bago Quarry in the Forestry Plantation at Bago (Wauchope) is 200,000 tonnes per annum for 20 years. Stone Ridge is over six times larger in an area already stressed by other quarry developments, and serves regionally important environmental services including as part of the Grahamstown Dam drinking water catchment.

Positive outcomes for the community will result if the Project is refused, and it is recommended that approval be deferred until such time as the NSW Government has formalised their Forestry Action Plan.

¹⁷ https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-12/IA23_Market%20Capacity%20Report.pdf

CONCLUSION

The environmental directive of the Hunter Regional Plan 2041 includes *planning for aggregate extraction areas must ensure that those areas contribute to the longer-term formation of a green corridor, both during extraction (eg by maintaining existing vegetation links and/or restoration on areas not being quarried or mined) and on completion of resources extraction*¹⁸.

The Project fails to advance the protection of existing vegetation and wildlife corridors already under stress from surrounding quarry development and offers no tangible plans to improve the local environment at Project completion. It is not acceptable for consent authorities to make it easy for developers to pay into a fund as a means to meet environmental offset obligations.

The cumulative and combined impacts of continued quarry development in our region must be immediately addressed prior to any further quarry approvals. A regional planning strategy to properly address these impacts and Stone Ridge's likely contribution, should be in place, but it is not.

Adequate and safe road infrastructure to support quarry expansion is not in place. The Department chooses to ignore Port Stephens Councillors request that only a grade-separated, fly-over interchange at the Italia Road junction will protect the health and safety of Port Stephens residents. Instead, supporting the Proponent's and other quarry operators' contention that an upgraded intersection will suffice.

Clearly, Stone Ridge Quarry is not supported by the community, it does not hold the social license to operate.

The Wallaroo State Forest provides essential services to the local and wider region in terms of biodiversity, cultural heritage, recreation, carbon storage, catchment/water provision and scenic amenity. It is highly unlikely that today any current Minister responsible for NSW State Forests would endorse a quarry the size of Stone Ridge in any Native State Forest.

We respectfully request that the Commissioners defer their decision on the Project until such time as the determination of Matters of National Environmental Significance are completed allowing the public further opportunity to comment, and the road and traffic issues are sorted out. Approval should not be granted prior to such outcomes.

Notwithstanding our requests, GEG members believe positive regional, environmental, social and economic outcomes can be maintained and achieved if the Stone Ridge Quarry Project is refused.

Megan Benson, Committee Member

Gloucester Environment Group, November 2024

Attachments follow- Letter to Jessie Evans DPHI, Newcastle Herald Media coverage of hard rock quarry social impact issues.

¹⁸ Hunter Regional Plan 2041 Planning Priority 5 Promote sustainable use of mineral and energy resources

Jessie Evans,
Director,
Energy and Resource Assessment (Underground)
Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

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10th September 2024

RE: Lower Hunter Hard Rock Quarry Strategic and Conservation Planning.

Dear Ms Evans,

The Minister, the Hon Paul Scully MP (Correspondence Ref: MDPE24/1496 dated 25/8/24 - attached) has directed us to you if we have “any questions” regarding his response to our correspondence concerning what we believe to be unacceptable hard rock quarry development in the Port Stephens, MidCoast, Dungog and Maitland areas (Lower Hunter).

We challenge the Minister’s view that consideration of cumulative impacts is adequate.

The Minister states the DPHI “*must take into account the cumulative impacts of any new proposal and existing sites of a similar nature.*” He misses our point that assessment should also account for other similar proposals already on the table, but not yet assessed.

Without consideration of ALL quarry projects proposed as well as those already operating or preparing to expand, the cumulative impacts will necessarily be understated and/or ignored. Our arguments are summarised in our Issues document (attached) and specifically referred to in individual community submissions during both the assessment process and to consecutive IPC hearings.

At no time has there been public consultation with the Department to discuss the overall cumulative impacts and the resulting social and environmental consequences from the concentration of ten operational and proposed hard rock quarries – all within a 25km radius in our rural regional area.

However, it is clear to any reasonable person, that there will be a wide range of cumulative and combined impacts caused by this concentration that is most impactful, in the first instance, throughout the Port Stephens, MidCoast, Dungog and Maitland Council areas.

We submit it is not acceptable for the Department’s merit assessment process to doggedly fail to account for the impacts identified by the community and ignore our widespread and valid community concerns, apparently in order to meet predetermined and opaque timelines.

This continued failure has happened despite -

- MidCoast Council’s statement to the IPCN in 2023
<https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/resources/pac/media/files/pac/projects/2023/11/deep-creek-quarry/case-correspondence-to-and-from-the-commission/response-to-questions-on-notice-from-council-redacted.pdf>)
*“New hard rock quarry proposals are being advanced in the south-west of the MidCoast LGA in the absence of a strategic or cumulative impact framework. In this sub-region, the community has the experience of quarries gaining approval and then being subject to modifications and extensions. This lengthens project timelines and enlarges impact footprints (and thus prolong and expand disturbance to the local environment). They have seen offsets established, and then de-classified and developed. **The community has not seen strategic outcomes or achievements, such as regional-scale conservation gain. It is impossible to see that there has been a neutral or positive gain in biodiversity (including the koala or Tetratheca juncea) within the existing quarry approvals and their offsetting, to date. It is important that decision-makers are cognizant of this experience and endeavour to establish an improved paradigm.**”* (our emphasis)
- the consistent and persistent objections from residents and local community groups that are repeatedly unaddressed during the assessment process, resulting in the planned permanent destruction of Koala Habitat wildlife corridors important for climate refugia and other threatened species,
- IPC approval of Eagleton Quarry in the absence of assessment under the EPBC Act on Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES),
- no attempt by the Department, or any proponent, to secure or transparently align and strategically plan for local biodiversity offset sites that would sustainably benefit wildlife in our region,
- potential and cumulative impacts to catchments, including Grahamstown Dam water supply,
- our collective call to Ministers Scully and Sharpe in April 2024 to respond to our concerns - listed in our Lower Hunter Hard Rock Quarry Strategic and Conservation Planning Issues Paper
- the longstanding call to State and Federal Government from both Port Stephens and MidCoast Councils for major intersection upgrades at Italia Road, Bucketts Way and Medowie Road to the Pacific Highway prior to quarry development
- our meetings with TfNSW and their advice (with regard to Deep Creek Quarry and the Bucketts Way intersection) that *“Independent Planning Commission (IPC) determined the application and included, as a condition of consent, the need for preparation of a TMP in consultation with TfNSW and Port Stephens Council that includes the need to mitigate impacts on Bucketts Way/Pacific Highway intersection during peak holiday periods. **Ideally this should have been worked through/resolved as part of the SSD assessment process however DPHI, in order to meet timeframes, have been pushing more items to be worked***

