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Submission

to

Clarence Valley Council

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on

**Development Application MOD2015/0008
Proposed changes to consent conditions
for the approved quarry development at
Boundary Creek Road, Nymboida
(Original DA 2014/0024)**

**Compiled by John Edwards
Scientific Licence No. SL 100126
For the Clarence Environment Centre
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Submission to Clarence Valley Council on DA MOD2015/0008 (Proposed changes to consent conditions for the Boundary Creek quarry).

Introduction

The Clarence Environment Centre (CEC) has maintained a shop-front in Grafton for over 25 years, and has a proud history of environmental advocacy. The conservation of the Australia's natural environment, both terrestrial and marine, has always been a priority for our members, and we believe the maintenance of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity is of paramount importance.

Overview

We have already presented a number of submissions, and deputations on the above development, outlining what we believed to be serious environmental and social impacts that will result from this proposal.

In approving the development, the Northern Regional Planning Panel, and Clarence Valley Council saw fit to override those concerns. Now, within weeks of the conditional approval being granted, the proponent is seeking to modify those conditions by:

- 1) *Increasing the maximum extraction rate to 200,000 tonnes per annum upon commencement of the quarry.*
- 2) *Modifying the type of creek crossing at Copes Creek.*

Both these proposed changes further exacerbate two of the major threats identified in our various submissions.

1. *“The already dangerous Armidale Road will be rendered even more so by the additional heavy traffic. This substandard winding road, with not a single overtaking lane, stretches over 40km, passing through the villages of Nymboida and Coutts Crossing, both of which have schools fronting the road, as does South Grafton. Numerous school buses also use that road, with limited pull-over bays”, and:*
2. *“In a high rainfall region, there will be storm water run-off, carrying silt and various pollutants associated with heavy machinery and trucks into Copes Creek. **It should be noted that Copes Creek runs directly into the Nymboida Weir, less than 4km away, the take-off point of drinking water for over 100,000 people living between Iluka and Bonville”.***

Traffic and road conditions on Armidale Road

As previously identified, and contrary to apparent claims by the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS), the entire 40km stretch of the Armidale Road, along which the quarry material must be transported, is substandard and already dangerous for users. It is narrow and winding, patched and potholed, with crumbling shoulders and an uneven surface that is more suitable to a BMX cycle track. The extremely limited opportunities to safely overtake, and the fact that there is not a single overtaking lane, already presents a serious hazard for road-users, which will be increased significantly by the additional truck & dog trailer movements generated daily by the quarry.

As explained in this latest DA, the original proposal was for “a smaller extraction rate (20,000 tonnes annually) for the initial few years”, building to a maximum 200,000 tonnes annually. That equates to an initial modest addition of 10 heavy vehicle movements daily, at least allowing the public to get used to the increased hazard, and possibly to alert the RMS to the real need to upgrade Armidale Road accordingly, and to provide safe opportunities for overtaking.

To launch directly into full production, with 100 truck movements each day which, when allowing for restrictions during school bus operation periods, equates to one truck movement every 5 minutes, without upgrading the road, would be irresponsible at best.

The experience with quarry traffic along the Gwydir Highway has shown that even major highways can crumble under the sheer weight of these heavy vehicles. The volume of trucks generated by the Nymboida quarry will have a major impact on road surfaces all along the already dangerous Armidale Road from Nymboida to South Grafton.

We fully understand the proponent's desire to capitalise on the opportunity provided by the Pacific Highway construction. However, that work has yet to begin, and given the quarry material is needed for construction of the RMS's Pacific Highway, we believe **Council must act immediately to pressure the RMS to undertake the work necessary to make that road safe for the thousands of people that travel on it each and every day.**

Pollution of the region's drinking water supply

As already identified, Copes Creek, into which any pollution generated by the quarrying operations will find its way, runs directly into the Nymboida River, the source of drinking water for over 100,000 people living between Iluka and Bonville.

Despite no plans for effective mitigation of silt run-off beyond a holding pond or two which will overflow during wet weather, Council has opted to ignore this potential problem. Now we have a proposal, which is nothing more than a money-saving exercise for what is already a multi-million profit-making project, which will significantly add to that threat.

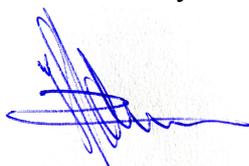
In proposing the changes, the proponent quotes Patrick Dwyer, Regional Assessment Officer, Aquaculture and Aquatic Environment, Primary Industries Fisheries, as claiming a causeway, described as a "splash crossing" would, if constructed properly, not impede fish passage. The proponent also claims to have received advice from "Council officers" that a splash crossing may be considered as an alternative to a culvert.

It is our hope that such "consideration" would also include the fact that the Copes Creek runs directly into the source of the region's drinking water only about 1.2 kilometres from the crossing. It is also to be hoped that the term "splash crossing" in itself would alert Council officers to threats posed by this virtual drive-through truck wash, not only removing and depositing mud and fuel pollutants into the creek that were picked up at the quarry site, but allowing oil and other leaking materials from the trucks' under parts to likewise washed off into our drinking water.

This proposed change to the original consent condition comes with no stated benefits whatsoever, other than the obvious money-saving achieved for what will prove to be a very profitable enterprise. Therefore we urge Council to ensure the proposed change is rejected.

We thank Council for the opportunity to comment.

Yours Sincerely



John Edwards
Honorary Secretary.