



## **TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING**

### **STONE RIDGE QUARRY PROJECT (SSD-10432)**

#### **PUBLIC MEETING**

**PANEL:** JANETT MILLIGAN (CHAIR)  
RICHARD PEARSON  
TERRY BAILEY

**SPEAKERS:** DR JUSTIN MELEO  
ALLAN EVANS  
MEGAN BENSON  
NEIL TURNER  
MARGARET KEAST  
GARTH NAGLE  
DEBBIE LEES  
GRAHAM LEE  
REBECCA BEETSON  
ANNA KERR  
BRUCE LYON  
CARMEL NORTHWOOD  
JOHANNA LYNCH  
STEVEN LARSEN  
CHARLEE CONNOR  
DAMON BIRD  
JESSIE EVANS  
JAMES MCDONOUGH

**LOCATION:** SEAHAM SCHOOL OF ARTS AND  
SCOUT HALL  
10 WARREN STREET, SEAHAM

**DATE:** 10:00AM – 1:13PM  
THURSDAY, 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2024

**<THE MEETING COMMENCED**

5 **MS JANETT MILLIGAN:** Good morning and welcome to the Independent Planning Commission's public meeting into the state significant development application for the Stone Ridge Quarry project, which is SSD10432. I'm speaking to you from Worimi land and I acknowledge the traditional owners of all the countries from which we meet today and I pay my respects to their Elders past and present and to the Elders from other communities who may be participating today.

10 I'm Janett Milligan and I'm the chair of this panel and joining me are my fellow commissioners, Terry Bailey and Richard Pearson. No conflicts of interest have been identified in relation to our determination of this development application. We have a limited and a specific role at the end of the planning process. We decide if an application should go ahead and if so, on what conditions. We consider the  
15 Department's assessment report, the application, your written and oral submissions and other materials that the planning law requires us to consider. All of these materials are either already publicly available or will be made available on our website.

20 In making a decision on this case, the Commission must obey all relevant laws and consider all applicable policies and the public interest. We're also obliged to consider public submissions and that's the purpose of today. We want to hear what you think about the merits of this application. This is not a forum for submissions on whether you like or approve of the applicant, the laws we must obey or the policies we must consider.

25 You will all have been sent some guidance from the Commission about expected conduct at the public meeting. If we consider that guidance isn't being followed, we can remind you of what's expected and, if necessary, direct you to end your submission and provide the rest of the submission to us in writing. If we do that, you  
30 do need to comply promptly so we can hear from your fellow community members as well.

35 The application's already been assessed by the Department on our behalf. Many of you may have already participated in the Department's processes and if so, thank you for your participation. There's no need to repeat your previous submissions. They're all available to us for consideration. The applicant and the Department have considered your submissions and taken them into account in the application and assessment and recommended conditions that we're considering today.

40 Today we want to hear your response to the Department's assessment and the recommended conditions. Even if your submission to us today objects to the application being approved at all, we encourage you to tell us whether any of your concerns could be addressed, either wholly or in part, by the imposition of conditions. Your consideration of alternatives doesn't in any way compromise your submission  
45 and it enables the panel to consider all options.

Firstly, we'll hear from the applicant. We will then proceed to hear from registered speakers. Then at the conclusion of the public meeting we will hear from the

Department and the applicant to answer any questions or respond to any issues raised during the public meeting. While we'll endeavour to stick to our published schedule, this will be dependent on registered speakers being ready to present at their allocated time. I'll introduce each speaker when it's their turn to present to the panel.

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Everyone's been advised in advance of how long they have to speak. A bell will sound when a speaker has one minute remaining. A second bell will sound when a speaker's time has expired. To ensure everyone receives their fair share of time I will enforce timekeeping rules. Extensions may be granted on a case by cases by the panel chair, however, in the interest of fairness to other registered speakers, an extension may not be granted.

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If you have a copy of your speaking notes or any additional material to support your presentation, it would be appreciated if you would provide a copy of those to the Commission. Please note that any material provided to the Commission may be made public. The Commission's privacy statement governs its approach to managing your information, it's available on our website.

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And just lastly before we hear from speakers, exits from this venue, in the case of emergency, are located at the back of the hall and the right of the hall and the toilets are located at the front of the hall. So it's now time to call the first speaker and our first speaker is Dr Justin Meleo from Australian Resource Development Group Pty Ltd.

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**DR JUSTIN MELEO:** Thank you, Madam Chair and panel members and members of the community, appreciate everyone turning up today. I'll confine my comments this morning to as per the guidance to the information provided in the DPHI assessment report. Next slide, thanks.

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So the first thing I'd just like to talk about is the strategic context for the project and in particular the resource and market section of the DPHI report. The first point I'd just like to make is that the quarry projects that are listed in table 3.1 of the assessment report cover two distinct categories of quarries that are located on resources that are suited to producing different types of products. One is a full range of quarry products, which includes high specification concrete and surfacing aggregates and another type is a lower specification quarry product.

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High specification resources, in general, opportunities are highly constrained by limited geological resource and specific geological types. For lower specification resources, opportunities are not as constrained by geology. A detailed assessment undertaken by us indicated that potential alternative sites in the region would significantly impact on local communities and the local road network. And if I could just have the next slide, please.

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So the following map demonstrates – and I hope that you can see it there – areas in green on the map demonstrate geological resources that are suited to producing high specification quarry products in this region and areas that are unconstrained are sort of located on the rest of the map. Also overlaying on this map are a range of planning and environmental constraints. Of particular importance to note is that areas that are

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shaded, so north of the shaded line and also within the area around Karuah, if you were to locate a quarry in any of those areas, you would need to transport material to market via local communities. So one of the significant advantages of this particular site is its proximity to the M1 Pacific Highway.

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So we just wanted to make that point that it's important to note that there are limited opportunities for the resources and if this site's not developed, then other sites will potentially be candidate sites that would have more significant impacts on local communities with respect to transporting and hauling material to market. Next slide, please.

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Just like to quickly touch on the engagement process and the summary of submissions. So traffic impacts were a key concern, understandably, from local submitters, particularly regarding safety but also noise and congestion. Biodiversity impacts overall were a major issue raised in all objecting submissions. In particular in relation to biodiversity, objections related to the fact that the quarry is located in a state forest.

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Now, I note that Forestry Corp is going to give a separate presentation but I just wanted to touch quickly on a couple of facts. First of which is that Forestry Corp has a statutory responsibility to provide for forest materials to the public and that's timber and other forest products and that includes quarry resources. They have existing commercial quarry operations in state forests that provide hard rock and other material for national parks, councils, private roads as well as the broader construction materials market. So therefore this project is not unusual for an operation in a state forest.

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And lastly, Forestry Corp specifically requested and had the Forestry Act amended to allow forestry materials licences to be awarded for 20 year periods and that was specifically in recognition of the hard rock potential of this site. And so therefore there's been a long acknowledgement and understanding by Forestry Corp of the potential resource value of this site to the state. Next slide, please.

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With respect to biodiversity, just wanted to touch on a couple of points. Firstly, the site itself has a long history of timber harvesting for the mining sector. The site is not old growth forest and doesn't contain any old growth forest. It's forest regrowth, which is subject to high intensity fires regularly and the project disturbance footprint itself represents less than 2% of the area of Wallaroo State Forest.

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With respect to assessment of biodiversity impacts and in particular koala, which was again understandably raised as a concern by the community, this was a critical consideration for us at the very beginning of the project and in particular that we weren't looking at a site that was located in high koala quality habitat, as identified in the Port Stephens Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management, which has been a guiding document in this region for over 20 years.

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But notwithstanding the state assessment process, which we obviously are subject to, that mapping is a reliable indicator of koala habitat quality. Further to that, 96% of the proposed disturbance area is mapped as being marginal for the koala with 1% being mapped as preferred habitat. The remaining 3% being buffers around those areas. So in

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summary the project would have a very small impact on the high value preferred habitat of koala.

5 Next slide, please. Just with respect to offsetting, so the entire disturbance area would be offset in accordance with the Biodiversity Conservation Act and the EPBC Act requirements. Those offsets would provide long-term protection and habitat enhancement for a much larger area relative to the disturbance footprint. The quarry itself would provide a revenue stream for Forestry Corporation, which will provide significant opportunities for improved management of their forest estate and additional  
10 revenue stream would be derived from the biodiversity stewardship agreement for habitat enhancement and weed and pest management.

15 Next slide, please. Just want to quickly touch on traffic. With respect to the Pacific Highway-Italia Road intersection, we developed multiple upgrade options for consideration by Transport for New South Wales over a five year period. The final design that was accepted by Transport was a joint position that was agreed by ARDG, the Boral Seaham Quarry and the Eagleton Rock Syndicate proponents. And that particular design doesn't conflict with longer term plans that Transport for New South Wales has for upgrading or eventually constructing an interchange between Kings Hill  
20 and the The Bucketts Way. And the shorter term upgrade to that intersection would provide significant safety benefits at that intersection.

25 With respect to the site access intersection itself, the options to access the site were constrained by requirements of Transport for New South Wales, who did not want a direct access onto the highway, the site topography, the site distance, nearest residences and Balickera Channel and its location at Italia Road was stipulated by Port Stephens Council.

30 With respect to the transport route – next slide, please – just wanted to touch on the fact that we've committed and are committed to not hauling any material west of the quarry entrance point, the proposed quarry entrance point. So haulage trucks would access the site and exit the site between the side entrance and the Pacific Highway. So there wouldn't be any trucks heading west towards Seaham.

35 Just with respect to trucks, just a little bit of further information, all drivers to the site would be subject to a site induction where their responsibilities would be clearly articulated regarding access to the site and there would be a zero tolerance policy for the designated road route and there would be significant controls on that.

40 Next slide, please. Just with respect to air quality, it's critical that the dust is maintained – sorry dust controls and safety is critical at the site and that's a key focus of the resource regulator. And compliance on site, if we're complying on site with the safety requirements of our workers, then ergo we're complying with offsite requirements and the EIS demonstrated that. And in addition to the statutory  
45 monitoring requirements that we've had, we have committed through our CCC to monitoring water tanks at nearby dwellings.

Next slide, please. Just with respect to blasting, all receivers were modelled and that

included the heritage listed Balickera House. Just got two more points. It'll take 30 seconds if that's okay. Just for clarity, there was a modelled exceedance referred to at R18, which is predicted from stage six onwards and the blast design modification would occur as quarrying progresses towards that house, which would resolve that issue. And all blasts would be monitored at representative locations to ensure that the criteria aren't exceeded. Thank you.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Just before you sit down, I have a question.

**DR MELEO:** Sure.

**MR RICHARD PEARSON:** Yes, thank you, Chair. My question is do you know where the DA is up to for that intersection improvement at the Pacific Highway and also secondly you mentioned if drivers don't comply with the left in left out, there would be significant controls, I think were the words you used. Can you tell us what that might be?

**DR MELEO:** Yes. So firstly, I understand that the DA is still being assessed. It's with the JRPP and there's some information requests gone back between Council and them and I think TfNSW. So I don't have any more information than that. It's difficult to get information from the JRPP as to where they're up to.

Just with respect to the controls, if it was determined that someone had broken a rule, it'd be instant dismissal from site. They wouldn't be welcome back at all. So that's a very strict control that we would have. But in terms of controls on the trucks themselves, there'd be a driver and vehicle registration process with the site, so a system to track the drivers and their vehicles. The road rules that we would require to be enforced, which is essentially the left out left in and no right and no left – sorry left out at the highway, left out at the site and no no left turn in so that you couldn't be coming from Seaham.

So those road rules would be enforced by reminders of that on weighbridge dockets, significant signage at the entrance gate, regular checks and audits, GPS tracking of the trucks that the company has, camera monitoring at the site entrance. There'd be a hotline for reporting non-compliance. We would be developing the TMP and involving the CCC in that process and a community complaints reporting procedure.