through post-consent.” (our emphasis – Ref: Response to Appendix of Issues – Questions for TfNSW 3 June 2024),

- Progressing quarry development applications in the absence of adequate road infrastructure specifically upon which the Italia Road quarries rely, noting the following Legal precedent: In August 2024, The NSW Supreme Court of Appeal upheld an appeal against the Bowdens Silver Mine project near Mudgee. See <https://www.caselaw.nsw.gov.au/decision/19153b7a4fcce511b59e9222> The following summary conclusion is provided by Johnson Winter Slattery <https://jws.com.au/insights/articles/2024/olympians-strike-gold-while-nsw-mining-strikes-out> September 2024 ***“In respect of the Bowdens Silver decision, future projects will need to include infrastructure as part of the mine SSD application or a separate SSD application, but in any event the impacts of the infrastructure must be considered as part of the assessment and determination of the mine SSD application, as a ‘likely impact’ of a single proposed development.”*** (our emphasis)
- The IPC rejection of Port Stephens Council request that approval for Eagleton Quarry be deferred until determination of the Italia Road and Pacific Highway Upgrade (required before transportation of quarry material is allowed for the three Italia Road quarries) ,
- **Port Stephens Council recent, unanimously endorsed Motion** – Pacific Highway Intersections (<https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/council-meetings/council-agendas-and-minutes/council-agendas-and-minutes-2024>) that agrees “that for any assessment being undertaken by Council staff for a quarry or mining DA, that has any interaction with a Pacific Highway intersection, where the traffic solution being proposed is anything other than a purpose-built fly-over that Councillors be notified via PS News, for the elected Council to consider whether to make a Councillor submission on the DA to the determination body, or to call up the DA”. Further – Council requested the General Manager to communicate to various Ministers and the Hunter and Central Coast Regional Planning Panel –
 - A. There is an ever increasing demand for new approvals and expansions of quarries accessing the M1 from Italia Road**
 - B. Any Traffic solution proposed for future development applications and modifications must adequately consider the cumulative traffic impacts and safety of the Italia Road/M1 intersection, as well as the Karuah exit flyover which is used by significant residential traffic and local families.**
 - C. The elected body of Port Stephens Council will not support any future traffic solution associated with new quarry development applications or modifications at the Italia Road/M1 intersection unless it is a grade separated, fly-over interchange, and encourages you in any and all of your assessments to adopt this same approach in order to protect the health and safety of locals in Port Stephens.** (our emphasis)

- Transparent justification that any one hard rock quarry in our region is required above any other proposed quarry noting that quarry materials are primarily needed for infrastructure projects outside of our region.

Although “permissible” development, all these quarries are in rural regional locations, in close proximity to each other. Hard rock quarry development does not align with local strategic planning policies. Our region is highly valued by Council and residents who rely on the safe operation of their existing road networks, and with the existing provision of scenic and social amenity and the myriad of environmental services our highly biodiverse environment provides.

Minister Scully provided a link to the Cumulative Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects (2022).

We draw your attention to 2.2 Integrated assessment p 11, where it states conditions which the **Department must consider if there is potential for material cumulative impacts with other relevant future projects** – including the “*strategic implications of allowing the project to proceed and the impacts it may have on the identified area with any other relevant future projects*” and “*how the findings of the cumulative impact assessment can be integrated in to broader strategic planning and decision making in the wider area. This may include:*

- *Assessing and evaluating the merits of other relevant future projects; and*
- ***Deciding if strategic action can be taken to reduce cumulative impacts to an acceptable level.*** (our emphasis)

We must ask the following questions, in good faith, and seek assurance that “the system” can work for affected local communities who experience first-hand the effects of hard rock quarry development and need to be recognised in the assessment process. Strategic action to reduce the cumulative impacts has not occurred and is required.

1. How is the Department addressing the need to reduce cumulative impacts from quarry developments in our region? (see Issues page 1 Issue Statement)
2. Where is there evidence of such consideration?
3. How is the Department sharing their conclusions and justification for the continued rate of hard rock quarry development at local community level?
4. What responsibility does the Department have in relation to reporting to the IPC (and the public) about the absence of regional scale planning that justifies the extent of hard rock quarry development in our region and clearly shows how such development directly benefits our regional community? (see Issues Paper page 2 Request to NSW Government)

We believe that positive social and environmental benefits to affected communities are just as important as the economic benefits provided to the wider community from hard rock quarry development and that currently our region is unfairly and disproportionately, bearing the adverse environmental, social and economic impacts from the uncoordinated, ad-hoc concentration of hard rock quarry development.

After receiving your written response to this correspondence with specific reference to our questions, we respectfully request an on-line meeting with you to further discuss our concerns.

Each community group that the undersigned represent have both common and particular grievances with the operation of the current merit assessment process that excludes consideration of the lived experience created by the cumulative impacts that each quarry development presents.

We look forward to your timely response and thank you for your time and consideration of the issues we raise.

