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OBJECT

Submission ID: 216453

Organisation:	<i>Voice of Wallalong and Woodville (and surrounding localities) (VOWW)</i>	Key issues: <i>Biodiversity, Traffic</i>
Location:	<i>New South Wales</i>	
Attachment:	<i>Attached overleaf</i>	

Submission date: 11/20/2024 9:57:55 PM

see attachment

VOWW

Email: [REDACTED]

20/11/2024.

Re: Stone Ridge Quarry Project – SSD-10432

Supplementary Submission to IPC Objecting to the Proposal.

This submission is written on behalf of the members of VOWW in support of the local community of Balickera and Seaham. VOWW is a not-for-profit community organisation in the West Ward of Port Stephens LGA.

VOWW made an earlier submission to DPE (18/07/2023) as objectors to this proposal.

The VOWW community have the lived experience of an expanding quarry (Hanson, Brandy Hill) and our comments regarding impact on the Balickera community comes from our own experiences.

Several of our members were present at the recent IPC hearing at Seaham School of Arts Hall on 14/11/2024. I am writing this submission to add some extra background to the presentations given by the speakers who were opposed to the quarry and to question some of the points and rationale given by ARDG management, Forest Corp representative and the DPHI.

Merits and disadvantages of this proposal.

Merits.

Mr Meleo, representing ARDG, made some alarming comments with respect to the merits of the site as well as the rock to be quarried.

- It is high quality rock even though it is also available elsewhere.
- If it is not mined in the State Forest, it will be mined in other areas and impact other communities.
- This location was close to the highway.
- In the EIS the following statement was made with respect to the financial merits of the proposal to the NSW Government:

4.4.2 Economic benefits

*The estimate of NSW net production benefits of the project includes **the costs of water access licences, biodiversity offsets, road intersection upgrades, road pavement maintenance costs and costs of mitigation, monitoring and management of other potential impacts.** Consequently, the Economic Assessment estimates that the Project will have a net economic benefit to NSW, and hence is desirable and justified from an economic efficiency perspective.*

Our response.

- The highlighted benefits in the above statement all relate to the ability of ARDG to be able to establish the quarry from which they will make a huge profit over the project's life. This would be in the order of \$2 billion over the 30-year proposal. This is not a profit for the State Government, rather the expenses that need to be incurred by ARDG to establish the project. And it is at the expense of the local environment and to the social cohesion of the Balickera community. We see no '*net economic benefit*'.
- The entire rationale is for the profit of the company or for NSW Forestry Corporation.

- At the IPC hearing the only benefit offered by Damon Bird (ARDG) to the Balickera community was for providing a source of water for firefighting and gravel for fire trails.
Hardly acceptable compensation for the local community who would suffer for 30+ years.

Disadvantages.

- Permanent destruction and loss of habitat.
- Fragmentation of climate refugia
- 30+ years of stress on residents with regard to:
 - Drinking water quality
 - Noise emissions from crushing and transport
 - Noise and vibration from blasting
 - Loss of ambience and character
- Loss of a community asset for sporting and leisure pursuits
- Danger on the road system for the residents and the wider community who use Italia Rd and the Pacific Highway.
- Added danger for motorists using the Pacific Highway with the compounded effect of multiple quarries using the Pacific Highway as a haulage route with inadequate interchanges at Medowie Rd and The Bucketts Way going north and south.
- Cumulative effect of 3 quarries within a 1km radius.

Environmental and Social Use Considerations

- I hope the panel have had the opportunity to view the video that Anna Kerr from the Save Balickera Group has produced. It shows a stark difference between the Seaham/Boral quarry which shows the quarry after the 30 years of operation, (a quarry that is now seeking another 30-year consent to operate with expansion of footprint) and the Wallaroo State Forest with significant vegetation which is habitat to various endangered and vulnerable species.
- After 30 years of quarrying the only thing left is a huge pit that cannot be filled or rehabilitated, hardly the sustainable rationale behind Forestry Corporation statements.
- The proposed site within Wallaroo State Forest has many benefits for local residents, tourists and sporting bodies, for example the Newcastle Orienteering Club. (see letter and map below).
- Biodiversity corridors which are crucial to the survival of endangered and vulnerable species will be impacted and the fragmentation of populations will result in localised extinction of species.