**MR PEARSON:** Thank you.

**DR MELEO:** Thank you.

**MR STEVEN LARSEN:** Excuse me. Am I allowed to challenge anything he said?

**MS MILLIGAN:** No. The purpose of today is for the panel to hear the information.

**MR LARSEN:** Yes, it's just that there was a tour of the site yesterday you's had and as a local resident, I wanted to go and was told no.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Okay. So look, we might move on with the speakers, if I can. And could I ask Allan Evans, our next speaker, please.

5 **MR ALLAN EVANS:** Okay. Thank you. Allan Evans from Newcastle. I have serious concerns, not only with the implication should this project go ahead, but also with the limitations of the planning assessment process to consider the broader issues and cumulative negative impacts it will have on the wider community and the environment. I am hopeful that the IPC will make a holistic assessment of this project beyond the  
10 constraints of the planning process, which by design are focused on project specifics as a standalone entity rather than how it will fit in with a wider community.

We are advised through the EIS and responses to submissions that after extensive consultation, the footprint has been reduced to 69 hectares. The negative  
15 environmental impacts will be cancelled out by biodiversity offsets that will be actioned prior to the project being carried out. Offsets are problematic at the best of times and are not a feasible strategy for this project in particular. The location of the site is as significant as the diverse flora and fauna it supports. It is an integral part of a broader ecosystem that is already under stress. The notion that a replacement can be  
20 established and integrated into the existing ecosystem is totally unrealistic. It takes years for an ecosystem of this complexity to develop and to suggest that the offsets can be actioned within a 30 year project life is fanciful.

The proponent confirms that adverse consequences of the site clearance are inevitable.  
25 We, as members of the New South Wales community, will be sacrificing 69 hectares of state forest, a community asset which has been entrusted to Forestry Corporation of New South Wales to manage on our behalf. The Forestry Corporation website outlines their principles of ecologically sustainable forest management. Their dedicated team permanently protects a million hectares of land for wildlife and conservation. Forestry  
30 Corporation has been appointed to manage state forests for multiple uses, including conservation, tourism, regional development, renewable timber production in line with policies and regulations established by state and commonwealth governments.

Let us look at how this project aligns with the principles and policies. There is nothing  
35 remotely sustainable about clearing the forest back to the bare bedrock. All the previous conservation efforts will be pushed aside by big bulldozers. The viability of the flora and fauna listed as vulnerable will be compromised. How can that be compatible with long-term conservation and koala management objectives?

40 Touring and recreation are not compatible with mining operations. The predicted volume of heavy truck movements on Italia Road will make access to adjacent forest and community areas a nightmare for potential tourists, visitors to adjacent sporting amenities and local residents.

45 Regional development. The proponent outlines perceived benefits arriving from the project in terms of employment opportunities, satisfying market demand for construction consumables and generating state revenue. I contest that none of these benefits are specific to the selected site. The losses are irreplaceable, the potential

benefits can be sourced from elsewhere. The land is currently designated for sustainable timber production. This comes with its own compromises but one that the community accepts, provided it is operated in line with policies and regulations established by state and government agencies to meet community expectations.

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The decline of koala population has been identified as a significant national issue. The federal government has actioned a national recovery plan to stop the trend of declining koala population by having resilient, connected and genetically healthy meta populations across its range and to increase the extent, quality and connectivity of habitat occupied. The New South Wales government has committed to the joint delivery of the recovery plan and allocated 80 million towards Great National Koala Park.

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Basic risk management points to the necessity to have dispersed viable populations which Wallaroo State Forest has. We cannot rely on Great National Koala Park being the sole solution. Put all your eggs in one basket and what happens when a bushfire goes through, which it most likely will. You end up with a basket of fried eggs.

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The Forestry Corporation, as the state entity, will collaborate with – sorry, that the Forestry Corporation as the state entity will collaborate with the proponent on a project that will have its significant adverse impacts on established koala population in an apparent contradiction of both state and national policy quite frankly is beyond belief and I consider represents a gross breach of community trust. This site has been selected – one paragraph.

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This site has been selected as it was the best identified to access rock resources. No viable alternative sites, we are told, were identified. I seek to challenge this assertion. From my observations there is an extensive rock resource running north from Raymond Terrace as far as Karuah. Existing quarries already access this resource. Eagleton, Seaham, Karuah, all of which have or are seeking approval to extend operations for up to 30 years and 150 million tonnes per annum.

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Brandy Hill Quarry is also planning to access the resource for similar duration and volume. The other quarrying entities have been able to locate viable sites. Maybe ARDG should be talking with them about a joint development, sharing the risks and the rewards. It would appear there is adequate viable resources to satisfy the market without the need to trash 69 hectares of state forest and decimate crucial habitat for at risk species of fauna and flora. Thank you.

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**MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you. Our next speaker is Megan Benson. Megan is speaking from the Gloucester Environment Group Incorporated.

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**MS MEGAN BENSON:** And I'm shrinking. This presentation is a précis of Gloucester Environment Group's submission of objection to the commissioners, which provides details on the following statements.

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We believe the project should be refused for the following reasons. A third Quarry at Balickera will destroy the character and liveability of the small village, intensifying the



negative impacts the other two quarries unavoidably will create, exacerbating environmental health and safety issues. Our public native forest estate should be managed to maintain economic, social and economic benefits and services into the future, for the wellbeing of everyone.

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Forestry Corp does not hold social licence to facilitate the development of industrial scale quarry operations in a native state forest. In this time of climate crisis and biodiversity loss, it is seen as irresponsible to sacrifice the Wallaroo State Forest for short-term economic gain. Contrary to the Department's assertions, the project does not adequately avoid impacts on threatened species. Assumptions about koalas in particular are outdated and lack scientific rigour.

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The impact from the project's land clearing on the Kings Hill Koala Hub cannot be predicted without consideration of the current and surrounding stresses, including other quarry developments. It's the same for the three vulnerable bat species. The cumulative impact from increased blasting regimes and haulage truck movements have an unknown impact on roosting and breeding colonies in the Balickera Tunnel.

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The project fails to advance the protection of existing vegetation and wildlife corridors already under stress from the surrounding quarry development and offers no locked in tangible plans to improve the local environment at project completion. It is unacceptable for the Department to endorse payment into a fund as a means to meet environmental offset obligations created by this project. The Hunter Regional Plan states that development proposals for quarries will be promoted if they are in accordance with district planning principles and local strategic planning, that to balance economic benefits with the protection of the environment and local communities. The Department, Forestry Corp and the proponent prioritise financial return. There is no balance. The environment and local communities are losing out.

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In terms of traffic impacts, the Italia Road junction upgrade to the Pacific Highway presented as a solution by the Department and proponent will severely impact the safe operation of The Bucketts Way and Medowie Road highway junctions and the operation of the Tarean Road overpass at Karuah. Cumulative traffic concerns are raised with each quarry development. The solution identified by Transport New South Wales, Council and the federal government is flyovers at all junctions.

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If the Department was to take a balanced approach in asserting more quarry product is required to meet construction pipelines, they would, to provide balance, ensure the necessary road infrastructure is expedited and realised prior to any further project approvals in our region. Otherwise public safety, including that of quarry haulage drivers, is compromised. Regional traffic management is a crucial issue the Department must address before any further approvals for quarries occur.

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Stone Ridge will provide substantial economic return to Forestry Corp through the payment of royalties, however no economic benefit will extend to our region as Forestry Corp already operates at a financial loss. With project refusal, the proponents for Stone Ridge will miss out on their investment opportunity, but that investment opportunity can only be realised at community expense. Noting this situation could

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have been avoided if public consultation had occurred prior to signing off on the lease agreement. The project presents substantial inherent risks that will be exposed over time to our natural environment, our social amenity and safety and to our local sustainable rural lifestyle and tourist economy. The project is not in the public interest.

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**MS MILLIGAN:** Just before you sit down, one quick question. I think I understood your point but I'm not sure. Where you talked about traffic and said that the proposed upgrading would impact negatively on Buckets Way, Medowie Road and the overpass, can you just tell us what you were getting at there?

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**MS BENSON:** That the traffic has been directed to turn left and will have to travel past The Bucketts Way and Pacific Highway junction in the first instance. There's been a quarry approved, Deep Creek Quarry, which anticipates – I think it's 25 truck movements in and 25 truck movements out per hour during the day. Those trucks, along with the local traffic, which includes tourist traffic and industrial traffic, other industrial traffic, will have to traverse across – how many trucks coming out of Italia Road? Is it almost 900 when the three quarries are operational.

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The traffic report, the GHT report for Stone Ridge and Boral for the Italia Road upgrade nominated several things that were high risk with approval of the upgrade, which was tailgating, speeding and illegal truck movements impacting other traffic.

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**MS MILLIGAN:** Right. So your point is that the traffic from this quarry will be on the highway and therefore making it more difficult for people to access the highway from those other points?

**MS BENSON:** Yes, but also the other quarry developments.

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**MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you, I understand. Thank you.

**MS BENSON:** Yes, thank you.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Our next speaker is Neil Turner.

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**MR NEIL TURNER:** Thank you. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, Chair. I wish to speak in support of the proposed quarry. To start with I have no affiliations or contacts with any proponent, stakeholders or persons regarding this project. I am simply a resident of Raymond Terrace. I use Italia Road quite often and a regular visitor also to the state forest and national park.

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I'm concerned about restrictions on growth and community and also infrastructure that are placed by people that oppose this. I've been following the progress of the nearby Kings Hill housing development and the restrictions and hurdles that have been placed in front of it in getting the proposed 3,500 houses ready for market, thereby relieving to the same extent the current housing crisis. I believe products from this proposed quarry will supply the greater Sydney area in a cost effective manner and it's all in our best interests to have the supply chain as cheap as possible for the end user, which is the consumer, being us.

I understand that there will be road improvements to the benefit of users of the Italia Road, including myself. But I would ask the Commission that during the life of this project that the safest means of getting the product to the highway be made. Therefore an overpass, a flyover would probably be the best option and safest for all motorists. The current proposal of turning left and going down the road and then coming back on a highway I think is a short-term fix and a longer term fix would be in the best – benefits for everybody.

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10 **MR LARSEN:** Why they do to that is because there's no government funding to build it.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Can I ask you please not to interrupt our speakers.

15 **MR LARSEN:** Sorry, I'm not interrupting. I'm just clarifying.

**MR TURNER:** Thanks very much. That's me.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you.

20 **MR TURNER:** Thank you.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Our next speaker is Margaret Keast.

25 **MS MARGARET KEAST:** Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm speaking from a slightly different perspective than others. My perspective comes from a sporting use of the forest. Even though I don't look like an athlete, I do use – I'm up in the forest a lot. I compete in the sport of tracking with my dog. That's where people pretend to get lost and the dog has to find them in the forest. These competitions take place within the forest itself, not on the roads. So we're actually in the bush.

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35 Competitors come from around the state to enjoy the forest. Every year we hold six trials within the forest, specifically in the area earmarked for development. Locally we have three dog clubs that participate in the trials, Port Stephens Dog Sports Club, Newcastle All Breeds Dog Training Club, Maitland and Kurri District Dog. There are no other tracking competition grounds between Southern Sydney and Grafton. It is the only forested land in which tracking competition is held in New South Wales. We've had people attend training days and trials who have gone on to train for search and rescue with their dogs because they enjoyed working their dogs in the forest so much.

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45 Every Saturday between May and September, when not competing, which happens on a Sunday, there is a small but dedicated group who regularly attend our tracking training days. In preparation for competition, we spend many hours in the forest marking out and memorising tracks in preparation for a trial. We're out there trudging in the rain, the mud and the sun and occasionally snake spotting. We see the forest go through its seasonal changes from winter to spring and appreciate the diversity the forest offers in flora and fauna.

In early 2014, a fire devastated much of the forest, spreading into our tracking area. When I turned up for tracking training in late April that year, recovery was already happening but many of the big trees had been burnt. Even now, after tracking the dog through the bush, we often come back to camp showing our blackened hands, clothes, sometimes our faces, as the trees still bear the scars of that fire. It has taken a long time for the bush to fully recover. The birds are just starting to come back now. In the past two years it's been lovely to see the return of the yellow-tailed black cockatoos together with other wildlife starting to nest and flourish.