Yours faithfully,

Megan Benson, Committee Member, Gloucester Environment Group
[REDACTED]

Nigel Waters, EcoNetwork Port Stephens
[REDACTED]

Jo Lynch, Coordinator, Hunter Community Environment Centre
[REDACTED]

- c.c. Tim Crosdale, General Manager, Port Stephens Council
ATTN: Steve Peart Community Futures Directorate
- c.c. Adrian Panuccio, General Manager, MidCoast Council
ATTN: Paul DeSzell, Director Liveable Communities
- c.c. Gareth Curtis, General Manager, Dungog Shire Council
- c.c. Jeff Smith CPA GAICD, General Manager, Maitland City Council
- c.c. The Hon. Kate Washington MP, Member for Port Stephens

Attachments:

Correspondence Ref MDPE24/1496, The Hon Paul Scully MP, Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, 25th August, 2024

Request and Summary of Issues February 2024, Lower Hunter Hard Rock Quarry Strategic and Conservation Planning, EcoNetwork Port Stephens, Gloucester Environment Group, Hunter Community Environment Centre

Newcastle Herald media coverage Hard Rock Quarries Port Stephens & MidCoast

Public meeting called following complaints about new quarry project By Matthew Kelly, and Jamieson Murphy October 23 2024 - 6:30pm

The Independent Planning Commission will hold a public meeting into a proposed rock quarry in a state forest north of Raymond Terrace.

The Stone Ridge Quarry project area covers 139 hectares within the Wallaroo State Forest. It has a disturbance area of about 80 hectares.

The Australian Resource Development Group has proposed to extract 1.5 million tonnes per annum of hard rock from the site for 30 years.

A coalition of 16 Hunter-based groups fighting the plan argue that, if approved, the project would destroy native vegetation in an area which supports both an intact regional biodiversity corridor, as well as three overlapping climate corridors that government commissioned research has highlighted are essential to the survival of threatened species populations fleeing the effects of climate change.

In a co-signed letter sent to Ms Plibersek last year, the groups argued that the quarry would have unacceptable impacts on biodiversity protected under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Australian Resource Development Group director of planning and development Justin Meleo previously said minimising and avoiding biodiversity impacts, including on the koala, were of paramount importance when locating the quarry site and in determining the location of any project disturbance area.

"The project site is mapped as the lowest category 'marginal' habitat on the Koala Habitat Planning Map within the Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management prepared by Port Stephens Council," Dr Meleo said.

The project has been referred to the Independent Planning Commission because the Department of Planning received at least 50 unique submissions objecting to the proposal.

The public meeting will be held at the Seaham School of Arts at 10 Warren Street, Seaham on Thursday 14 November 2024 at 10am.

Anyone wishing to present at the public meeting must pre-register their interest on the Commission's website using the [Speaker Registration Form](#).

Written submissions will be accepted until 5:00pm on Thursday 21 November 2024. Plans have also been lodged for another quarry just south of Stroud, off Bucketts Way near Booral.

The \$6.5-million Hillview Hard Rock Quarry, which would extract up 1.5-million tonnes of hard rock per annum for up to 30 years.

Coastwide Materials made the application for the development, which if approved will be undertaken over seven stages and extract up to 45-million tonnes of resources.

The project is expected to create an additional 252 daily truck movements. The plans include road and intersection upgrades to Maytoms Lane and The Bucketts Way to cater for the extra vehicles.

The site covers 400 hectares, but the quarry footprint will be confined to 48 hectares, and is expected to employ 25 to 30 full time employees once established.

1000 extra trucks a day: council push for Pacific Highway upgrade

By [Michael Parris](#)

Updated July 21 2024 - 4:12pm, first published 4:00pm

Port Stephens Council will be asked to oppose any Italia Road quarry development proposals which do not include a new flyover at the Pacific Highway.

Raymond Terrace-based councillor Giacomo Arnott will move at next week's council meeting that the council write to senior NSW ministers expressing its concern at truck traffic arising from multiple quarry projects near Balickera, north of Raymond Terrace.

The *Newcastle Herald* reported last week that the NSW Independent Planning Commission had [approved the new Eagleton rock quarry](#), which will produce up to 600,000 tonnes of rock annually for 30 years and generate an estimated 170 inward and 170 outward truck movements a day.

Under the approval, outbound trucks will have to turn left from Italia Road onto the Pacific Highway and take a 22-kilometre detour north via the Karuah overpass before heading back south towards Newcastle and Sydney.

Building industry supplier Boral has plans to extend the life of nearby Seaham Quarry by 30 years to 2057 and almost double its maximum output to 2 million tonnes a year.

Also in Italia Road, Australian Resource Development Group is seeking approval for its Stone Ridge Quarry, which would produce up to 1.5 million tonnes of hard rock for 30 years.

The three quarry projects combined would send an estimated [1000 extra trucks a day](#) through the Italia Road-Pacific Highway intersection, or 365,000 a year. It is likely all of the southbound trucks would be routed north via Karuah.

Cr Arnott's motion says the Transport Minister and Planning Minister should be informed the elected council does not support any more quarry approvals without a "grade-separated fly-over interchange".

The motion before Tuesday's meeting "encourages" the ministers and the Hunter Central Coast Regional Planning Panel to adopt the same position.

Cr Arnott's motion says government agencies and quarry companies must adequately address cumulative traffic impacts of their proposals on the Italia Road intersection and the Karuah exit fly-over, "which is used by significant residential traffic and local families".

The likely truck movements from the three quarry projects prompted federal Nationals MP David Gillespie to call last year for a [new interchange](#) with slip roads from Italia Road and the Bucketts Way linked to a Medowie Road overpass.

Residents 'shocked' over quarry approval as trucks face 22km highway detour

By [Michael Parris](#)

Updated July 17 2024 - 4:26pm, first published 5:00am

A Port Stephens community group says it is "shocked" after the NSW Independent Planning Commission [approved the new Eagleton rock quarry](#) near Raymond Terrace.

EcoNetwork Port Stephens spokesperson Nigel Waters said the Balickera quarry would erode the area's natural and social amenity and put more trucks on local roads.

The quarry, which has been seeking development approval since 2017, will produce up to 600,000 tonnes of rock annually for 30 years and generate an estimated 170 inward and 170 outward trucks movements a day.