The following is a personal submission from a member of the Newcastle Orienteering Club.

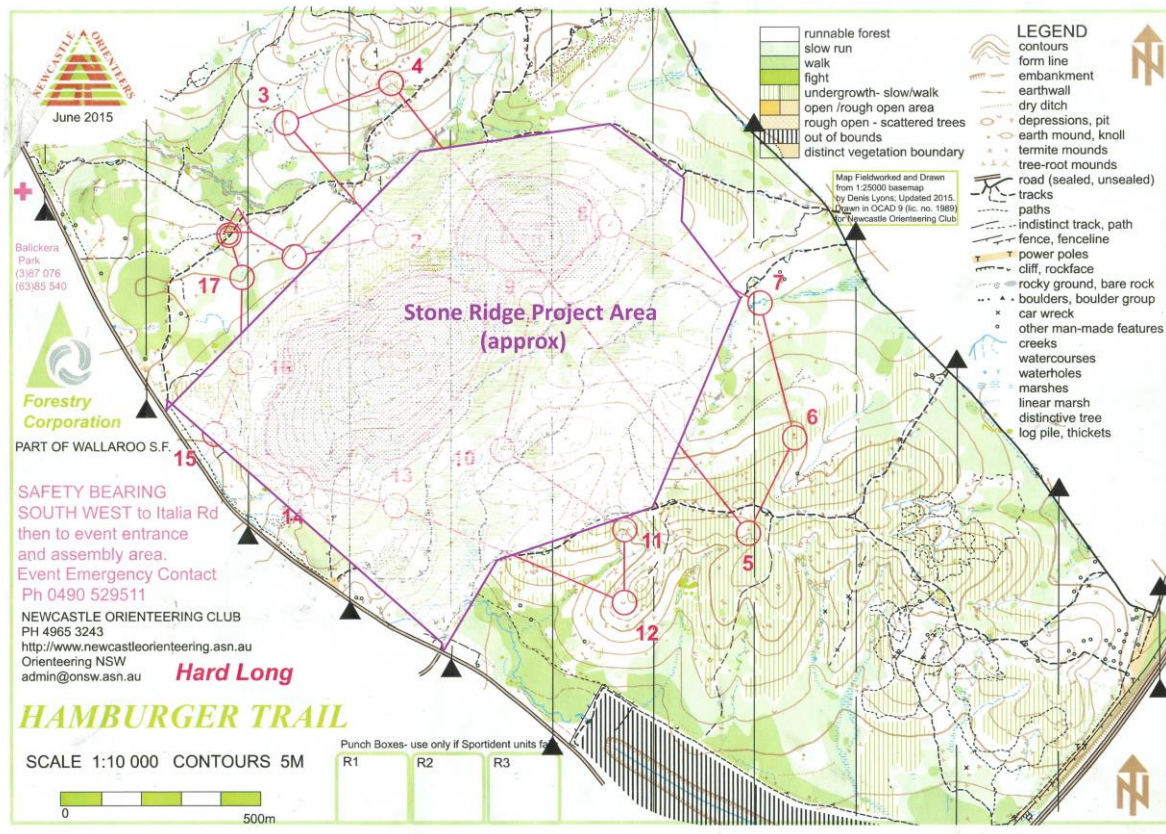
Newcastle Orienteering Club has been using Wallaroo State Forest for its competitions for approximately 40 years.

Recently we have held one or two events in Wallaroo SF each year. Our local events typically attract 70 to 90+ entrants from the lower hunter region with ages from 8 to 80+ years. Occasionally we hold State League competitions with up to 250 entrants from NSW and a few from interstate.

We value the Wallaroo SF for our events because of its unique topography, including the unusual Stone Ridge hills that are the target of the proposed quarry, and the natural bushland vegetation. These provide the navigational challenge that is the basis of the sport of orienteering.