When walking through the forest, at times you feel like you are the first person to walk there. If you're lucky, you might see few wallabies and other wildlife. Most of the time they remain well hidden. The tracking group I joined in 2012 originally tracked in the Medowie State Forest, not far from the Medowie Grahamstown Dam. When this became a conservation area, the Forestry Commission agreed to transfer the group to the Wallaroo State Forest, under licence.

In the past 12 months I've searched, along with others from our tracking group, for other available spaces that might be suitable. Unfortunately, we've not found anything suitable at this time that gives us access to the same land area. We require quite a bit of land to work our dogs. Other potential sites have been financially out of reach for clubs. Over the years, I've spoken to many people who have come up to the forest who are there to track, to compete in orienteering, bird watch, ride dirt bikes or four-wheel drive. All have expressed enjoyment and appreciation of being able to experience the forest.

I'm speaking today to let the Commission know that the forest is used and appreciated. It's not an idle piece of land. It's a privilege to be able to walk through our forest because that's how we see it when we're there. It's ours. We're there sometimes three times a week, racking up 10,000 steps or more, walking through the forest, marking and learning multiple tracks in an area that covers around – probably around 400 acres, I'm not sure, hectares, I'm not sure which one. Our usage is probably very different to others, but we well and truly appreciate it. I hope I've outlined and managed to give you some understanding of what my appreciation and usage of the forest is and the impact it will have on our sporting group if the proposed quarry goes forward. Thank you.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you. Our next speaker is Garth Nagle from Forestry Corporation.

**MR GARTH NAGLE:** Thank you. I'm here today to just reiterate Forestry Corporation's position in all this and hopefully be available for questions from the panel. Forestry Corporation, as Dr Meleo stated before, has a responsibility to provide forest products for the benefit of the state of New South Wales. Forest products are not restricted to timber. They also include rock and stone, gravel and sand. Forestry Corporation operates its own quarries throughout the forest estate, mainly for the maintenance of its own roads, which are all for public use. Forestry Corporation already has commercial quarries in place and our main focus there is providing construction materials for groups such as national parks, council as well as private

roads and the broader construction materials market.

5 Wallaroo State Forest has long been recognised as having a significant hard rock resource. Early drilling by Forestry Corporation confirmed this, which dates back to 1994. The forest itself had a former market of providing timber and forest materials to the mining sector. Mining methods, especially underground methods and Mr Meleo did mention pit props in that, the mining methods have sort of moved away from the use of that type of material, leaving this site to be a lower productive site from a timber perspective. The site has been reserved for this quarry for some time and a forest materials licence was issued to ARDG, a deed for forest materials licence, I should say, and ARDG are developing this site on behalf of Forestry.

15 This site is the largest hard rock resource for a metropolitan area on state forest estate. It's going to be a significant development on New South Wales public land with significant benefits. The benefits will flow back in to the community and there will be opportunities for the upgrade of local roads and community programs. The resource assessment that ARDG have undergone has proved that the resource is there and on that basis Forestry Corporation support the development of this with confidence that we know that the rock is there and will be available.

20 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you. A question.

25 **MR PEARSON:** Yes. So Garth, the previous speaker, Margaret, ran through her issues with the tracking event. Is that is the sort of thing where state forest could find alternative locations for people such as her? So, you know, if and when they're displaced by this development, surely there's somewhere else that they could set up. Is that is that something you could undertake to look into?

30 **MR NAGLE:** A point that Justin Meleo made earlier was that this 68 hectares only represents 2% of Wallaroo State Forest. It'd be great to work with community groups that do use the forest in an approved manner to look at combined usage. I can't say definitively whether this development will exclude the use for tracking, but if it does we will work with those groups to find alternate locations, if they can't be housed in the same state forest.

35 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you.

**MR NAGLE:** Thank you.

40 **MS MILLIGAN:** Our next speaker is Debbie Lees.

45 **MS DEBBIE LEES:** Just before I start, in regards to the forestry speech, you can regrow trees but once they take the rock away you can't replace that. So good morning everyone and thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts. My name is Debbie Lees and I'm here to express my family's deep concerns and strong opposition to the proposed quarry project. Our family has lived on our property for five generations and my 94 year old mother-in-law, who lives next door, represents the oldest generation. We actually live in Balickera. The property was my mother-in-law's father's.

The land holds a legacy for us and we've built our lives here with deep commitment to our community. We already live with the effects of an existing nearby quarry, the dust, the noise, truck traffic have affected our lives in ways that are hard to ignore.

5 Expanding Boral's quarry or adding a new one would only worsen these issues, making our daily environment even less liveable. The dust from the current quarry impacts our air quality which is especially concerning for elderly residents like my mother-in-law, as well as for anyone with respiratory concerns.

10 Since we rely on tank water here, dust from the quarry also has the potential to contaminate our water supply. Safe water is a basic necessity and we're worried about the health risk from dust settling in our tanks. Additionally, noise from trucks disrupts the peace we deserve in our own homes and the heavy truck traffic on our road creates safety risks, especially at the end of where the trucks have to cross the four lane  
15 highway. I've personally had some near misses with trucks pulling out in front of me and it's only a matter of time before someone really gets hurt. Excuse me.

This project also threatens the value of our land, which has been in our family for generations. The presence of an industrial quarry so close to our property will likely  
20 reduce its value, significantly compromising our family's long-term investment and the worth of everything we've built there.

We are deeply concerned about the environmental impact of this project. Our surrounding forests are home to a rich variety of animals, trees and plants that  
25 contribute to the beauty and ecological balance of our area. Mining activity could disrupt wildlife habitats, damage native plant life and harm the delicate ecosystem we rely on. The natural beauty of our community is part of what makes this place home and it's at risk of being irreparably damaged.

30 In summary, we are firmly opposed to this project. Expanding quarry operations here would not only harm our family, reduce the value of our property and risk contamination to our water supply, but would also increase safety hazards and threaten the environment that our community treasures. We urge those in charge carefully consider the long-term impact on all residents. Thank you for listening and for  
35 considering the real consequences of this proposal on the lives of closest to it.

**MR PEARSON:** Thank you.

40 **MS MILLIGAN:** Debbie, can I just ask you – there's a question here. Would you mind just coming back for a quick question?

**MR PEARSON:** Thank you, Debbie. I was just wondering how close is your property to the quarry site, in your estimation?

45 **MS LEES:** Well, it's not too far from us. I'm not sure exactly how far.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** She's the closest.

**MS LEES:** I'm the closest, yes.

**MR PEARSON:** Okay. Thank you.

5 **MS LEES:** Yes, thank you.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you. Our next speaker is Graham Lee.

10 **MR GRAHAM LEE:** Right. Thank you, Commissioners, for the opportunity to speak  
this morning. I'm a professional geologist with more than 50 years of extensive  
experience assessing aggregate resources and a variety of other industrial minerals  
throughout the country. I'm a fellow of the Australasian Institute of Mining and  
Metallurgy and a member of the Australian Institute of Geoscientists. I have previously  
15 been involved with ARDG in peer-reviewing their extensive work program and that  
includes sites apart from this one that were rejected as not being suitable.

I've undertaken an assessment of the Stone Ridge resource for producing a range of  
quarry products including aggregates for concrete and road surfacing requirements.  
Today I wish to provide some comment and context to the DPHI assessment report, to  
20 give a little more information that I trust will provide a greater confidence to the panel  
and the level of resource assessment that has been undertaken by ARDG.

We can go to the next page, please. Next slide, thank you. From the October 24 DPHI  
assessment report, it says at point 11, "While it is difficult to quantify the amount of  
25 hard rock material required over the next few years. the recent influx of state  
significant development applications for hard rock quarries in the region points to a  
strong demand for rock material in the short to medium term." And the next slide, that  
is a table, 3.1 out of that report by the DPHI and it was alluded to by Justin in his  
report and I would like to address some issues on that table.

30 The next slide, please. I've included into that table, trying to point out that there's two  
particular rock types mixed together in that table. The ones with the green "Yes" on  
the right-hand column are the ones that produce material suitable for concrete and road  
surfacing. The others produce a lower grade material that is used in various  
35 applications, for unsealed roads and fill and applications such as that, but they don't  
meet the requirements for the concrete and hard rock aggregate for roads. I've added  
into that table the Martins Creek Quarry, which is outside the 30 km of that table, but  
it's important to note that that quarry also produces a similar material but has recently  
40 been rejected for an extension to the quarry. So that's a resource that's coming out of  
production in the near future. Moving on to the next slide, please.

**MR LARSEN:** Excuse me, you didn't mention that –

45 **MS MILLIGAN:** Can we –

**MR LARSEN:** The Martins Creek Quarry was rejected on safety grounds.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Sorry, could I ask you not to interrupt the speakers. Thank you.

**MR LARSEN:** Sorry but I just thought that that needed to be said. It wasn't just because someone [unintelligible 01:11:05] it was a safety [unintelligible 01:11:07].

5 **MS MILLIGAN:** Sorry, could I ask you not to interrupt the speakers if you don't mind.

**MR LEE:** Continuing. Yes, the first point there were the two different types of materials. There's a market demand for concrete and surfacing aggregates and it's particularly high and it's increasing in this region. The requirement to meet that high specification material is that we have a homogeneous rock mass and it has consistent properties and that is what we require for the high specification materials. There's a common misconception that rocks are common and that all rocks are the same and I just want to emphasise they're not. We're looking for a specific material that meets specific technical requirements to meet those market demands and the geology is important to understand in searching for that type of material.

10  
15  
20 Volcanic rocks are often sought and that's what we're seeking here at Stone Ridge. The sedimentary rocks which adjoin Stone Ridge are generally unsuited and they're the materials that were not highlighted with a "Yes" in that table 3.1 modification. So we're looking for a demanding geological constraints for high specification aggregates and not for the other materials that are lower specification.

25  
30 Next slide, please. Somewhat similar to a slide that Justin showed, the green rock or the green outlines there are the rocks that are generally suitable as mapped by the Geological Survey of New South Wales. On to that map we've also shown the other operating quarries including Martins Creek and that's within the region extending down to the Central Coast and a couple of quarries down there that are coming towards the end of their life. So if you want to know the ones that are producing the high specification materials, you need to go back to table 3.1.

35  
40 Next slide, please. The Stone Ridge assessment has focused on the high quality aggregates and it includes detailed geological mapping, that is mapping at a higher standard than we showed on that slide before. It includes detailed ground magnetic surveys. I'll come to that in a minute. Twenty diamond drill holes for a total of 1748.9 metres, downhole geophysical logging of those drill holes to get more information on the geophysical properties of the rock, which helps us in interpreting suitability, microscopic exam petrographic examination of 52 core samples, 31 bulk samples for geotechnical testing with a range of critical tests undertaken on each sample. And then all of that data has been utilised in modelling to interpret the site.

45  
Next slide, please. Just to briefly show you the results of the ground magnetic survey, it's all been walked, carrying a magnetometer. The blue and green areas are generally the less suitable areas and you can see them easily on the map and the red areas are the areas of the good high quality aggregates. There's a number of features there but I just won't go into them at the moment, as not part of this topic.

Next slide, please. ARDG have drilled 20 drill holes within the site, all diamond drill



holes. They're all shown there and the trace of each hole is shown on that map. So it gives you some idea of the coverage of the site with drilling. It's a significant coverage and it's really industry best practice.

5 Next slide, please. There's a photograph of some of the diamond core from the drill hole DDH16. That's in the rhyodacite, it is all good sound rock. There's 50 something metre of – I think it's 58 metres of core there shown. All of that is usable rock and that's what we're seeking for the material to extract.

10 Next slide, please. A cross-section through the deposit in the bottom right-hand corner, there's a map of the site. The cross-section I've selected there is one through the middle of the site. It shows the diamond drill hole 16 on the left-hand side, which was the photograph before and that hole goes through the rhyodacite into the underlying sandstone, which is unsuitable rock, and on the right-hand side, the top of that  
15 rhyodacite unite has been intersected.

