

IPC Presentation

Eagleton Quarry.

31/5/2024

My name is Margarete Ritchie and I represent VOWW, an incorporated community organisation of the West Ward of Port Stephens.

I am not here just to be difficult for the proponent. That would be a waste of my time and yours.

All that residents want is a fair resolution to the problems as we see them. Problems for the existing residents and to the future residents in the locality. Residents who will see no financial gain or benefit as the proponent surely will. All residents can see is the change to the character and ambience of the area and possibly changes they will have to make to their lifestyles.

I can speak from past and present experience as I live about 4 km from Brandy Hill Quarry on Brandy Hill Drive which is the main haulage route from that quarry. I am also a member of the Hanson/Brandy Hill quarry CCC and therefore am well acquainted with the problems residents encounter on a daily basis and how the quarry management deals with them.

The main complaints brought to CCC meetings involve:

- noise from road haulage
- noise from crushers and other equipment
- dust
- light
- vibration from blasting
- broken windscreens from gravel deposited on roads.
- loss of habitat for resident koalas, phascogales and some bird species

The new consent for the expansion of the Hanson quarry has not yet been adopted and it will be interesting to see if any of these issues will be resolved.

The first issue I would like to bring to your attention is the lack of strategic planning for quarries in this area. There will potentially be 3 quarries within close proximity to each other. They will all be using Italia Road for access to the Pacific Highway.

There is no time today to discuss the issue of 'strategic planning for quarries' in this area. I will however say that several community groups have grave concerns about this issue and have collaborated to present a paper to State Government Ministers and are currently waiting for a reply. I will leave you a copy to add to this submission today.

All quarries are applying for different operating and despatching hours, have different interpretations of noise and dust abatement as well as their impact on the local environment and residents.

The DPE assesses these individually rather than applying the same conditions to each as a standard “best practice” policy.

At present the Boral owned Seaham quarry is at ‘response to submissions’ stage. This is the closest to the Eagleton quarry and shares a common boundary. This will almost act as a super quarry with dust and noise from the quarrying of over 2.5 million tonnes /annum. Yet, no cumulative impact is being applied. The same applies to the hours of operation and haulage. And the combined effect on the surrounding residents has not been considered noteworthy.

The IPC, in its conditions of consent for the Brandy Hill quarry applied conditions that were fair to most residents and did not impact on the overall operation and profitability of the quarry owner. Haulage 6am to 6pm. That means that company trucks will be loaded the evening before ready for despatch at 6am. This ensures that residents are not impacted by early loading or transport.

In addition to this, the IPC, in its determination for the expansion of BH quarry, stated that the operating hours and despatch hours must take into consideration the impact on wildlife that is active from dusk to dawn and that was also a part of the decision making. I have noticed the reduction in dead wallabies and koalas on Brandy Hill Drive since Hanson reduced the haulage hours.

We suggest that Eagleton should have similar load and despatch hours to protect the wildlife that will be impacted by the quarry operations.

Best practice for noise and dust suppression must be imposed. The surrounding residences are all reliant on rainwater tanks and therefore excessive dust settling on roofs can cause health problems. With the cluster of quarries that may be operational this could be exacerbated.

Research has shown that the rock being excavated is highly prized because of its hardness. However, this ignimbrite rock, while it may be excellent for road surfacing is silicic. From research we are told of the health implications of silicates and therefore the potential harm to residents, as well as workers on the site. Every part of the quarrying process creates dust. To this end the quarry operator, in executing his duty of care, must make all necessary efforts to eliminate this serious health potential and to protect all surrounding neighbours by way of information and actively striving to create a safe environment. A natural barrier only goes part way to solving this issue.

If quarrying is approved with housing in such close proximity, practices must be modernised and best practice applied.

To avoid harm from dust generally, and silica in particular, we submit that the proponent encloses all equipment – crushers etc, to avoid dispersion. And the added benefit is that it would also suppress noise .

It is essential that all possible measures are adopted before the quarry begins operations. Best practice should be the norm. therefore, in the instance of dust and noise suppression,

all equipment should be enclosed. BH quarry conditions of consent mandates that there must be a noise management plan “including the enclosure of fixed processing equipment and partial enclosure of the mobile crushers to ensure:

- Compliance with the noise criteria and operating conditions and
- Best practice management is being employed and
- ...must not commence stage 1 of the development until the noise management plan is approved by the Planning Secretary and the noise management measures are implemented.

There is a comparison between BH quarry and the proposed Eagleton quarry. Brandy Hill quarry is located below a significant hill and the quarry operations are therefore considerably shielded from residents of Brandy Hill and Giles Rd, Seaham. However, residents of Giles Rd have constant complaints about the noise and the dust and concerns about the noise and vibrations from blasting. We expect a reduction in complaints once the quarry has begun operations under the new consent. We will wait to see.

So, my point is that Eagleton assumes that natural barriers will work. The consultants have said that there should be no problems, but the BH Quarry example is clear. It may have a very minimal impact but not enough to stop complaints and concerns from residents in the locality.