Transport for NSW objected to the quarry in 2017 after deeming the intersection of Italia Road and the Pacific Highway unsafe for additional southbound trucks turning across northbound highway traffic.

Eagleton Rock Syndicate amended its plans so outbound trucks will turn left onto the Pacific Highway and drive 11 kilometres north before turning around near Karuah and heading south.

The road infrastructure to accommodate the massive increase in haulage vehicles is not in place, yet quarry approvals are taking place.

- Nigel Waters, EcoNetwork Port Stephens

Building industry supplier Boral has plans to extend the life of nearby Seaham Quarry by 30 years to 2057 and almost double its maximum output to 2 million tonnes a year.

Also in Italia Road, Australian Resource Development Group is seeking approval for its Stone Ridge Quarry, which would produce up to 1.5 million tonnes of hard rock for 30 years.

The three quarry projects combined would send an estimated [1000 extra trucks a day](#) through the Italia Road-Pacific Highway intersection each way, or 365,000 a year.

It is likely all of the southbound trucks would be routed north via Karuah. Mr Waters said the combined traffic impacts of multiple hard rock quarry developments compromised the community's ability to safely use and access the Pacific Highway.

"Simply stated, the road infrastructure to accommodate the massive increase in haulage vehicles is not in place, yet quarry approvals are taking place," he said.

The proposed truck movements prompted federal Nationals MP David Gillespie to call last year for a [new interchange](#) with slip roads from Italia Road and the Bucketts Way linked to a Medowie Road overpass.

Mr Waters said the latest approval had been granted "in the absence of transparent consideration of the project's strategic, social and conservation implications in the context of the other nine hard rock quarries operational or proposed within a 25km radius in our rural hinterland area".

The IPC found the Eagleton site was "suitable for a hard rock quarry given its hard rock resources, topography, avoidance of major environmental constraints and access to the regional road network".

The commission acknowledged [residents' concerns](#) and found the impacts of the development could be mitigated through strict conditions of consent, including noise, blasting and air-quality criteria.

Nearby resident Anna Kerr said her neighbours were weighing up their options for a legal appeal.

Mr Waters said the Eagleton quarry would affect the local environment.

"The Eagleton Quarry Project will contribute to the loss of habitat essential for the survival of a number of threatened species, including our iconic koala," he said.

"Time will tell about the impacts of another quarry in our Grahamstown Dam water catchment."

He said the state government should "properly plan" for producing construction materials.

"It is not sustainable to effectively destroy the amenity and biodiversity of a region to support development elsewhere," he said.

"Earlier this year we called on ministers Penny Sharpe and Paul Scully to urgently address the matters we raised in our hard rock quarry issues paper but have so far been ignored.

"Without consideration of the cumulative impacts that extensive hard rock quarry development in our region will cause, we face an inevitable destruction of the environmental attributes we so greatly value and need."

The nearby Brandy Hill quarry [won expansion approval from the IPC](#) in 2020.

Residents fear lower Hunter is becoming a super quarry for Sydney

By [Matthew Kelly](#)

April 26 2024 - 8:00am

Residents living in the shadow [of the Lower Hunter's burgeoning quarry industry](#) want a strategic plan to control its cumulative impacts.

They say the five operational quarries (Brandy Hill, Boral-Seaham, Martins Creek, Karuah East and Karuah) and five new proposals (Eagleton, Stone Ridge, Deep Creek, Hillview, and Karuah South) within a 15 kilometre radius present [increasing risks to community safety, rural amenity and the environment](#).

An Environment Impact Statement for a proposal to extend the life of Boral's Seaham Quarry by 30 years to 2057 and almost double its maximum output to 2 million tonnes a year is presently on public exhibition.

In another development, an amended proposal to extract, process and transport up to 600,000 tonnes of hard rock products per year for 30 years at the Eagleton Quarry is also on public exhibition.

The Hunter Community Environment Centre, Eco Network Port Stephens and the Gloucester Environment Group have produced a strategic and conservation planning document for the region's hard rock quarries.

Residents want the government to fund and implement the plan.

The plan would help introduce standardised, scaleable cumulative impact assessment and monitoring of social and environmental impacts including traffic, dust, noise, water discharges and vegetation loss.

It would also quantify data on supply and demand for quarry products to guide ecologically sustainable, efficient and cost effective provision of materials, and assess alternative sources of recycled housing and infrastructure materials, including gravel and aggregates from recycled coal-ash waste.

Brandy Hill and Seaham Action Group spokeswoman Margarete Ritchie said the rights of the local communities and the environment had been sacrificed for commercial interests of quarry owners.

"It is absurd that these projects can be assessed separately when the cumulative impacts they have on roads and the environment is massive," she said.

"We know the quarry industry's lobbying has enormous influence on the assessment of projects, but who is standing up the communities and the environment that are treated as collateral damage."

The Hunter's catchment is the largest in coastal NSW, encompassing an area of 21,500 square kilometres.

The Myall Lakes and the Hunter Estuary, both listed under the RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands, comprise outstanding, internationally significant migratory bird habitats. Port Stephens contains listed nationally important wetland and the Port Stephens - Great Lakes Marine Park, the Seaham Swamp Reserve and the Grahamstown Dam domestic water supply and catchment.

"Areas of high conservation value providing connectivity and containing climate refugia must be established as no-go zones for greenfield development and expansions, in line with Objective 6 of the Hunter Regional Plan 2041 to conserve heritage, landscapes, environmentally sensitive areas, waterways and drinking water catchments.

Hunter Community Environment Centre coordinator Jo Lynch said current planning laws were failing to protect communities and the environment.

"The lower Hunter is facing more than a doubling of the quarry industry with five newly proposed and five existing operations seeking expansions," she said.

"Community members are increasingly concerned about the projected cumulative impacts of this huge expansion of the quarry sector, including increased heavy haulage traffic, habitat loss and air and water pollution in the catchment. The proposed Stone Ridge quarry in Wallaroo State Forest falls within a high value biodiversity corridor and has been roundly rejected by community members."