So what can we say about the resource assessment? It's comprehensive, it's confirmed a substantial high specification hard rock resource, ideally suited for the products. It's suited for producing high wet weather road skid resistant aggregates for road surfacing and that leads to safe roads. If we could go to the next slide, please. It has developed a quarry development strategy for the site, it ensures only those areas needed to be  
20 disturbed are disturbed. In other words, not disturbing areas that are nonproductive. And the work undertaken confirms that the resource is capable of supplying a high quality product as listed in the DPHI assessment report.

25 Can I just wrap up, please?

**MS MILLIGAN:** If you can do it quickly. Thank you.

30 **MR LEE:** Last slide, please. So the investigations of Stone Ridge are thorough and best practice in the industry. They benchmark what should be expected generally in quarry assessment and they aim to maximise recovery of good rock and to minimise waste. Thank you.

35 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you. Our next speaker is Rebecca Beetson.

**MS REBECCA BEETSON:** Good morning, everybody. Now, I haven't prepared a speech or any of that, no facts or data and all the rest of it, that doesn't matter to me. I'm a resident on the road and I'm here to talk about how this impacts us on the road.  
40 So for some of the guys that aren't as familiar with the area and don't actually live on the road, you probably don't fully understand the dangers that we face every day with the amount of trucks on the road.

45 So I'm one of the unfortunate residents, I live in an older house on Italia road which is very close to the road. So I can tell you that the truck movement starts at 4:30 am in the morning. So for my children, who sleep in the front bedrooms of the house, these are very easily heard all morning even before the times that they really are required to get up and get ready for school or go to work and those sort of things.

Now, to Deb, what you said was absolutely spot on and perfect and I feel for you being the closest resident to the quarry. So my question, I've got a couple of questions actually. What I'd like to know is, as Deb touched on about the water quality, we're all on tank water on Italia Road, so what's going to be provided to us to test our water, maintain the quality of our water? Are we going to be provided with town water to ensure the safe drinking water that we have?

So not only is that dust from the quarries and explosions, as she's saying, but it's also the traffic, the trucks. Italia Road has recently had a large, large traffic movement increase in the area and as a parent of children, I have two children learning to drive, that currently learn to drive on that road, and I have one young child who needs to be able to access a bus stop. Now, currently on Italia Road there is no designated bus stopping area. There is no safe designated bus stopping area. So for my son, who's almost 12 years of age, the bus stops on the opposite side of the road to us. We still have to have somebody there every afternoon at 3:30 to be able to safely walk him across the road at almost 12 years of age.

So the other issue is also my other children that are driving now, has anyone in the room that lives on Italia Road, have you had to turn right on to the highway behind five truck and dogs? Anyone? Yes, yes, takes a long time to get out of there with five truck and dogs in front of you. Now, currently the only quarry operating at the moment is Boral. And also you're saying that you're going to ensure that the trucks are only going to turn left onto the highway.

You're telling me that contractors that are on a time limit to deliver a product are going to waste another 30 minutes of their day to go all the way up to Karuah, past Bucketts Way and past Medowie Road, as we've spoke of, turn around and then drive all the way back in a south direction, if that's the way their jobs are? I don't think that's going to happen for very long. Who is going to man the U-turn bays on the highway? My guess is the trucks are going to turn left and then they're going to chucky a U-ey in the U-turn bay, creating a massive safety hazard for not only local residents in the area but tourists who regularly use – we've seen the amount of traffic on the Pacific Highway, especially at Easter and Christmas and things like that.

The other safety issue is for me when you are trying to turn right off Italia Road, there is currently the merging lane for the cars turning on to and trucks turning on to Italia Road. Now, if you sit at the corner and indicate to turn right, if you have a truck constantly coming down there, which is estimated we will have a truck every three minutes, you can't actually see the traffic that is coming behind that truck because that truck fully blocks your vision to be able to turn right. So you've either got to try and wait for every truck to turn around that corner to safely see what is behind it or you have to risk your life and pull out into the lane.

So as a parent, as a resident, we did move to the area for a nice peaceful quiet area to live, which we did have when we moved to the area. So I would really like to keep it safe for myself, my family and the other residents of the area. So thank you.

**MR PEARSON:** Just a question, you mentioned you observed a recent large traffic movement increase on Italia Road. What are you attributing that to? Because as you know, this quarry is not yet approved or operating.

5 **MS BEETSON:** So as everyone else can tell that lives on the area, we get told the same thing from Boral Quarry currently, you know, that they monitor where the trucks come out and the trucks have to turn right and they can't turn left. That doesn't happen. It does not happen. So there has been a large increase of quarry trucks currently on the road already even though you aren't operating.

10 So obviously the young lady that went and shut the door this morning there, I'm guessing you can't really hear very well with all the trucks that are coming past this room this morning and I certainly can't, sitting at the back down there, hear the speakers every time those trucks come past. Every one of those trucks – every one of those trucks that you can hear has just turned out of East Seaham Road there, has come from Boral Quarry. Now, that's only one quarry. You're going to expect us to have three of those quarries. So unless you can say you're going to have somebody that's going to sit on the highway and man which way the traffic goes, it's not going to happen. The trucks are just going to go whichever way they like to go, same as they do now.

15 So the other increase of traffic is also there's a new quarry, as you said, there's Karuah Quarry already there and there is a new quarry going out, I believe out near Limeburners out there. So you've got trucks using Italia Road currently already I'd say as a thoroughfare that go through to those other quarries already. And you've also got the load limits that have been reduced at Clarence Town Bridge, so I believe a lot of that traffic now uses Italia Road. And a pure increase in residents, Clarence Town's had a growth obviously in the number of residents and they use Italia Road to bypass through.

20 **MR PEARSON:** Okay, thank you.

**MS BEETSON:** Thank you.

25 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you. That brings us to our morning break. We're doing very well with time. We're a little ahead of time. So I suggest we come back at the scheduled time, taking a slightly longer break. So we'll resume at 11:40 to hear our next registered speakers. Thank you.

30 **SHORT BREAK**

**MS MILLIGAN:** Welcome back. We'll go on with our registered speakers this morning, and our next speaker is Anna Kerr. Anna is speaking to us on behalf of the Save Balickera Incorporated.

35 **MS ANNA KERR:** Thank you, and good morning, Commissioners and community. I'm here representing Save Balickera Incorporated which is an organisation of residents who are deeply concerned about the potential impacts of

the proposed Stone Ridge Quarry on our community and environment.

[Unintelligible 01:57:07] and many of our members couldn't attend today due to work commitments. But they stand in strong opposition to this project. It's also disappointing and uncanny that this meeting coincided with a rare local event hosted by Hunter Water, limiting some attendance from our community.

I did have both a film and PowerPoint presentation but unfortunately, I've been refused the opportunity to share these. I unfortunately got them in too late, I was busy working on a submission in relation to Boral's quarry which was due yesterday. I note my objection to the fact that the proponents and their supporters have been allocated disproportionate time to present their position, despite already having had a separate meeting with the Commissioners for this purpose.

My family has owned and lived in the heritage-listed Balickera House and Farm for five generations. This is just over a kilometre from the Quarry site. Shockingly, this historic house and farm was completely overlooked in the project's flawed and deficient Environmental Impact Statement, which claims no major farms with cattle or grazing land exist within 2 kilometres of the Quarry. Our house, convict built in 1830, shows structural damage from blasting from the existing quarry, and yet we've had no contact or consultation from any of the developers on how they plan to address this issue, despite raising it in all our many submissions.

We are fortunate, however, that our house is set well back from Italia Road. However, let me share on behalf of our neighbours, [redacted].

When they purchased their property 26 years ago, they were assured, like many, many residents of Italia Road, that the existing quarry would close, aligning with their plans for a peaceful retirement. However, they now face the prospect of two additional quarries and a massive increase in the already unbearable truck traffic. Increased traffic, dust, noise and the transformation of the Balickera area into a heavy industrial zone will destroy the promise of a peaceful setting for all of us.

Dust alone would increasingly impact on our homes, water tanks, and health. As well as on the nearby Balickera Canal and Grahamstown Dam which supply drinking water for the entire Hunter region. The cumulative impact of three massive quarries, along with a transformed Italia Road becoming a haulage route, will fundamentally change Balickera from a peaceful rural area into a major industrial zone. The joint application by the quarry developers for the upgrade of the Italia Road – Pacific Highway intersection is yet to be determined. No quarry project should be approved before the intersection upgrade is in place. And according to a motion passed by consensus by Port Stephens Council, public safety demands that this should involve nothing less than a purpose-built flyover.

Forestry should not be cleared in expectation of road infrastructure that may never eventuate. Setting conditions in this regard is simply not enough. We have seen in the case of both Eagleton and Seaham quarry developers that any conditions set in regard to truck movements will be appealed by applicants, despite their

undertakings to the contrary.

5 Despite what the developers say, this is clearly not an optimal site for this massive quarry which, if approved, will be the largest of the 10 in the region, and the biggest ever within a State Forest. This is public land that provides crucial wildlife corridors for threatened species, including the iconic koala. Australia's Environmental Offset Scheme, which the developers rely on, has been exposed as a scam which does nothing to protect local ecosystems, as seen in the alarming increase in threatened species in just the past year, due to habitat loss.

10 All this makes a mockery of the Australian Government's international commitments to stopping deforestation and achieving net zero. This project is within the drinking water catchment for the Hunter region and approving it would be irresponsible in the extreme. And in not actively opposing it, Hunter Water has again failed in its duty of care to the community.

15 The site is also within a culturally and historically significant area, with well-established residential homes and farms that will be adversely impacted. There is also a lack of transparency in relation to this project, which fuels distrust in relation to the claims made by the developers.

20 The developers refuse to disclose what fees exactly or what proportion of profits will go to Forestry New South Wales. And there is no guarantee that the amounts received will be applied to the benefit of the local community at all. We are told the details of the deal are commercial-in-confidence. Despite this project being on public lands, it would appear designed to enrich a small number of private individuals at the expense of our local community and environment.

25 30 Is the community even guaranteed the establishment of walkways, bicycle paths, bus shelters, and long-overdue maintenance of both Italia Road, but also the bush tracks within the forestry, so that they are usable again for horse riding and other leisure activities. And not to mention safety in relation to the use of them by the fire brigade during bushfires.

35 It's true we all drive on roads. But there are alternatives to endless new greenfield quarry sites. We've spoken to industry experts who confirm that recycled materials can replace rock aggregate in construction. However, due to cost, developers still favour forest clearing over more sustainable options.

40 In conclusion, this quarry project prioritises private profit over public welfare, risking our health, our homes and our heritage. We urge you to reject the Stone Ridge proposal and instead support the preservation and protection of our community and environment. Thank you.

45 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you, and can I just confirm that we do have a copy of your presentation, and it will be made available to us.

**MS KERR:** And I will be sending through some other materials, because I have

also a written submission from Debbie Charlton, and the film that I referenced, which I'm very disappointed not to be able to present for the benefit of everybody here. But I will send them and hopefully they'll be uploaded to the website. Thank you.

5

**MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you. Our next speaker is Bruce Lyon, and Bruce is speaking for the Hinterland Port Stephens Town Team, which is an unincorporated local residents group representing the 12 villages of West Ward of Port Stephens LGA.

10

**MR BRUCE LYON:** Okay. It's not quite good afternoon, but thank you, Commissioners, for being in attendance here for this hearing event that you are holding to listen to community's views. Welcome to Seaham and East Seaham and Balickera. These form part of the hinterland to Port Stephens Town Team area and are part of the West Ward of the Port Stephens local government area.

15

My name is Bruce Lyon and I'm a long-term resident of Italia Road, East Seaham. My wife and I have owned and developed our home and workplace, a lifestyle 2-acre property on Italia Road since 1993, some 31 years ago, the same lifetime as the mine itself at Boral.

20

So, this constitutes, just quickly, a declaration that I have an interest in the land value in the area near the proposal of the Stone Ridge Quarry, which is 4 kilometres to the east of our location. Fiona and I regularly use the M1-Italia Road intersection both turning left and right multiple times a day. Very scary sometimes, when there's Christmas traffic and so on.