One of the main venues for our events in Wallaroo is our Hamburger Trail map. The Stone Ridge Project Area consumes approximately half of our Hamburger Trail map and would make it unusable. (The map is attached showing the project area superimposed).

Jim Lee
 Member, Newcastle Orienteering Club



Social Impact.

Residents of Balickera will no doubt display some, or all, of the following:

- Anxiety and depression.
- Sleep deprivation due to quarry hours of operation.
- Anger at the loss of control over their own health and wellbeing.
- Fear for the safety of children needing to catch school buses with excessive quarry truck movement
- Fear of tank water contamination – often collected from the roofs of buildings coated in quarry dust.
- Anger at noise of crushers and loading trucks well into the night.
- Anger at the frequency and the noise of trucks.
- Anger at the difficulty encountered negotiating quarry trucks on the road system.

(Some of these impacts are being experienced by residents surrounding Brandy Hill quarry and along the haulage routes associated with that quarry.)

These are not addressed adequately and DPHI seems to dismiss them as a natural consequence of quarrying and residents should just accept them. When there is the probability of multiple quarries operating in close proximity that becomes a 'bitter pill to swallow'.

There will be winners and losers and members of the community are the losers.

The Role of State Forestry Corporation

The principals of Forestry Corp are set out succinctly on their website (forestrycorporation.com.au) with sustainability, carbon capture and storage and climate change management being advocated as core values

Garth Nagle representing Forestry Corporation stated quite clearly at the IPC presentation that ***"forestry principles were based on sustainability"***

We fail to see how the quarry with a future unfillable void is a sustainable use of a state forest.

He also stated that Forestry Corp is currently running at a loss. In other words, negotiating 'royalties' with ARDG is a revenue raising enterprise with no link to the values that are espoused on their website. We believe that this is a poor argument for destruction of a section of Wallaroo State Forest which has benefits for the environment, residents and fauna all of which cannot be financially quantified.

Forestry Corp have collaborated with ARDG for over 5 years but have not made any of this public on their website and the 'royalties' to be paid are commercial-in-confidence.

Garth Nagel stated at the IPC hearing that ARDG has a forest materials deed which allows them to develop the quarry **on behalf of State Forestry Corp.**

On NSW public land.

"The rock is there and will be available"

"The resource is there and on that basis Forestry Corp support the development with confidence"

Benefits for the community is outlined as: *"opportunities for upgrade of local roads and community programs"*.

There is an underlying principle of profitability in this presentation from Forestry Corp with almost negligible concern for the local community which is already impacted by 2 other quarries nearby. Community programs and local roads to be upgraded were not elaborated in this presentation. As mentioned earlier, the profits will be considerable, and it is now unclear to what extent the profits will flow on to State Forestry Corporation, but it is obvious that the environment and local communities will be the losers.

Cumulative Impact.

There is a range of issues dealing with this topic.

- Traffic is rarely modelled in peak holiday times. Traffic data is often out of date and therefore does not reflect the true safety concerns on both Italia Rd and the Pacific Highway that residents and local commuters have to face every day.
- The DPHI shows no support or empathy for local residents on any aspect of cumulative impact.
- It seems that each DA presented to DPHI is assessed on its own merits. Cumulative effects are dealt with by 'desk-top' analysis and in each case, for the many quarry developments

that VOWW has been involved with, cumulative and combined effects rarely make an impact.

- If Stone Ridge is approved and Seaham/Boral quarry is given consent to expand to 2mtpa, and with Eagleton already approved, the total possible numbers of haulage vehicles at peak would be **918 truck movements/day**. + ancillary quarry traffic. This represents the 4mtpa from 3 quarries that is to be removed and transported via Italia Rd and the Pacific highway.
- It seemed from the answers given by Jesse Evans, DPHI, that this is quite acceptable. It is easy to use a desktop assessment, but the lived experience of this issue shows up the flaws in the DPHI logic. Residents who must negotiate this traffic mayhem are concerned for potential fatalities at present, let alone with the expected increases.
- The panel asked for clarification on the issue of 'queuing' of haulage trucks before opening of the quarry gates. Damon Bird (ARDG) stated that there is to be no parking near the quarry and the truck drivers in the 'code of conduct' will be notified that they will not be able to enter before 7am.