Hunter rock quarry gets nod despite community protest

By [Matthew Kelly](#)

Updated January 25 2024 - 4:17pm, first published January 24 2024 - 3:00pm

The NSW Independent Planning Commission has conditionally approved Deep Creek Quarry north west of Karuah, [despite fierce community opposition](#). Ironstone Developments Pty Ltd will extract, process and and transport up to 500,000 tonnes of hard rock material from the area over 30-years. The project's business case says it will provide between 17 to 31 direct employees and contractors per year. It will also contribute between \$3.7 and \$10.2 million per year in gross state product. But the Ironstone Community Action Group argued the quarry would have a devastating impact on the surrounding community and the environment.

In particular it warned the project would destroy the area's fledgling eco-tourism industry.

The group was supported by a Mid Coast Council submission that described the proposal as 'significant' and warned it would cause the clearing and loss of a large area of native vegetation, affect local populations of threatened species and remove and modify areas of habitat for biodiversity and connectivity.

The three-member commission Panel, comprising Professor Snow Barlow, Janett Milligan and Ken Kanofski, met with key stakeholders, conducted a site inspection tour and held a public meeting into the project. They heard from 12 speakers and received 42 written submissions from the community.

In its [Statement of Reasons](#), the commission found the proposed site was "suitable for a hard rock quarry given its hard rock resources, topography, avoidance of major environmental constraints and access to the regional road network".

It acknowledged the community concerns but concluded that the impacts of the development could be mitigated through strict conditions of consent. These include real time noise monitoring for compliance with noise limits and regular air quality monitoring, the results of which are to be published on the applicant's website.

Conditions also include measures to mitigate the impact of heavy vehicle movements on the performance of the Bucketts Way and Pacific Highway intersection and adherence to a code of conduct by drivers.

The applicant must also offset biodiversity impacts, including by establishing a 235 hectare biodiversity stewardship site on adjacent land, and planting and maintaining 900 koala feed trees.

The commission said these and other conditions of consent would:

- prevent, minimise, mitigate and/or offset adverse environmental impacts;
- set standards and performance measures for acceptable environmental performance;
- require regular monitoring and reporting; and
- provide for the on-going environmental management of the development.

Cluster of big quarry projects rocks residents living with traffic, dust, noise

By [Michael Parris](#)

Updated June 24 2023 - 2:41pm, first published 5:30am

Three large quarry proposals north of Raymond Terrace have raised concerns about increased truck traffic, pollution and environmental degradation.

Building industry supplier Boral has lodged a scoping report with the NSW Department of Planning and Environment to extend the life of Seaham Quarry by 30 years to 2057 and almost double its maximum output to 2 million tonnes a year.

The proposal includes expanding the Italia Road quarry site from 68 to 99 hectares, increasing its operating times to 24 hours every day and increasing blasting from once a month to once a week.

On the northern side of Italia Road, Australian Resource Development Group published an environmental impact statement on Thursday for its Stone Ridge Quarry, which would produce up to 1.5 million tonnes of hard rock for 30 years.

The EIS says the quarry would occupy 139 hectares of Wallaroo State Forest and generate 334 truck movements a day.

The two quarries are close to the [revived Eagleton mine project](#), which would produce up to 600,000 tonnes of rock material a year and 170 truck movements a day if approved.

Many trucks from the existing Boral quarry turn south from Italia Road onto the Pacific Highway across northbound traffic, but the new proposals involve trucks turning north 11 kilometres up the highway to Karuah before turning around to travel south back towards Newcastle.

Documentation for the three proposals suggest they would generate a total of almost 1000 truck movements a day, though Brandy Hill & Seaham Action Group spokesperson Margarete Ritchie regarded this figure as conservative.

A Boral spokesperson said 800 to 900 trucks a week entered the existing quarry. "A traffic study and modelling will be undertaken as part of the environmental impact assessment of the project," the spokesperson said.

"Our proposed Seaham Quarry Project is in the early stages of technical studies to prepare an environmental and social impact assessment.

"We will continue to work collaboratively with the community and all levels of government throughout this process."

Ms Ritchie said the cumulative impact of the three quarries would be catastrophic for nearby residents and others living further away.

She said the developments would choke Italia Road and the Pacific Highway with trucks, spread more potentially harmful dust and generate "horrendous" noise.

"It doesn't matter which way you look, the community will be affected," she said. "You'll have the cumulative effect of three quarries that will have 4 million tonnes coming out.

"You have all these trucks that accumulate on that highway. There is no bypass built yet, so for many years it will be wall-to-wall trucks. It's just unsustainable."

Ms Ritchie is on the community consultative committee for the nearby Brandy Hill quarry, which [won expansion approval from the Independent Planning Commission](#) in 2020.

She said the noise of crushers and blasting from the proposed quarries would carry for kilometres, including to the site of the proposed 3500-home Kings Hill housing estate to the south.

"They will hear the rumbling of the crushers. They are pretty phenomenal in their noise. We're talking great big rocks being dumped into machinery.

"I know it's a few kilometres away, but it's not as if noise suddenly stops at a particular place.

"We had someone just above the Hanson quarry who had a nervous breakdown over that because the constant noise of the banging of the machinery.

"We've had people along Brandy Hill Drive saying the noise of the crushers keeps them awake. They can't do it 24/7. Boral is dreaming if they think that that is acceptable."

ARDG says its Stone Ridge investigations have confirmed a "very large" hard rock resource suited to producing a broad range of construction products.

"It represents a rare opportunity to access a very large greenfield hard rock quarry resource, particularly given the significant geological, environmental and planning constraints that apply in the region," the company says on its website.

ARDG says the proposed quarry's proximity to Newcastle, the Central Coast and "the Sydney market if required" would allow it to "significantly ameliorate medium to long-term supply-side pressure of quarry materials" and generate state government royalties.

Boral's scoping report says the existing quarry, an "essential supplier" in the Hunter and Central Coast, will exhaust its approved hard rock reserves within a few years. Lawyer Anna Kerr, whose family owns a property near the existing Boral quarry, said the "cumulative effect of so much quarrying will make the area increasingly uninhabitable for humans as well".