25

I note that in the last 31 years, Italia Road started as an unsealed road for a third of its length, with narrow single-lane bridges and poor road surface, and an unjustifiably high speed limit of 100 kilometres. Today, since Boral has been in operation, it would be fair to say Italia Road has improved itself in width and safety road alignment. And in some sections, compared to the previous days, the speed limit is now 80 kilometres per hour and is fully sealed. This doesn't mean to say we're happy with the road pothole problem.

30

35

These improvements for the Italia Road were partly funded by the existing mine operation. There is still a lot of work to do, and we make regular complaints to the Council about wet weather related potholes and so on. Italia Road has experienced two road deaths, and very many misses. It's quite often the case that trucks are speeding, cars are speeding, four-wheel drives are speeding, over the 80 kilometres and over the middle two lines.

40

The intersection is inherently unsafe due to poor visibility and awkward road camber in the existing format that is the M1 and Italia Road. Especially from the intersection of Boral Quarry, the same area for the proposed Stone Ridge Quarry. Others will and have already spoken about the nature of the quality of the road. It's supposedly national B-double standard heavy haulage from the dual accessway that will come. A lot leaves to be desired.

45

5 I'm also a member, I declare, of the ARDG Stone Ridge Community Consultative Committee, which started about one and three-quarters years ago. I joined as a community representative to assist in two-way conduit of information between the community and ARDG, as have other CCC representatives, one another who is speaking today.

10 I commend the ARDG for its foresight and consultation process in affording an independent chairman and conducting multiple CCC meetings. This should be the case for any of the proponents, and I am very disappointed that Boral and Eagleton Rock Syndicate don't have the same foresight.

15 I speak specifically also as a member of the Hinterland Port Stephens Town Team, currently an unincorporated body as was introduced. This includes Glen Oak, Seaham, East Seaham, Balickera, Eagleton, Duns Creek, Brandy Hill, Osterley, Nelsons Plains, Hinton, Woodville, Wallalong. We exclude the coverage of Raymond Terrace.

20 The Hinterland Port Stephens Town Team area, of if you like, the Hinterland, has something like 6,000 residents. That's not an insubstantial number, about two-thirds the size of the entire Dungog Shire. Covering 6,000 residents, it would be nigh impossible to get or espouse a single coherent view on the Stone Ridge proposal, particularly for decision makers.

25 The Hinterland is apolitical, we don't take positions because we are apolitical. But the issues I do want to speak about briefly are the road issues of the traffic intersection. We're very disappointed in the way that the appeals process seemed to overtake the undertakings previously made by other proponents. Traffic management at the Italia Road intersection is essentially about human life, and the fact that we may have one, two, three mines generating traffic at the intersection as it is, is unacceptable.

30 Everyone would say that we need human life to be sacrosanct and good road safety. There should be a higher bar for spending public money in making some sort of decent arrangement for the road infrastructure at the interchange. The cheapskate shortcuts in the road design, such as level intersections, as against flyovers and slip lanes and the like, are really unacceptable to the community. So, we call for the road intersection safety to be a prime matter for the IPC. Thank you.

40 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you. Our next speaker is Carmel Northwood, and Carmel is speaking on behalf of Koala Coalition Econetwork Port Stephens Incorporated.

45 **MS CARMEL NORTHWOOD:** Thank you. Stone Ridge will be the worst of the 10 quarries slated for this area, because it's within Wallaroo State Forest. It will be 140 times the volume of the other quarries operating in our state forests. Blasting rock, crushing it on site, and taking it away on heavily laden trucks for 30 years

will have much more severe impacts than logging. Recognised fauna corridors will be destroyed, because the forest will never grow back.

5 The maps show the three quarries on Italia Road are very close. And so are Kings Hill housing proposals, and there are 7 other hard-rock quarries nearby. Balickera Canal is an open channel that goes underground for just 1.2 kilometres near the proposed entries of the three quarries. The historical but still dangerous route of wildlife crossing above the Balickera Tunnel will barely remain. Both the width and the location of remaining pinch points across the road are insufficient as  
10 possible crossings.

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

20 Kings Hill studies and the publicly available OWAD report into Port Stephens koala populations with WWF, proved that koalas are not only present and actively breeding west of the highway, but are genetically more allelic-rich and deserve protection. We refute that Stone Ridge Quarry operations will not impact the Balickera Tunnel and the bats roosting there. Balickera Tunnel is integral to local water supply; failure would be catastrophic.

25 Back in 2020, Boral's modification was refused by Council because more development on Italia Road was deemed unsafe for the community. Boral, Eagleton and Stone Ridge then proposed a minor upgrade to the intersection with the Pacific Highway, making it safer to turn left in and out of Italia Road. Balickera residents are still worried about the risks from increased road haulage and the Italia Road junction.

30 Our meetings with Transport for New South Wales suggest there is no funding or plans available to build flyovers at Italia Road, Medowie Road or Bucketts Way, putting many more people at risk. To reduce the risk of vehicle collisions, recent consent conditions preclude trucks from turning right out of Italia Road onto the highway, where they will cross all lanes to slowly gain speed over the hill to go  
35 south. Just three months later, Eagleton and Boral are already seeking to remove these traffic safety conditions, that should be imposed on all the quarries here.

40 Quarries should wait for a road upgrade to be built, to avoid catastrophic impact risks. Our councillors support this position. Look in the minutes of the 23rd of July. DPHI's assessment does not validly weigh up the cumulative impacts, nor adhere to the Hunter Regional Plan's environmental objectives. Cumulative assessment guidelines have not been rigorously applied. All wildlife will be subject to greater roadkill risks on Italia Road, the highway, and Newline Road where precincts 6, 7 and 8 of Kings Hill are already coming online.  
45

The impacts of increased traffic on threatened and endangered wildlife have not resulted in satisfactory avoidance or mitigation plans, with no fauna underpasses or overpasses for Italia Road. Too much weight is placed on the forest being



marginal koala habitat according to the CKPoM maps of 2002, when recent surveys show many koala food trees here, and koala sightings.

5 TECs on the eastern sides of Stone Ridge have not been avoided at all. Economic arguments have been given too much weight, in comparison to the community's health and wellbeing, biodiversity, and the need for action on climate change. Koalas and other threatened species south of Italia Road are at risk of being trapped.

10 Over 300 hectares of koala habitat will be removed by 10 hard-rock quarries near here, and Stone Ridge in Wallaroo State Forest is the largest. The New South Wales Koala Strategy provides public funds to create koala habitat on one hand, while healthy koala habitat may be destroyed in a state forest. Clearly, in conflict.

15 If Stone Ridge Hard-Rock Quarry in a state forest opposite two others already approved on privately owned land is approved by the IPC, the serious and irreversible impacts on actively breeding koalas in an area of regional koala significance may result in local extinctions, and certainly reduced occupancy.

20 We trust that the IPC will weigh up the policies and the expected outcomes of all these quarry proposals with rigour, and respect for the local communities and our environment. Please do not quickly assess and approve Stone Ridge Quarry. It is not in the public interest. Thank you.

25 **MS MILLIGAN:** Any questions? No? Thank you.

**MS NORTHWOOD:** I'd just like to say that I've prepared all those maps, and you may not have been able to see them adequately. But I've sent them as the presentation so that you can view them later.

30 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you. So, we'll receive those as a formal submission and have access to them all.

35 **MS NORTHWOOD:** Thank you. And I'd also like to say that in regard to the Italia Road upgrade proposal, I received an email two days ago that the HCCC RPP is due to meet on the 3rd of December at 1:30.

40 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you. Okay. Our next speaker is Johanna Lynch. And Johanna is speaking to us on behalf of the Hunter Community Environment Centre.

45 **MS JOHANNA LYNCH:** Hello, all. Thanks, Commissioners. Thanks everyone who's spoke today. So yes, I am here on behalf of the Hunter Community Environment Centre. And we, along with some of the groups represented here, a total of 15 groups representing the Lower Hunter region, did immediately write to Federal Environment Minister Tania Plibersek when we learned about the Stone Ridge Quarry proposal. And in our submission, we pointed out our concerns about the siting, which is within the Grahamstown drinking water catchment. It's in state

forest. It is in an area that supports regional fauna corridors that have been mapped for a long time.

5 It is also within an area that supports climate corridors, which is a concept not everyone would be familiar with, but I'll briefly describe them. Climate corridors have been mapped by the New South Wales Government. They're the areas that have been designated as likely to persist in multiple different climate warming scenarios. They link together areas of what are called "refugia", insinuating  
10 refuge, which is where species are predicted to hide out to flee the worst of the impacts of climate change.

15 So, part of the reason that we objected so strongly to this quarry on the biodiversity grounds is because of this. This area is not to be underestimated in its importance for supporting the long-term survival of species and crucial connectivity of bushland.

20 I did just want to briefly point out that in the Response to Submissions prepared by Umwelt, the New South Wales Fire Service, it was evident that the New South Wales Fire Service didn't receive a fire management plan from ARDGC. They will prepare one now, but I did just want to point out that, you know, other areas of the documentation for this project prepared by the proponent do mention the frequency of fires in Wallaroo State Forest yet they have failed to prepare the plan. And that kind of speaks to some of the lack of trust that there is in this community for this particular developer.

25 I think it's because it's quite clear, looking at the development proposal documentation, there were lots of deficiencies in particularly the Environmental Impacts Assessment. And there's a lot of outdated data that's being relied upon. Look, I won't harp on about that, I'll put those bits in my submission; I'm sure  
30 you're all privy to the Response to Submissions document. But if this quarry is approved, I think there needs to be quite a bit of work done on behalf of the proponent to shore up the confidence in the community that they're able to, you know, do this job.

35 But look, based on the – I'll speak to my notes about the biodiversity. So, we have publicly called for the cumulative impacts of nine operational or proposed hard-rock quarry developments within a 25-kilometre radius of Stone Ridge Quarry to be better assessed in order to inform adequate avoidance, reduction and mitigation measures. This call for additional scrutiny to inform better cumulative  
40 impact assessments and a management framework and, ideally, an independent body to manage it, is based on what we feel to be a significant expansion of the entire sector within the Lower Hunter.

45 Of course, the eye of the storm is just here, with Stone Ridge being, you know, one of the three quarries that are in a very short distance to the likes of Anna and others, who we heard from. Look, in the case of Stone Ridge Quarry, the deficiencies and absence of key information throughout the process have been glaring. It is clear that agencies have risen to the challenge to help them, you

know, adhere to the legislative requirements. But again, we don't have a lot of confidence that they are keen to adhere to the precautionary principle or do their due diligence when it comes to environmental impacts. And indeed the environmental impacts of this quarry should not be underestimated.

5

We remain strongly opposed to this project, and if it is approved, we would like to see a great deal more attention paid to the mitigating impacts on the koala. So, the Environment Centre and the Gloucester Environment Group commissioned an ecologist, a local ecologist, Matt Bailey, he's accredited and an accredited BAM Assessor. He reviewed the Biodiversity Assessment Report for us, and this report, which he will lodge in separate submission, identifies a range of unresolved issues, specifically relating to the koala and to the micro-bats in the Balickera Canal.

10

He points out that the blasting impacts could be catastrophic for some of the micro-bats in that canal. And the southern myotis, I believe the documentation shows that there is breeding of the southern myotis in that canal. So, it's unclear to me reading the Response to Submissions whether or not ARDGC are willing to put monitoring for blasting in the canal. But I think that that's an incredibly important thing that needs to happen to ensure that those species are protected, and indeed the integrity of the canal.

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So, in terms of the koala, as Carmel was suggesting and started, look, the vehicle strike impacts haven't been explored. They are a key threatening process for koalas, as is the loss of habitat. The additional 334 truck movements per day is of serious concern for koala-vehicle strike. And yes, look, Matt Bailey in the report suggests that this has not been evaluated, nor the impact of increased vehicle strike on the koala along the haulage route. In the EPBC Act referral regarding the Commonwealth Matters of National Significance, it just hasn't been addressed, which is a concern.

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In the Boral Seaham expansion, BDIR did identify the increased risk of vehicle strike on native ground flora and fauna, including the koala, though it failed to identify the increased risk of vehicle strike along the haulage route. Overpasses are going to be important, and there needs to be a recognition that this vehicle strike from the increased traffic in a known area of koala significance, something needs to be done about this in terms of overpasses/underpasses.