It is simply also inappropriate for a quarry to be operational with minimal noise and dust mitigation and only reporting quarterly. By the time the data is analysed, the damage has been done. Complaints may be logged with the quarry and the EPA but what will be the outcome? What are the consequences for a quarry that shows negative results in this data? A fine? That is of no consequence to a quarry that will annually make millions of dollars in profit.

All quarries should be following best practice and should be mandated by the DPE. It would reduce all the problems listed above and avoid constant confrontation and complaints to the quarry itself and to government agencies.

No mention has been made in any reports of the potential increase in population between Eagleton and Raymond Terrace. However, PSC has assessed a development called Monarchs Rise which sits at the bottom of the ridge below Eagleton and along Six mile Rd. At present the DA is for 100 houses with planning for a further 600.

In addition to that a development of between 2,000 and 3,500 lots is being planned for the Kings Hill URA situated between Eagleton and Raymond Terrace. The first 2 DAs have been submitted to council for 2 precincts with over 150 homes.

Noise travels.

Dust travels.

Blasting causes vibration through rock strata with potential for impact on buildings.

Eagleton quarry will inevitably be part of a much larger community. As such it needs to show a duty of care and if it is granted an operational licence must use every possible mitigation measure.

In truth we question whether the quarry is actually appropriate this close to a proposed URA.

Haulage.

We know that most of the product is to be hauled to markets via the Pacific Highway. However, there will no doubt be deliveries that will be deemed 'local deliveries' and this is a concern. Without a definition of 'local' it could mean anywhere. For example, in an IPC presentation by Daracon for the transport of product from the Martins Creek quarry, the quarry manager, when asked what local meant, answered, "anywhere we have a contract". When questioned further he was not able to elaborate on that. The issue for BH residents was the potential cumulative effect of Daracon and Hanson quarries both using the Brandy Hill haulage route along Brandy Hill Dr and Seaham Rd. that could potentially mean 800 trucks/day at peak. Totally unacceptable for a rural road and through a residential area.

The condition of Italia Rd is certainly not suitable for major or even periodic haulage of truck and dog configuration. It does not comply with any Austroads conditions for heavy haulage. There are no verges, deep table drains, the road is narrow with numerous driveway entries and some on dangerous curves. Residents are aware of the dangers of turning into and out of their driveways and the real danger of a truck driver not reacting quickly enough to this scenario is on everyone's minds. While some sections have recently been improved it gives a false impression of the dangers that exist on this road. Wildlife is frequently seen on the nearby land and the potential for animal strikes is real.

Therefore, there should be strict rules about trucks using this substandard road for deliveries and there should be some way of monitoring the direction that trucks take when entering Italia Rd.

There are several other issues of great concern.

- The potential cumulative effect of 3 quarries in such close proximity to each other.
- The potential cumulative and combined effect of haulage from 3 quarries using the intersection onto the Pacific Highway.
- The combined effect of these quarry trucks with those from the Karuah and Deep Creek quarry cluster and from other quarries along the Bucketts Way.
- The danger and other effects on the highway traffic.
- The combined pollution from the diesel particulates and the impact on climate change.

In total, at peak, there could be over 5,000 truck movements/day that will combine with other vehicles on the highway. There will eventually be a tipping point for dangers on this section of highway just as there was with coal trucks using the New England highway from the Upper Hunter mines to the Port of Newcastle. There is the extra problem with all Italia Rd quarries needing to turn left and using the Tarean Rd intersection to come back south for

their major delivery destinations. That doubles the pollution as well as the truck numbers, at least from Italia Rd to Karuah and then back to Italia Rd before they continue on.

And, included but often ignored in the dangers of quarry trucks on the roads is the loss of gravel that spills onto the road and then is flung up into car windscreens. All quarries say that they have plans in place to stop this from happening. Then why is the gravel so prevalent on the edges of the roads leading onto the highway or out of the quarries? We have recently documented some of this for another quarry submission and were surprised at how far the spilt gravel is tracked. Broken windscreens can be a frightening experience when travelling at speed and the cost is of course borne by the vehicle owner.

If Eagleton does not have its own fleet of trucks, as do Boral and Hanson quarries, then they will be relying on subcontractors with trucks that may not be maintained. We know from experience that the subcontractor trucks that service contracts for Hanson at Brandy Hill do not always have trucks that are well maintained and the brakes that squeal and the engine braking used is an absolute imposition to residents along the haulage route. In the case of the trucks from the Eagleton quarry even drivers using compression braking on the highway as they approach the Italia Rd intersection from the south will impact residents. Hanson management have told us quite bluntly at CCC meetings that even with strict code of conduct requirements that every driver signs at the despatch gate, once a truck leaves the quarry they have no control over driver behaviour. And unless residents log number plate or other distinguishing feature, it is hard to identify the offenders. And this will be the case for the Eagleton quarry. NO AMOUNT OF CODE OF CONDUCT REGULATION WILL ALLEVIATE THE PROBLEM OF SUBCONTRACTORS. From personal experience, I can say that I have been unable to work outside in my garden at times because of the relentless noise of poor braking practice as trucks pass my house. And my place is 50m from the road. I am also impacted by the noise of engine braking from over a kilometre away.