Another Italia Road resident, Charlee Connor, said she could not "see one single benefit to these quarries going ahead on our road".

"It's pretty horrifying if you drive down here and you come across a quarry truck," she said.

"You have to pull off the road. The road's just not wide enough. It's crazy dangerous. I'm just surprised there hasn't been more fatalities."

About 50 residents attended a meeting on Wednesday at Woodville, where Ms Ritchie said she detected the "same anxiety and depression" in Italia Road residents as exhibited by people living near Brandy Hill quarry.

"People are very, very concerned for their own health. Here at Brandy Hill we've had problems with dust pollution into water tanks," she said.

"That dust has proven to be harmful. It was analysed by one of the residents and it had silica dust in it."

The Stone Ridge EIS predicts "no adverse air quality impacts at locations outside the project area with respect to crystalline silica".

Ms Ritchie said development had "absolutely trashed wildlife corridors" in the Hunter.

The Stone Ridge EIS says the project will have "residual direct impacts" on threatened koalas, squirrel gliders and the brush-tailed phascogale.

DPE is assessing the quarry projects as fast-tracked state significant developments.

Hunter groups ask environment minister Tanya Plibersek to stop Stone Ridge Quarry project

By [Matthew Kelly](#)

Updated July 27 2023 - 4:43pm, first published 5:00am

A coalition of Hunter environment groups has appealed to federal environment minister Tanya Plibersek to save precious koala habitat by stopping the proposed Stone Ridge Quarry project.

The Australian Resources Development Group is [seeking to extract up to 1.5 million tonnes of aggregate from the area per year over 30 years](#).

The project area covers 139 hectares within the Wallaroo State Forest, north of Raymond Terrace. It has a disturbance area of about 80 hectares.

The 16 Hunter-based groups fighting the plan, presently on public exhibition, argue that, if approved, the project would destroy native vegetation in an area which supports both an intact regional biodiversity corridor, as well as three overlapping climate corridors that government commissioned research has highlighted are essential to the survival of threatened species populations fleeing the effects of climate change.

Environmental groups in the Barrington to Hawkesbury Climate Corridors Alliance [last year called for a moratorium on land-clearing within 22 of the Climate Corridors](#), in order to preserve key areas predicted to provide landscape connectivity and refuge essential to the persistence of threatened fauna species between now and 2070 set to be displaced and forced to seek new areas of suitable habitat due to climate change.

In a co-signed letter sent to Ms Plibersek, the groups argue that the quarry proposal would have unacceptable impacts on biodiversity protected under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

"This proposal is a slap in the face to local communities who have tirelessly contested inappropriate quarry developments that brazenly encroach into areas of habitat supporting threatened and endangered species, such as the Koala," Hunter Community Environment Centre coordinator Jo Lynch said.

Martins Creek Quarry Project rejected by NSW Independent Planning Commission due to road impacts

By [Sage Swinton](#)

Updated February 14 2023 - 7:33am, first published February 13 2023 - 5:41pm

The [NSW Independent Planning Commission](#) has refused the [Martins Creek Quarry Project](#) due to "[significant impacts from the road haulage of quarry products](#)". Daracon Quarries subsidiary Buttai Gravel had applied to expand the quarry to extract 1.1 million tonnes of material every year for up to 25 years.

In its [Statement of Reasons for Decision](#) on Monday, the commission found that "the road transportation of 450,000 tonnes a year of hard rock quarry product over 25 years would have unreasonable and unacceptable impacts for the communities along the proposed haulage route".

The commission acknowledged that the project had "strategic value and economic benefits", and that the on-site issues associated with the proposed quarry - including water, air quality, noise and biodiversity impacts - could have been appropriately managed.

But it noted there would be "significant off-site impacts along the road haulage route".

The commission found that increased traffic of up to 160 truck movements per day through the main street of Paterson and to a lesser degree, Bolwarra and Bolwarra Heights, would have impacts on residential amenity, tourism, local businesses and road and pedestrian safety that would result in significant and adverse impacts on the communities in the affected areas.

The commission concluded that "the cumulative impacts of the proposed road haulage volumes are, on balance, not in the public interest, particularly given the 25 year period over which the impacts would be experienced".

The project had been [recommended for approval](#) by the Department of Planning, however the community fought a long campaign against it.

Daracon was [found by the Land and Environment Court in 2019 to be unlawfully operating the site](#), which led to the quarry's operations being significantly scaled back.

Quarry plans revive calls for new overpass for Medowie Road, Italia Road, Bucketts Way

By [Michael Parris](#)

Updated June 27 2023 - 7:36am, first published 5:30am

Federal MP David Gillespie says plans for three large quarries north of Raymond Terrace demonstrate why the Pacific Highway urgently needs a new interchange to fix safety concerns at Italia Road, Medowie Road and the Bucketts Way. The *Newcastle Herald* reported last week that [three proposed quarries](#) at Balickera could generate 1000 truck movements a day.

The former federal government budgeted \$9 million in 2021 for an Italia Road overpass, but Dr Gillespie, the Nationals Member for Lyne, said the project had not materialised.

He said an interchange could include slip roads from Italia Road and the Bucketts Way connecting to an overpass at Medowie Road, eliminating three dangerous intersections where cars cross high-speed traffic.

Two men died at the Medowie Road intersection in 2019.

Dr Gillespie said in a speech to Parliament in 2021 that the NSW government should fast-track the Medowie Road flyover and overpasses at other dangerous intersections between Newcastle and Port Macquarie, including the Myall Way turn-off to Hawks Nest and Tea Gardens.

"The Italia Road highway overpass project is long overdue, as these quarry developments have highlighted," Dr Gillespie said on Monday.

"This is yet another case of poor planning and too much red tape by the NSW government which has failed to deliver these projects. They always drag the chain."

The quarry companies involved in the Balickera projects have reached an agreement with Transport for NSW for trucks to turn north from Italia Road, travel 11 kilometres up the Pacific Highway to Karuah then turn around to travel south back towards Newcastle.

