

Our ref: Deep Creek Quarry (SSD 11591659)

Prof Mary O’Kane
Chair
Independent Planning Commission
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21/11/2023

Subject: Deep Creek Quarry – Referral to the Independent Planning Commission

Dear Professor O’Kane

The Department has completed its assessment of the merits of the application for the Deep Creek Quarry (SDD 11591659; the Project). The application is referred to the Independent Planning Commission (the Commission) for determination as there were more than 50 unique public submissions objecting to the proposal.

Ironstone Developments Pty Ltd (Ironstone) proposes to develop a new State significant hard rock quarry to extract, process and transport up to 500,000 tonnes per annum of hard rock material over a 30 year period. The Project is located immediately to the west of The Bucketts Way, approximately 12 kilometres north of the Pacific Highway on the boundary of the localities of Limeburners Creek and Allworth, in the Mid Coast Local Government Area.

During the public exhibition of the Project, the Department received 59 public submissions, including 56 objecting submissions of which 53 were considered unique. The Department also received advice from 8 State government agencies and two local councils (MidCoast Council and Port Stephens Council).

The Department carried out a site visit and held a community information session at the Limeburners Creek Community Hall on 9 December 2021. The Department also undertook a second site visit, which included a visit to a local landowner’s residence, on 19 June 2023.

Due to the proposed clearing of remnant vegetation and road haulage of quarry products, and the Project’s location adjacent to the sensitive riparian environment of Deep Creek, the Department considers that the key assessment issues relate to biodiversity, traffic and water resources. Given it is an extractive industry proposal involving drilling, blasting and excavation of extractive material in a relatively undeveloped rural setting, potential noise impacts is also an important assessment issue.

The Department has carried out a detailed assessment of the merits of the Project, having regard to Ironstone's project documentation, advice from NSW government agencies and independent experts, and all public submissions. The Department has also considered the objects of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* (EP&A Act) and relevant considerations under Section 4.15(1) of the EP&A Act.

Based on this assessment, the Department considers that Ironstone has designed the Project in a way that would achieve a practicable balance between maximising resource recovery and minimising associated impacts on the surrounding landholders and the environment.

The Department has carefully weighed the environmental impacts of the Project against the significance of the identified hard rock resource and the wider socio economic benefits associated with operating the quarry for 30 years under a contemporary development consent. On balance, the Department considers that the benefits of the Project outweigh its residual costs, the site is suitable, and that the Project is in the public interest and is approvable, subject to the recommended conditions of consent.

I have attached a copy of the Department's assessment report and recommended conditions of consent for the Commission's consideration.

If you have any questions, please contact me on (02) 8275 1374 or via email at jessie.evans@dpie.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,



Jessie Evans
Director
Energy and Resource Assessments