Of course, if road surfaces are poorly maintained, the noise of the empty trucks rattling past is also a concern. And, truck noise carries for many kilometres. In the case of the cluster of quarries this problem will be compounded once the trucks enter Italia Rd. so, codes of conduct need to have consequences attached and adhered to. Not just lip-service.

I have had only limited time to read through some of the transcripts from the proponent and from PSC. However, if I could please have a few minutes to address some of the concerns raised.

Traffic and Intersection issues.

I am surprised that the proponent is in talks with TfNSW with regards to being able to turn right from Italia Rd onto the highway. The council, in its documentation from 2017 till May 2024, has been steadfast in its stance on this issue. I refer you to the stream of emails submitted by council to the IPC. But, I will remind you of the proponent's comment to commissioners...

"And the upgrade of the Italia Road and Pacific Highway intersection. Has been submitted and is under assessment by Council. So, one of the things I'll just flag it here that that the

Applicant is still talking to Transport for New South Wales about. It's not part of the current proposal. But is the possible temporary use of the existing intersection? In the short term, to allow trucks to turn right for - with a reduced frequency and capacity. If there's a need to or if the quarry needs to open before the intersection works are complete... (The proponent should be aware that the Hunter and Central Coast Planning Panel is the decision maker on this issue and not PSC.)

This point is raised time and time again.

- *So, it's when the amount of traffic on the highway sort of reduces the amount of spaces for trucks to cross the lanes to be able to turn right.*
- *Our application. Always was supported by evidence and traffic reports that said we don't need to do that intersection upgrade. That the right-hand turn movements was actually not at a level that that caused a major safety concerns at the highway*

And in all correspondence to DPE council insists:

- *a further condition (B33(e)) could be included requiring that the intersection upgrades proposed in DA 16-2023-477-1 **are completed and operational prior to the transport of quarry products** occurring.*
- *The applicant must ensure that GPS data tracking the transport routes for haulage trucks is collected to ensure compliance with the approved transport routes. The GPS data is to be made available to Council, TfNSW and the Planning Secretary on upon request.*

(This idea of crossing the highway would be dangerous for highway traffic and pose an unacceptable delay for other traffic waiting to exit Italia Rd including any Boral trucks correctly turning north. There is no turning lane on Italia Rd.) No mention is made of added traffic during school holidays or long weekends or poor visibility when there is rain or fog. This is a dangerous, selfish and disgraceful suggestion from the proponent. The safety of all road users on this highway needs to be at the forefront of everyone's mind, even that of the proponent.

Contributions

.....contributions along Barleigh Ranch Way, which as part of the proposal, the Applicant will be constructing Barleigh Ranch Way to Council standards. And we just seeking a dispensation on haulage contributions for a period of time, and we've suggested the first five years. Given the significant cost up front to construct that piece of local road infrastructure.

May I suggest that other quarries have to spend millions of dollars to make upgrades to road systems before they can begin production. For example the Holcim quarry in the Southern Highlands spent over \$45m to construct a full interchange with the Hume Highway as part of its conditions of consent. Here, to access their quarry the proponent needs to make an upgrade to a few kilometres of Barleigh Ranch Way but wants to offset the haulage levy for 5

years? That should not be allowed to happen. If they have no access they can't quarry! That should not be the responsibility of PSC and the ratepayers.

Comment referring to blasting.

..That that is the best time to do it. Typically, it's like I say, it's about wind direction, background noise, a whole bunch of things, but I don't see why it couldn't be done within that 4-hour window.

Has this been thoroughly thought through?

At a BH Quarry CCC meeting it was explained why it was difficult to pin down an actual blasting time. It was not up to the quarry to make the call but the blasting experts. Sometimes a blast will be abandoned at the last minute because of a change in conditions and sometimes brought forward or delayed. So, a 4 hour window might be unachievable on some days.

Comment on noise and dust issues in the last stages of the quarry.

(A question from the panel)...I just wanted to understand what you're looking at, two metres, three metres, a wall of some type of acoustic material. MR WARD: Yeah, yeah. MR WILLIAMS: We initially just thinking back when we spoke to the acoustic consultant about this, there was talk that we look at either a single row, if not a double row of shipping containers to give you a 2.4 or a 4.8 sort of barrier.

Perhaps filling the shipping containers with some kind of acoustic material? Other quarries build bund walls of considerable height as well as enclosing all equipment! There was talk...indicates that this has not been well thought through. Until there is a concrete answer to this the application should not be approved.

To conclude.

What I have mentioned today has not included the environmental issues and I hope some of the other speakers will respond to that as well as the other social issues such as loss of character and amenity for this rural community.

I hope I have been able to highlight community concerns. The issues of noise and dust have not been adequately addressed.

The proponent seems to want the cheapest resolution possible.

Does not seem to understand the processes involved with rock quarrying as opposed to sand quarrying which is mentioned at times.

Is not prepared to accept the dangers of the intersection of Italia Rd and the Pacific highway.

I ask you to please adhere to the highest standards possible to make the environment liveable for all.

If these standards cant be met then perhaps the quarry application should not be approved.

Thank you.