Mr Gillespie described this plan as "ridiculous", though the quarry projects were "certainly welcome" to supply materials for building and maintaining roads. "Transport for NSW needs to immediately complete the planning for these highway overpasses ... so that works can begin as soon as possible," he said.

"They are critical for our economy, important for road safety, and they are all long overdue."

Martins Creek Quarry expansion: Dungog council joins fight against appeal

By [Madeline Link](#)

September 3 2023 - 6:00pm

DUNGOG Shire Council wants to join the fight [against a controversial appeal to expand the Martins Creek Quarry](#) in the NSW Land and Environment Court.

The council voted unanimously at an extraordinary meeting to seek to take part in the proceedings and to reach out to Maitland City Council to stand with them.

Mayor John Connors said the haulage increase of up to 160 truck movements per day through the main street of Paterson and surrounding suburbs of Bolwarra and Bolwarra Heights would be "extremely detrimental".

"The dominant issue with the community is the transport of material and the truck movements," he said.

"There's issues and impacts from dust, noise and blasting but there's less community concern about that as there is about the truck movements through Paterson and Bolwarra to the highway.

"If you start putting a huge number of trucks through Paterson, turning right on a narrow intersection, it will destroy that village and community - that's the position council has taken."

Daracon Quarries subsidiary Buttai Gravel had originally applied to expand the quarry to extract 1.1 million tonnes of material every year for up to 25 years. The Independent Planning Commission (IPC) [refused the state significant development in February](#) this year due to "[significant impacts from the road haulage of quarry products](#)".

Last month, Daracon announced it would appeal the decision in court - it's unclear what the specific grounds of the appeal are yet.

A spokeswoman for the company said they were aware of Dungog council's decision.

"Daracon has consistently stated that our desire is a full and open process," she said.

"The process allows for parties such as Dungog Shire Council and Maitland Council to apply to be heard.

"We cannot speculate as to the impact such an application might have on the outcome of the appeal."

Daracon hopes the appeal will be wrapped up within the next six to eight months. Cr Connors said that if the company were to transport the bulk of its product by rail, it would allay most of the council and community's concerns.

"We want to protect the community interest, and the position that council has taken since this development application was lodged has not been to oppose the application per se, but to seek to have limitations placed on the movement by road," he said.

"As I recall they said it wasn't feasible to move it by rail.

"It will be extremely detrimental, depending upon the number of truck movements the court might allow - if they were to allow what the company wants then that would be quite destructive of the village of Paterson."

There is no estimate yet on what it might cost the council to take part in proceedings. Cr Connors said the council will be pursuing the same arguments it did before the IPC decision, and that the general manager will reach out to Maitland council.

In its decision earlier this year, the IPC found that the transport of 450,000 tonnes a year over 25 years would have "unreasonable and unacceptable" impacts on communities along the proposed haulage route.

It found increased traffic of up to 160 truck movements per day through the main street of Paterson and the surrounding suburbs of Bolwarra and Bolwarra Heights would have impacts on tourism, business, residential amenity and road and pedestrian safety.

The commission acknowledged on-site issues associated with the proposal, including water, air quality and biodiversity impacts could have been managed and agreed the project had "economic benefits".

A date has not yet been set for the appeal to be heard.

Port Stephens and Mid Coast residents push back against the impacts of quarries in their communities

By [Matthew Kelly](#)

Updated February 22 2022 - 6:45pm, first published January 22 2022 - 5:00am

It's the multimillion-dollar Hunter industry that is literally underpinning the state's record infrastructure and construction boom.

But while the region's quarries struggle to keep up with the demand, concerns about the industry's environmental, health and social impacts are growing as loud as the rumble of trucks that travel along the roads of Port Stephens and Mid Coast Council areas.

"The expansion of Sydney's housing and construction market seems more important to politicians than anything else, but it is coming at the expense of rural and regional communities who are losing their environment," Port Stephens EcoNetwork spokeswoman Margarete Ritchie said.

Six quarries currently operate in an area bounded by Seaham, Martins Creek and Karuah with a cumulative output of about 3.5 million tonnes per annum.

Affected communities cite the dangers of more trucks on rural roads, nose bleeds from dust, threats to the water quality of Port Stephens and the loss of native koala habitat.

And there are more to come - community groups estimate, based on existing expansion plans, there could be 3500 trucks a day rumbling to and from Hunter quarries in the next five years

"We are talking about thousands of trucks a day going through Heatherbrae and Raymond Terrace," Ms Ritchie said.

"The pollution from the diesel (trucks) is just as bad as the dust pollution from the quarries. It's not just one issue, it is the cumulative impact of all these issues."

In recent years Hanson's application to expand its Brandy Hill quarry met with sustained community opposition, which attracted support from celebrities including [Olivia Newton-John and Jimmy Barnes](#).

Federal Environment Minister Susan Ley, [who gave the final approval in late 2020](#), claimed significant modifications had been made to protect the area's koala habitat, but opponents dubbed the outcome a victory for "rocks over koalas".

Ironstone Developments Pty Ltd, which wants to extract 500,000 tonnes of rock per annum from a proposed new quarry near Limeburners Creek, is facing similar community opposition.

Prominent Hunter businessman Hilton Grugeon began operating Hunter Quarries at Karuah in the mid-1990s.

The operation has between 30 to 40 full-time employees and about 60 contractors. Mr Grugeon said he supported tough regulation.

"The approval processes and requirements are not what they were 50 or even 20 years ago. They are incredibly prescriptive. But we wholly support it because the issues are real and they need to be well managed otherwise everyone loses," he said.

While he supported rigorous approval processes, Mr Grugeon argued quarries were an essential part of a healthy economy.

"In an ideal world you would pull it (rock) out of the ground far away from where anyone was living and put it on rail. But the cost of all that gets passed down the line."

Tea Gardens resident and former Mid Coast Councillor Len Roberts has called for a consolidation of the region's quarries.