35

Indeed, just yesterday, the Ecological Consultants Association summarised research and pointed to some precedents in Queensland where along a stretch in the Bowen Basin where there are many coal mines operating, there has been a significant number of koalas hit by vehicles. So, the research on this is coming out.

40

As of yesterday – and there's a precedent which we hope not to replicate here in Port Stephens, in the Appin Road in Gilead development in southwest Sydney, where as part of the planning for that proposal, ecologists did implore the Minister to do before-construction mitigation efforts to protect the koala. That didn't happen, and there's been 146 koalas killed on Appin Road since January 1st, 2022

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after that.

5 So, another point that is raised in the submission that we got, that we asked Matt to prepare for us, is that, so this is a small population locally, and it is understood that there's chlamydia in the population. That makes it all the more important that the mitigating efforts from the additional impact of this quarry, the habitat loss, and the truck movements, are proactively pre-emptively addressed. Because it's a small population; it's going to be wiped out if it isn't protected from as many impacts as possible.

10 I did want to point out that the Koala Plan of Management for Port Stephens is very old. It's from 2002. I don't think that we can be safely making assessments about the risk to koalas based on that incredibly outdated information. It's really important that the Council update that document before this proposal, this development is approved. Because it does present a major risk to koalas.

20 And the emphasis from the proponent in the documents and in a media statement that it's marginal koala habitat, sure, however, I note that in their presentation given to you ahead of this meeting, the preferred koala habitat directly abuts the Stone Ridge proposal development site to the south. And indeed, Port Stephens did point out in their submission to the Eagleton Quarry projects planning documents that they mistakenly were referring to the area as marginal koala habitat. I think it's really important that we get to the bottom of whether indeed this is marginal, and there needs to be – or not – and there needs to be updated information to support that.

30 The koala has been uplisted as Endangered in the time that ARDG have been seeking to get this project up. So, yes, I think our ecologist suggests that the lack of exploration of the koala-vehicle strike impacts in the EPBC referral could be challengeable. So, yes, we are quite concerned about that.

35 So, look, I don't know how much time I have left, but I did just have a few pieces from the Response to Submissions report that I'll point out. So, the Biodiversity Conservation and Science Division recommended targeted additional surveys of the Balickera Tunnel micro-bat population and indeed, I would suggest that proper baseline surveys of all the fauna and flora to be implicated in this proposal and the area needs to be conducted. It doesn't seem like that has happened.

40 So, they refer to micro-bats, raptors, forest owls, the glossy black cockatoo, amphibians and the orchids that are present. They suggest that further measures should be included to mitigate prescribed impacts.

Is that the end? Or is that one more minute? All right.

45 So, the Department of Climate Change, Energy and Water issue a series of recommendations to be satisfied prior to approval. Initially, ARDG did not demonstrate an ability to obtain entitlement in accordance with the requirements for the New South Wales Aquifer Interference Policy. I understand some of this

information has been resolved and submitted by the proponent since the Response to Submissions.

5 I just want to emphasise that there was a raft of lacking information that was submitted in the first instance. I think it's clear the proponent are aware that there is a viable resource there. But that's really, in our view, the only thing that's viable about this project.

10 And indeed, I would emphasise a lot of the local community's concerns that have been raised today about the changing of this area, the increase in the traffic. It's already pretty crazy living on these roads. I grew up nearby. We've been hearing trucks whizz by. It's a human safety issue as well. And we are going to be commissioning a review of the traffic studies for all three of the quarries that are in the area.

15 Yes, I'll leave at that. The cumulative impact assessment has not been done, and the nine quarries, the 10 that someone has mentioned, within the 25-kilometre radius within the region, really need to have additional scrutiny for the cumulative impacts and communities need more transparency about that.

20 So, thank you for your time.

25 **MS MILLIGAN:** Just a minute. Just before you sit down, can I just ask you. You talked about the impact on fauna in the tunnel from blasting. And you referred to a potential monitoring regime. Could you just say a few more words? I didn't fully understand that. Thank you.

30 **MS LYNCH:** Look, this was from my read of the planning documentation, was that – I can't remember which agency it was, but they suggested that blasting monitoring apparatus should be installed in the canal. Which I think makes perfect sense.

35 If there's going to be impacts on these sensitive species in that canal, it was unclear to me in what the proponent's response was in that response report, whether they were going to commit to that or whether they were saying, no, we've done enough. The breeding activity of those bats in that canal, it's 2% of the southern myotis population. Yes. And I recognise that the area's been shrunk slightly to move away from the tunnel. But the blasting impacts resound, you know, yes, so ...

40 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you. We can clarify that question with the applicant before the end of the session. Thank you.

45 **MS LYNCH:** Great. Thank you.

**MS MILLIGAN:** So, our next speaker please, is Steven Larsen.

**MR LARSEN:** Good morning, all. As mentioned, name is Steve Larsen. I'm a

local resident of near-40 years in the East Seaham area. And I'm not just here as a heckler. Although I must admit at times, I can't handle it when people give us unclear things or education on how rock mixes with concrete. I thought that was totally ridiculous.

5

Okay. So, as I say, I'm a 68-year-old, I could quite happily sit at home, do nothing rather than be here. All right? But I felt that I needed to come because someone needs to come here and voice for the people, or for the people and things that can't vote. The schoolchildren that are using the road. The local animals in the environment. Even the poor old trees that are sitting there doing nothing except helping with climate change.

10

So, I believe the quarry should not be approved due to climate change, because the best way to combat climate change is with trees. And we're now talking about knocking out a significant number. I know that climate change continually tries to get ignored in different developments, and politicians try to tell you that, "Oh no, no, don't allow for that." I fail to see why's that the case. I suppose that's so they can get things through that they want.

15

The other thing is with animal habitat. The report mentions the koalas, and as we've just heard, there's a very old report from the Port Stephens Council about past koala movements in the area. I have a real issue when we measure the environment by koalas. Politicians love it because they get their photograph with it. I'm not saying it's not a great thing to do, and I'm not saying it's not a good thing that they help the Koala Hospital, although the local council should declare that they actually make money out of the Koala Hospital by hiring out cabins and things like that.

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The other thing is, in the habitat there, there are the other animals that we probably don't find that photogenic. There are ones that cause me great disharmony at this time of year. As I've been walking around today, I've had to continually get cobwebs off of me in the paddock. And that's because November is actually the month that spiders actually go out mating, if you're not aware. That's why if you've got a pest controller, you get it done in October. Don't wait till November; it's too late. All right.

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The other animals that should be mentioned that aren't that photogenic, and I've had issues, or reason to come across them in the 40 years I've been where I am, is things like goannas, snakes. Those things, oh yuck. But they are protected. They are a protected animal. And these environmental reports that I continually see never mention those things to you. And what we should always be aware of, you know, in the 40 years that I've been there, I've had the goanna up on the flyscreen door trying to get in at the dog's food, which is quite distressing when you've got a 6-foot goanna and you want to get through the same door.

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I've also had the other one where dad gets voted the man to go and fix it up when the brown snake's on the bedroom floor. Right. All these things are terrible things to have happen to you when you live where I live, near that forest. But it also

makes me realise now as I've got older, that's what they talk about the balance of nature. The goannas help keep the population of the snakes down, and the snakes keep the population of the water rats and the other rodents, that are generated by human population, down.

5

The other reason why I'm against this development is safety. The roads are not built for the extra traffic, and especially not if the other proposed quarries end up getting approved. Because there's talk that that'll add up to 1,600 truck movements a day. And I don't care what they do to the M1 Freeway out there, they're going to have a disaster on their hands.

10

The other thing that you'll find is the quarries won't honour their traffic things. Recently, the Boral Quarry, the one across the road, got approval to deepen by the local council, even though I thought that I saw at a council meeting they were against it and an employee approved it, which seemed very weird to me, but politicians tell me that happens.

15

The interesting thing is though, with that proposal they were told that all traffic had to turn left onto the highway. They currently area appealing that decision. So, that shows you that no matter what restriction you's might want to place on them, quarries will not take that as an answer.

20

The local roads and that are not built for this type of traffic, and this is the other people, or the other people that I talk about that can't vote. I'm voicing the opinion for the schoolchildren. Our roads are used by school buses. And there is no way in the world, as we've seen, some of us local residents, that the very large truck and dog he comes across a pothole on the side of the road, and he goes, "Nah, I'm bigger than them, I'm going down the middle." And we've had evidence of people on the road.

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Yes, I'll take the question.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** [Unintelligible 02:35:35] ... who have actually been physically run off the road by [unintelligible 02:35:45].

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**MS MILLIGAN:** Actually, I think we agreed not to interrupt the speakers. So, carry on, please.

**MR LARSEN:** And that's why I took umbrage with the person that mentioned the Martins Creek Quarry. It was knocked on the head due to a safety concern, and wasn't due to development or whatever he thought, but he's all right, he lives at Raymond Terrace, if you remember, he said. So, that didn't take much for me as a local resident, or the wildlife in that area, that this is right.

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The other thing is, as we all know, this quarry if it did get approved, that's a great thing, it's a money spinner, and the few people that are behind it, they'll sell it off to a multi-national a month later or a year later or two years later. They'll be like Brandy Hill Quarry, that's how it started.

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**MS MILLIGAN:** Mr Larsen, I'm going to ask you to wrap up, if that's okay.

5 **MR LARSEN:** Okay. I'm sorry if I've tended to go on there. But as you can tell, I'm quite passionate, and I'm passionate because I feel that no one is taking into account for those who cannot vote. The people and animals that are most affected. Then if you really want me passionate, I really don't want it myself. And as for someone from the Forestry to tell me how it makes money and all that when they run at a loss, I won't take that one either. Because you know why the quarry wants to be there? Because it's cheaper to set up there than go and pay someone the right amount for the land, oh wow, maybe we could build one along here and straighten Clarence Town Road.

15 **MS MILLIGAN:** Mr Larsen. Out of time, I think.

**MR LARSEN:** Sorry.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Are you good to wrap up?

20 **MR LARSEN:** Thank you very much.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Our next speaker, and our final registered speaker, is Charlee Connor.

25 **MS CHARLEE CONNOR:** I think we're afternoon. Good afternoon. Thanks for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Charlee Connor, and I'm a long-time resident of Italia Road and the founder of Italia Road Action Taskforce, which standards for IRATE, which is an accurate reflection of how most of our members, which is about 25, feel about the proposed Stone Ridge Quarry development in our area.

30 I'm also a committee member of the Stone Ridge Community Consultation Committee. I'm here today to voice the concerns of our community, which I've gathered and summarised through a questionnaire which allowed people to respond anonymously via our Facebook page, which was a week before the 13th of July 2023 Stone Ridge community consultation meeting.

35 This is the first time I've been able to present this to anybody, so thank you for having me here. So, I only had a week to distribute and receive back responses. Of the 38 people who responded, 33 live within 15 kilometres of the proposed quarry site. A staggering 35 out of 38 respondents oppose the quarry. Almost everyone believes it will have negative effects on the environment, residents, flora and fauna, with dust, noise and traffic being primary concerns.

40 Let me share a few highlights from the feedback. Thirty-five people oppose the quarry, and 36 believe it will harm the environment. Twenty-seven people believe their property value will significantly drop due to the quarry development. In fact, only three people think the quarry could be considered with changes like



restricting traffic, reducing traffic movements, or better environmental management.

5 These responses clearly indicate that the local community feels unheard and deeply concerned about the impact on our daily lives. We already live with the negative effects of the Boral Seaham Quarry, including dust, noise and deteriorating air quality. Adding another quarry will only compound these issues, and we also have the Eagleton Quarry that's just been approved, so that's another one.

10 So many of us suffer from constant respiratory problems, those closer, especially in Balickera. Dust accumulation on our properties and disruption to our daily routines; that's with everyone that lives on Italia Road, because of the trucks.

15 One key concern is traffic. As a resident of Italia Road, I am consistently woken up by trucks passing at 4:30 a.m., sometimes driving at high speeds, and rarely within their lane. Hands up who has been run off the road by trucks or stopped in their tracks? Just about everyone that's driven on the road, I would say.