Therefore, drivers will need to find a suitable location to park large truck and dogs, and the closest locality will possibly be Raymond Terrace. This could cause problems for residents there as drivers will arrive near homes and leave trucks idling until they are able to move onto the quarry site. Eagleton and Boral will possibly do the same thing. Trucks from Hanson quarry at Seaham are already queuing along parts of Seaham Rd which thankfully has no dense residential development. Has this queuing even been considered or modelled by DPHI or ARDG?

Monitoring.

- Too often the community is asked to monitor the movement of trucks, their speed and direction of travel. Jesse Evans expects that the community would police this issue and report via a complaints website.
- It is difficult for a community member to identify an individual truck because number plates are too hard to read and with 3 quarries operating, which quarry the truck is from. Subcontractors do not necessarily have a logo or any other defining feature to help with identification.
- Each quarry would have to insist on an ID for every subcontractor that would indicate the quarry and an identifying number. This would need to be large enough to be seen from a distance and displayed on the sides and the back of the vehicle. Otherwise, the quarries will be able to say, "not our truck".
- Dust and noise of operations as well as blasting noise and damage are to be monitored and reported to EPA. However, these results are often published well after the event and are therefore historic data rather than real time. What will the consequences be for the quarry if there are exceedances?

Will DPHI or EPA have the power to close the quarry until changes to operations are made to resolve the issue?

Nowhere is this process outlined and leads to the scepticism the community has for this entire process.

Lived Experience.

- The experiences that residents have each day seem to be ignored by DPHI. Jesse Evans believes "*there is a lot of community scepticism*" regarding truck drivers doing the right thing and turning left onto the highway. And rightly so! This scepticism is well founded with both Seaham/Boral quarry and Eagleton quarry appealing their conditions of consent, regarding truck movements onto the highway, to Port Stephens council and the LEC respectively.

- DPHI forgets that this community is already living with one fully operational quarry and residents therefore already see and live the impact of quarrying on their lives daily.

People are grieving the potential loss of the character and ambience of their area. There may be implications for their physical or mental health or both with quarries in such close proximity and with little support, if any, from DPHI.

There is a term for this feeling: **solastalgia**.

"It is best described as the lived experience of negatively perceived environmental change."

The word was coined by philosopher [Glenn Albrecht](#) in his 2005 article *Solastalgia: a new concept in human health and identity*. He describes it as *"the homesickness you have when you are still at home and your home environment is changing in ways you find distressing. In many cases this is in reference to global [climate change](#), but more localized events such as...destructive [mining](#) techniques can cause solastalgia as well., solastalgia refers to the distress specifically caused by environmental change while still in a home environment."*

Conclusion.

- There are concerns within the community that situating such a large quarry within State Forestry land will set a precedent for other Forestry land.
- We believe there is a conflict of interest with this project being situated in a State Forest. The government, through NSW Forestry Corp, stands to profit through royalties and yet is also the arbiter of the process and decision.

At present there are multiple benefits and uses for this section of Wallaroo. Amongst them:

- there are unique plants and animals, some of which are vulnerable or endangered.
- residents and tourists use this area for sporting and recreational purposes.
- there are wildlife corridors that traverse this area.
- the vegetation in this area has a value in slowing the effects of climate change.

Comments by Rob McCann, Sustainability Manager – Infrastructure Projects, RENEW, highlight some important issues.

- *Our infrastructure needs clever planning and engineering which meets the needs of the present, without compromising the needs of the future.*
- *We need to make sure infrastructure serves our needs, maintains biodiversity, is climate resilient and future proof. **The answer is, of course, sustainable infrastructure.***
- *Raw materials aren't endless.*

Quarrying hard rock is not sustainable.

In our opinion, disadvantages of this proposal outweigh the merits.

Margarete Ritchie.

VOWW