"We have to have (the quarried product) but there has to be a better plan for coordination," he said.

"People have a right to do their business but there has to be a way of minimising the overall impact. Tea Gardens quarry is not being used to its full capacity and neither is Karuah at this stage."

Port Stephens MP Kate Washington said quarries would continue to be an important part of the region's economy.

"But each proposal must be judged on its merits, taking into account the increasing need to preserve native habitat whilst also protecting the health and wellbeing of residents," she said.

"The cumulative impacts of habitat destruction in Port Stephens can't be ignored. Not only does our native wildlife deserve to be protected, but our local economy is dependent on maintaining our environmental credentials.

"We're seeing more trucks, larger trucks, and heavier trucks on our local roads, and very little being done to mitigate those risks," she said.

"If the government has learnt anything from COVID it should be that a healthy community and a healthy environment is needed for a healthy economy. Our community deserves a comprehensive planning strategy which considers all these factors, rather than the ad-hoc approach which fails to protect local residents and allows the destruction of valuable native habitat."

Federal government under pressure to reject Brandy Hill quarry expansion

By [Matthew Kelly](#)

Updated September 6 2020 - 7:07pm, first published 7:00pm

Pressure is increasing on the federal government to refuse the expansion of Brandy Hill quarry after evidence was uncovered that shows the area is a koala breeding ground.

[The state government approved the expansion in July but federal environment minister Susan Ley will have the final say because it is likely to have a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance.](#)

Ms Ley is due to make a ruling under the 1999 Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act on Tuesday.

Koala rescuer Kai Wild, who rescued more than 100 koalas on Kangaroo Island during the black summer bushfires, visited the area on Saturday to show support for the community campaign to stop the quarry expansion.

Mr Wild was present when locals with the assistance of a scat detection dog found scat from a mother and joey within a kilometre of the quarry's boundary.

"Now that it has been identified as a breeding population I would hope the NSW government will rescind its approval and don't wait for Susan Ley to reject it. I would hope they understand the significance of the site given what has happened with the bushfires," he said.

[A report authored by University of Newcastle wildlife conservation scientist Ryan Witt and conservation biologist John Clulow](#) determined the expansion would sever an east-west corridor between other patches of preferred koala habitat and result in a significant barrier to koala movement.

The report, Commissioned by the Brandy Hill and Seaham Action Group, report notes that the NSW Independent Planning Commission, which recommended the project be approved, relied on outdated data when assessing the project and failed to take into account the "current and declining status" of koalas, which was drastically affected by the 2019-20 bushfires.

Dr Witt said the loss of around a quarter of koala habitat on public land during the 'black summer' bushfires increased the significance of the koala habitat that would be destroyed by the proposed expansion, but this had not been factored into the IPC's decision.

"The site of the proposed expansion contains some of the best habitat in an area that did not burn. It has high suitability to support the remaining koalas in the state," he said.

"It's not an appropriate time to approve projects that will affect koala populations and habitat when the impact of the 2019-20 bushfires hasn't yet been factored into planning instruments."

The report is based on analysis of relevant policy documents and fieldwork conducted on properties neighbouring the quarry, where the fieldwork team spotted a healthy female koala and a bellowing male nearby.

"I spent three nights conducting fieldwork on properties neighbouring the quarry, and within that time we observed a healthy female koala, and a bellowing male koala within 100 metres. A short time later, another bellowing male koala was heard a bit further way," Dr Witt said.

"It's clear the expansion would have a critical impact on the local koala population, especially considering the likelihood of healthy males and females utilising that habitat."

Koala habitat to be cleared for controversial Brandy Hill quarry extension: reactions from celebrities and activists

Updated October 28 2020 - 7:50pm, first published 1:30pm

THE Federal Environment Minister Sussan Ley's [decision to approve the expansion of Brandy Hill quarry](#), allowing the destruction of 53 hectares of koala habitat, has caused outrage among environmental campaigners.

The decision has [drawn indignation from the local community](#), celebrities and koala conservation advocates across the country, many using social media to vent their fury.

Ms Ley's Twitter account was trending in Australia on Tuesday alongside the #koalakiller as celebrities joined the online pile-on.

Music legend Jimmy Barnes tweeted an expletive before asking the government to "leave the koalas what little they have left". High-profile commentator Peter FitzSimons criticised Premier Gladys Berejiklian for attending a press event at a koala hospital in Port Macquarie on the same day Ms Ley made the quarry announcement.

"Premier, PLEASE. You weakened native vegetation laws = land clearing up by 60%. Yr Dep. Premier calls Koalas "tree rats."

"This week announced that 20 hectares of Koala habitat at Appin, 52 hectares at Port Stephens to be cleared.
"But you care for Koalas?"

Comedian Celeste Barber, who had joined the campaign to save the koala habitat earlier in the year, simply retweeted a scathing attack against the minister which read: "Disgraceful, shameful, traitorous...this is a despicable decision at an AUSTRALIAN level."

Colin Hay from band Men At Work had only publicly released a video imploring the refusal of the expansion on Tuesday. He wrote "koalas in New South Wales are on trajectory towards extinction by 2050 unless their habitat is preserved and protected". Within hours of the video going live news of the expansion approval was publicly released.

He was one of many celebrities who joined the video and social media campaign to stop quarry.

Save Port Stephens Koalas campaign manager Victoria Jack said on the group's facebook page that the "grassroots campaign had achieved more than we ever thought possible".

"Sussan Ley's office has been "inundated" with calls and emails.

"Our campaign has been featured in newspapers, radio and television news stories more than 200 times. We crowdfunded an expert report by University of Newcastle scientists, which provided evidence of the presence of breeding koalas near the quarry and the quality of the habitat."

Despite all of the hard work the campaign was unsuccessful in stopping the quarry expansion.

"For now, we want to thank each and every one of you again for the time and effort you've put into supporting this campaign," a statement released on Tuesday said.

"We have not secured the outcome we wanted, but we have shone a spotlight on the need to protect Port Stephens koalas and habitat at a time when koalas are facing extinction in NSW."