20 Our small quiet road is not designed to handle this level of industrial traffic. The proposed intersection upgrade is not for our safety, but to accommodate approximately a thousand additional quarry trucks per day. This is not just an inconvenience; it's a safety risk.

25 Moreover, the local area is home to important wildlife corridors, including the Wallaroo State Forest – sorry, that doesn't make sense. This forest is vital for biodiversity and used by many, as you've heard, for recreational purposes, including hiking, horse riding, and nature walks.

30 I read in a meeting that the Forestry Commission believes that the quarry will help fund maintenance of the trails. I'd like to point out that taxpayers do already fund this, and in the 20 years I've lived there, there has been no maintenance on those trails that I've seen near me. And they're unusable for horse-riding now, which was one of the main reasons we bought there 20 years ago. If more funding is required, surely there's a better solution than destroying 70 hectares of the state forest that people actually use. We can't get to the rest of it now because the fire trails are so bad.

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40 This brings me to a larger question – actually, this is about Martins Creek that's already been covered, I won't cover it.

45 Residents are also worried about their mental health. The constant noise and dust, the stress of navigating increasingly dangerous roads, and the anxiety of possible living with three quarries, are taking their toll. One local resident wrote that they don't want to live between two quarries. Add another one to that now. Another says they bought their property with the expectation that the existing quarry would eventually close, not be replaced by another.

5 I fully understand the need for quarry materials. We all see the trucks hauling gravel to construction sites. But the toll on our health, property and quality of life is unacceptable. We've already given up too much. The quarries are forcing us to make unbearable sacrifices. We need better solutions that don't come at the cost of our homes and environment.

10 So, I urge you, the decision makers here, to listen to the voices of people who will be most affected by this development. We need stricter conditions if this quarry is to be approved, such as a flyover at the intersection, a commitment to ensure trucks do not use local roads. And most importantly, a real effort from the quarry companies to give back to the local community, not just with token gestures like sponsoring the netball club, but with meaningful investments that help mitigate the impact that they will have on us.

15 We're not wealthy. We are hard-working people trying to raise families, pay our mortgages and live in harmony with nature. We don't have the resources to combat the degradation on our air, roads and environment. But we do have one thing we control; the power to stand together and say no to a development that does not benefit us, our children, or the future of this area.

20 Thank you for your time and for considering the voices of those who will be most affected. I would have loved to have read you all the quotes that I have from the community, but due to time constraints I couldn't. Thank you.

25 **MS MILLIGAN:** We were just saying, if you feel inclined to document the response from your Facebook survey, you could give that to us as submission and we would read those.

30 **MS CONNOR:** I will. I definitely will. Thank you.

35 **MS MILLIGAN:** Okay. Thank you. So that brings us to the two final speaking spots today. Firstly, we'll hear from the applicant and then we'll hear from the Department of Planning. So, could I ask from Australian Resource Development Group Pty Ltd, Damon Bird and, again, Justin Meleo to come forward?

40 And just as they do, it might be useful for people to know, because we did have a comment earlier about the fact that the applicant is having now a 10-minute spot to answer questions, and other people didn't have 10 minutes. I just sort of wanted to reassure you that's per our published guidelines for public meetings. And the reason we do that is, just to be honest, to give ourselves a chance to ask questions from the material we've just heard, and for you to observe that exchange and perhaps get more information too. So, that's the reason why there's 10 minutes allocated.

45 So, the purpose is for us to – sorry, we agreed that we weren't going to interrupt the speakers.

**MR LARSEN:** I wasn't. I was just going to ask you a question.

**MS MILLIGAN:** What's your question?

5 **MR LARSEN:** Does that mean that was the reason why I wasn't allowed to attend yesterday's site meeting?

**MS MILLIGAN:** That's quite a different topic. I was just explaining why there's now 10 minutes for us to question the applicant. And so I think we'll start on that. Maybe is it okay if I start on that?

10 **MR TERRY BAILEY AND MR PEARSON:** Yes, sure. Yes.

**MS MILLIGAN:** All right-y. So, we've heard a number of things this morning about – in fact, two of our speakers talked about current truck movements, and this is not your issue of course, you're not operating. But people have talked about trucks at 4:30 in the morning. So, my first question: can you just clarify or make very clear for us what are your hours of operation, what are your hours of transport movements? And we might have a discussion about that, thank you.

20 **DR MELEO:** Yes. So, the hours of operation are 6 a.m. till 10 p.m., with truck movements from 7 till 10 p.m. at night. But operational activities are between 7 and 6, I think. And on weekends, 7 till 3 p.m. So, load out.

25 **MS MILLIGAN:** I think probably this one, people are interested in the traffic, so 7 till 10, people – the trucks can ...

**DR MELEO:** Load out, yes.

30 **MS MILLIGAN:** Yes, okay.

**DR MELEO:** However, I would – sorry – I would stress that normally there wouldn't be load out after 5 or 6 in the evening. So, the ability to load out after 10 is to deal with potential surge operations or special projects where there is a requirement to possibly deliver to a site in the evening. But it wouldn't be a normal part of our operations.

40 **MR DAMON BIRD:** And it's often utilised for loading vehicles ready for dispatch the next day. So, often you'll have – you can have on site loading but ready for dispatch the next day. We're not talking about quarry operations as in extraction, it's truck loading.

**MS MILLIGAN:** So, can I ask you, if 7 o'clock is the start, what stops the trucks getting there much earlier than that and queueing so they can be first in and then first away?

45 **MR BIRD:** Yes, that's a good question. And what you see at a lot of quarry operations is trucks queueing, leaving early, going to a site in advance to queue ready for loading. One of the things that we'll have at this site is that we'll have a

protocol relating to the front gate, if you like, that the boom-gate won't go up until shortly before opening, which prevents – because you've got a very limited ability to get trucks off the road in the front entrance, it will mean that there won't be an opportunity to queue. So, in the induction process which will relate to the site, it will be made very clear don't come to site early because there will be nowhere to park. And you can do that in the induction process. All drivers will be registered and each driver – sorry, each driver will be registered, as will all trucks that they're in. So, we'll be able to track that as well.

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10 **MS MILLIGAN:** All right. Any other questions on that?

**DR MELEO:** Just on that, could I just reiterate that we have committed, and it's in the EIS and we've mentioned numerous times today to using the section of Italia Road between the Pacific Highway and the access entrance. So, not accessing the site from the west, so not coming through Seaham, and not exiting the site obviously that way either. So, utilising the existing approved B-double haul route section of Italia Road, which is the last, the eastern 1.4 k section.

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20 **MR BIRD:** And I think it's important to note that we hear the community's comments in relation to what's happened at other locations in terms of a reversal and approach. But we're absolutely committed to honouring what we've said to the community. I know it's easy to say, "Oh yeah, you can say that." But we're happy to give away any right, say before you now that we will not challenge turning left out of the site and going left onto the highway. That's an absolute  
25 commitment and we're quite happy to put it on the record today.

So, it's okay, yes, I can see, you know, that maybe you may not believe it, but what else can we do other than be totally open and transparent? And you know that's a commitment. We will have the front entrance set up so that it is fully signposted and made very clear that if you turn left out the ...

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**MS MILLIGAN:** Sorry. Continue. Thank you.

**MR BIRD:** If you turn left. Sorry. If you turn left out the front gate, that – sorry, I should have ... Yes, what I was saying was we're totally committed to ensuring that any vehicles that come out of the quarry turn left and then left onto the highway. And we're – there is no way that we will be going against that promise. One, it's ethically and morally inappropriate, considering what we've agreed to with the other two parties at that intersection.

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**MS MILLIGAN:** Okay, thanks. We might ...

**MR BAILEY:** There's a commitment, but how do you ensure – or what could that compliance look like?

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**MR BIRD:** Okay, well the compliance is ... The first thing is, one, there's an induction process. So there's an awareness amongst the drivers that that is a requirement. The way we monitor that and ensure that it happens is that any

company-owned vehicles would be GPS tracked. It's one of the key things.

There will be regular audits on vehicle movements. And one of the first points of auditing is actually the camera at the front gate that determines where a truck comes from and where a truck is going. And one of – the other thing too ...

**MS MILLIGAN:** Sorry. Could we just let the speaker answer the questions.

**MR BIRD:** The other thing too is that it's made very clear in the induction process that, for a driver, if they go down to – say for example they turn right, which will be very difficult, the way we construct the intersection onto Italia Road, because it'll be constructed in a fashion that will make very difficult turning right. You have to be able to turn right for a light vehicle, but in terms of turning left, they'll be monitored going that way. And if that get down to the Pacific Highway and turn right, because that right turn, we believe, will remain open for light vehicles, for the community vehicles. If they get down there and they are picked up turning right, it will be, "Well, don't bother coming back." So that'll be very clear in the protocol for them.

Now, we understand that the community has concerns regarding existing truck movements. We hear that. But we do make the point that, you know, those are issues you really need to take up with the other parties. And the other thing too is it's very difficult when you're looking at trucks, and I understand there's a lot of trucks going through Seaham, but to determine where they're coming from and where they're going. So that's something that, you know, yes, it's a bit difficult.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you. Can I move on – sorry, could we just have a little quiet. Could I move onto another topic please. We heard one of our speakers talk about the tunnel and the impact of blasting on bats, and the possibility of monitoring within the tunnel. We're just interested to be clear if that is an undertaking you've given?

**DR MELEO:** That's actually draft condition, I think it's B48F3. It's conditioned in the draft conditions of consent.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Mm-hmm. And your view of that condition? It's something you can do, something ...?

**MR BIRD:** That's totally acceptable.

**DR MELEO:** Well, we've been through the process of reviewing the conditions with the Department and agree with that. And in fact it was a mitigation measure that was put in the EIS.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Okay, thank you. And my other question before we move to the others. The consultative committee. I was interested to ask you what discussions you had there about community benefit. We had at least one of our speakers this morning talk about some perhaps disappointment about no real community benefit

coming from the project. Is there anything else you can say about that?

5 **DR MELEO:** I think given that we've had – sorry, we had three meetings last year and then we had a pause whilst the assessment process was being undertaken. And we had a meeting last week. And I think it'd be fair to say that those meetings have been taken up with discussing the project, the potential impacts, the community concerns, and discussing all those. And we probably haven't had a lot of discussion too much about community benefit at this point in time, given where we are in the assessment process. You can make a comment on that.

10 **MS MILLIGAN:** So, is there anything you wanted to say about that?

15 **MR BIRD:** Yes, one of the things. There were a couple of things that we did talk about. One of the concerns with forest users is the quality of the tracks. And they're in a pretty poor state and they don't get a lot of attention. So, there was a question I think from one of the landowners on Italia Road, is there something that could be done there?

20 So, Nine Mile Creek Road, which will remain open, absolutely. I mean, one of the things a quarry can do is provide material for use on the forest tracks. And whether it requires even a dozer going through from the quarry to maintain and upgrade the tracks, that's something that's easy to do.

25 One of the other things that comes to mind was in relation to fire fighting and having a ready source of water available for fighting fires. That's something that the quarry will be able to work with Forestry on, you know, sourcing water, storing it, and having it available for firefighting. I mean, they're two things that can be done quite easily.

30 **MS MILLIGAN:** Okay, all right. Thanks. We might then go to other questions. Sorry, one more?

35 **DR MELEO:** Sorry, could I just make a comment on an issue that was raised regarding the intersection with the Pacific Highway and in particular, a flyover. So, one of the things that we did in our consultation process with TFNSW from the very beginning, was to ask them, we acknowledged that there was an issue at the intersection, and we've spent – it was a five-year process to get to the end of it with TFNSW.

40 One of the things we asked them was what would you like at Italia Road? You tell us and we'll do it. And one of the things that they indicated was, "Well, a grade separation would be great." So, we went through a process of actually designing a grade separated intersection at Italia Road. We went through a detailed consultation process internally with TFNSW, workshops, looking at strategic studies.

