

Independent Planning Commission Determination Cabbage Tree Road Sand Quarry (SSD 6125)

9 May 2018

The Independent Planning Commission has granted consent to a State significant development application (SSD 6125) from Williamtown Sand Syndicate for the development and operation of a sand quarry at 398 Cabbage Tree Road, Williamtown, subject to conditions. The decision follows a public meeting in Williamtown on 12 March 2018.

In reaching its decision, the Commission has carefully considered the concerns raised by the community at the public meeting, information provided by relevant government agencies, and the NSW Department of Planning and Environment's assessment report.

The Commission acknowledges there is a great deal of concern within the local community about the potential impacts of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination emanating from the nearby Williamtown RAAF Base on human health. Ongoing uncertainty around the PFAS contamination and a lack of Commonwealth Government action to deal with the crisis continues to place significant stress on residents.

Locals expressed concern the proposed quarry on Cabbage Tree Road – which lies partly within the NSW Environment Protection Authority's Broader Management Zone for the Williamtown contamination – would increase their exposure to PFAS. The Commission, however, has found there is no evidence that PFAS is present in the extractive material on or the groundwater under the project site. The Commission, therefore, considers that an exposure pathway for PFAS as a result of the project is unlikely to exist, and PFAS-related impacts on human health from the project are unlikely to occur.

The Commission recognises the project will result in an increase heavy vehicle traffic on Cabbage Tree Road but does not believe this increase in volume will significantly impact on road safety and the level of service for Cabbage Tree Road. The Commission also recognises that while the road safety audit has identified areas which require action to improve road safety, these actions are the remit of other organisations, including the NSW Roads and Maritime Services and Port Stephens Council, to address.

The Commission recognises the project will have some impacts on protected biodiversity, including local koala populations; however, the Commission believes these impacts will be adequately compensated through appropriate biodiversity offsets, with on-site rehabilitation further reducing these impacts.

The Commission considers the project will be generally compliant with relevant criteria for noise and air quality. Where exceedances of these criteria are predicted to occur, any potential impacts and/or risks can be appropriately addressed through the framework of rigorous controls and requirements in place to manage, mitigate and minimise those impacts.

The Commission recognises the project will provide economic benefits to the local and wider region through the utilisation of an identified sand resource, the provision of employment, and additional royalties for the State and Port Stephens Council.