45 That was about a two-and-a-half year process, at the end of which we waited probably 8 or 10 months for their final response. And they said, "Actually, we've

changed our mind, we don't want you to do that, because we've got other plans for potential grade-separate interchanges at other locations. Go away and come back with something else." At which point they then directed us to consult with the other two quarries and to see if we could come back to them with a proposal that they would accept. That was another year-and-a-half process. And they finally accepted the left-out, dedicated left-out acceleration lane north for the three sites.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you for that additional detail.

**DR MELEO:** There was consideration for the grade separation in a great lot of detail.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Okay. Thank you. I know we're pushing for time.

**MR PEARSON:** So, just on that intersection upgrade for the Pacific Highway. The current proposal, the one that we've heard is going to the regional panel in December. Assume that gets approved and assume if this quarry were to get approved, what would be the timeframe for construction of that highway intersection improvement? When would we see quarry product being exported from your site under the most likely scenario for that upgrade?

**DR MELEO:** Yes. So, a draft condition of consent is that no product's to be exported from the site until that intersection upgrade is completed. There are two processes, or one, two processes. One is the Works Authorisation Deed process with TFNSW which is effectively like a construction certificate for a house.

So, the detailed engineering design component for the upgrade has to be worked through and approved by TFNSW. That could be a 10 to 12 month process. And then there would be the letting of a contract and construction which, weather dependent, could be another 8 to 10/12 month process.

**MR PEARSON:** About two years?

**DR MELEO:** Potentially, yes. Yes.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Okay. Anything else? Okay, so I think that that probably brings us to the end of the questions. Thank you very much.

And the last session is with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, who I understand will be talking to us via telephone. And we have them on the line at the moment, is that right? From the Department we're joined by Jessie Evans and James McDonough. Jessie and James, are you available?

**MS JESSIE EVANS:** Yes, good afternoon.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Okay. Thank you for joining us. Let's just get straight into some questions that have emerged during the morning. Terry, perhaps you'd like to start?

5 **MR BAILEY:** Thanks, Janett. Jessie and James, I'm wondering if you could just take us through how the assessment report takes into account cumulative impacts. For the course of today, we've heard significant concerns around cumulative impacts and would like to understand that for new – particularly as it relates to dust, biodiversity, blasting, traffic.

10 **MS EVANS:** Of course. I can take that one. So, the cumulative impacts of any other quarry proposals do form a key part of this Department assessment of each individual quarry proposal. So, this assessment includes consideration of the suitability of each site, including surrounding land uses, community and environmental value, the location of the hard rock resource and its proximity to transportation corridors to deliver quarry products to market.

15 So, when we look at the quarry proposals and when we assess the impacts of those, the consent authority must consider the cumulative impacts of other existing and proposed quarry proposals. So, the cumulative impact assessment considers both the cumulative effect of multiple projects increasing the magnitude of a particular impact. So, as you mentioned, it could be noise, blasting, dust. But it  
20 also looks at the cumulative effect of multiple types of impacts on individuals and community, so the social impacts due to a combination of amenity impacts.

25 [Unintelligible 03:00:46] is another key consideration when we're assessing the merits of quarry proposals. In many cases, total avoidance of impacts is restricted by the location of the resource. And from a very high level and more from the policy perspective, all projects must include a consideration of cumulative impact studies informed by the Cumulative Impact Assessment Guidelines for State Significant Projects.

30 The need for cumulative assessment is also outlined in several more specific key New South Wales Government policy documents, including but not limited to the Noise Policy for Industry, the Approved Methods for Modelling and Assessment of Air Pollutants in New South Wales, the Guide to Traffic Generating Development, the Social Impact Assessment Guidelines, and the Sydney New  
35 South Wales Aquifer Interference Policy.

40 So, I'm confident that the Department has done a thorough cumulative impact assessment for the Stone Ridge Quarry. And I hope that comes across in our assessment report.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Follow up?

**MR BAILEY:** No, I think I'll work off the transcript actually. I need to go back.

45 **MR PEARSON:** Yes, hi Department, Richard Pearson speaking. Just – and I don't know if you heard the discussion with the applicant or any of the discussion with community today about the intersection upgrade to the Pacific Highway and its status. And also the ability through the consent to ensure that the applicant



complies with the conditions about left-in/left-out, and left-out of the quarry intersection that trucks are not heading towards Seaham. There's a lot of community scepticism, I guess, would be the word about how that consent would be enforced. Do you have anything you would like to share with us about how a condition which is not something that is going to be able to be resolved with hard infrastructure, can be enforced to keep the quarry honest in terms of that left-in/left-out onto the highway?

**MS EVANS:** Yes, thank you. We have been listening in today and we have acknowledged the community's concerns, particularly with their lived experience that is currently occurring with trucks turning right onto the highway from Italia Road from Seaham Quarry.

So, under that council consent for Seaham Quarry, trucks are permitted to turn right. Under the SSD applications for the approved Eagleton Quarry and the recommended conditions for the Stone Ridge Quarry, there is a very clear requirement for trucks to turn left. This is a legal obligation that is placed on the company through conditions of development consent.

It is up to the company how they best manage that and comply with that legal obligation, and so we did hear from ARDG about a couple of mechanisms that they would be putting in place to do that. But from the Department's perspective, compliance action would be taken if any trucks are not operating in accordance with that consent that's given. So, I would encourage members of the community to report any illegal truck manoeuvres that they do witness.

So, but in addition to that, there is reporting that's recommended under the conditions of consent. So, there's requirements for annual reports, independent environmental audits, and incident reporting. And it's also within the Department's remit to undertake both spot and scheduled site inspections, and we have quite a strong compliance team now with regional officers that do this – they're out on site all the time.

So, the Department's compliance actions, should a breach occur, can range from warnings to penalty infringement notices and all the way up to prosecution in court for any breaches that occur to conditions of consent.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Okay. You can jump in. Yes.

**MR BAILEY:** Thanks, Department. It's Terry Bailey again. I'm just going back to the material in the consent and the possible conditions, and I'm looking at B8 which is – we've heard some concerns around blasting and the impact on blasting on private residences and vibration. So that there's some prescription there, and there's – the piece that I'm particularly interested in is how you ensure compliance with that condition. It's condition B8.

**MS EVANS:** B8. So, blasting frequency and the vibration it can generate.

**MR BAILEY:** Yes.

**MS EVANS:** So, blasts are monitored by the company. So, we do prescriptive conditions and that is what is required to happen. So, they're only allowed to do  
5 two per day or not more than four per week during construction, and then one per day and two per every 14 days during operations. And they must ensure that it does not exceed 0.5 millimetres per second in ground vibration.

How they monitor that, blasts on site, it's probably a good question for the  
10 company. But blasts are monitored on sites. And the operations track the vibration, and also the number as well. But in terms of frequency, it would be reported to the Department should they exceed the frequency, either through the incident reporting, the blasting hotline that goes to the company, and then if it was found to be in exceedance, it would come to the Department. Or they could get picked up in  
15 independent environmental audits as well.

So, there is equipment to monitor the ground vibration and the frequency is picked up a variety of different ways.

**MR BAILEY:** If a resident had concerns that it was having an impact on their property, how would they bring that to the attention?

**MS EVANS:** So, you've got conditions B9, B10, B11, 12 and 13 that cover  
25 blasting impacts to properties. So, under B9 and B10, you can get an inspection if you live within 1 kilometre, and if you live within 2 kilometres, you can have an investigation as well.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Can you just repeat that last sentence? I didn't catch it.

**MS EVANS:** Yes, so conditions B9 through to B13, and they cover private  
30 property inspections and investigations.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Okay. Thank you. Other questions?

**MR BAILEY:** No.

**MS MILLIGAN:** Could I –

**MR PEARSON:** Oh, sorry. Look, just one final question from me. In relation to  
40 dust, there was another issue that was raised quite a number of times today. What, in your recommended consent, will commit the applicant to minimising dust generation from the site? And I think particular concerns have been raised around a lot of the local residences being on water tank and getting dust into their water supplies that they use for drinking water. How has the Department addressed that  
45 issue through its recommended consent?

**MS EVANS:** Yes, thank you. So, specifically it's covered in conditions B15 through to B20. They all relate to air quality and dust management. So, they're the

conditions, that includes operating conditions for air quality and greenhouse gas management. But more going back to the comments on water tanks, ARDG has committed to undertaking routine inspections and where necessary, cleaning of water tanks at residential locations near the quarry.

5

There's not a specific condition in our recommended conditions to cover that, but we do have that the applicant must carry out their development in accordance with the EIS. So, there's that one that's there, and that means that they need to meet that commitment that they've made to undertake routine inspections and, where necessary, cleaning.

10

We do have a condition in our conditions that requires them to provide compensatory water supply to any landowner whose water supply is adversely or directly impacted by the quarry. So, that's probably the one step above and covers it more broadly, not just for dust impacts.

15

In terms of trucking, we were listening to the trucking impacts today, and concern that the dust is coming off site through trucking as well. There is a condition that requires all loads to be covered when entering and exiting the site.

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**MS MILLIGAN:** So, could I just ask – thank you, Ms Evans – just stay on the line. But can I just ask ARDG to say a bit more about that last comment, that you had offered to do inspection of private water tanks for dust? Is that what I just heard? Okay, would you just come up and tell us. So, what I just heard was it hasn't been in a recommended – it's not a recommended condition, but it's something offered.

25

**DR MELEO:** Yes, so it's in the EIS and because the conditions of consent say that the development has to be taken out generally in accordance with the EIS, ergo it's a condition of consent. But it's something we've discussed with the CCC, that we're quite willing to undertake monitoring of water tanks before operations commence so we've got good background information on what the existing water quality is like. And then to continue that process throughout the operations of the quarry and work with each of the landowners in that respect.

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**MS MILLIGAN:** Mm-hmm. And that's then, what, leads you potentially to compensatory water supply?

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**DR MELEO:** Yes, if there's ...

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**MS MILLIGAN:** If necessary.

**DR MELEO:** If it's shown that there's adverse impacts coming from dust from the quarry which – we'll be doing everything we possibly can do to make sure that doesn't happen, and we're pretty sure that it won't. But notwithstanding that, we're still willing to work with the landowners to address that issue.

45

**MS MILLIGAN:** Okay. Thank you. So, back to the Department, do you have any

follow-up questions?

**MR PEARSON:** Not for the Department, no.

5 **MS MILLIGAN:** And Terry?

**MR BAILEY:** No.

10 **MS MILLIGAN:** So, to the Department, is there anything else you would like to say to the panel before we finish this morning?

15 **MS EVANS:** I just wanted to clarify one point. I think just to make it crystal clear, the recommended conditions that we've put forward had trucking hours from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. I might have misheard, but I think I heard ARDG say in their previous speaking that it was 7 a.m. So I just wanted to make that crystal clear that our conditions are 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. And apologies if I misheard, but I just wanted to make sure that was clear.

20 **MS MILLIGAN:** Okay. No other comments?

**MS EVANS:** That was it, thank you.

**MS MILLIGAN:** All right. So, thank you for joining us. Thank you.

25 **MS EVANS:** Thank you.

**MR BAILEY:** Thank you.

30 **MS MILLIGAN:** So, thank you. That brings us to the end of this public meeting into the Stone Ridge Quarry Project (SSD-10432). Thank you to everyone who's participated in this important process. Thank you to Terry Bailey, Richard Pearson and I, we've particularly appreciated your input.

35 Just a reminder that it's not too late to have your say on this application. Simply click onto the 'Make a submission' portal on our website, or you can send us a submission via email or via post. The deadline for written comments is 5 p.m. next Thursday, which is the 21st of November. In the interest of openness and transparency, we'll be making a full transcript of this public meeting available on our website in the next few days.

40 At the time of determination, the Commission will publish its Statement of Reasons for Decision which will outline how the panel took the community's view into consideration as part of its decision-making process.

45 Finally, a quick thank you to my fellow commissioners, Terry Bailey and Richard Pearson. And thank you for participating, thank you to the people who are watching. And from all of us here at the Commission, enjoy the rest of your day. Thank you and good afternoon.

**MR BAILEY:** Thank you, Janett.

**>THE MEETING CONCLUDED**