

April 5 2024

Hon. Penelope (Penny) Sharpe MP,

Minister for Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Heritage

Hon. Paul Scully MP,

Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

Sent via email; office@sharpe.minister.nsw.gov.au, office@scully.minister.nsw.gov.au

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Request: Lower Hunter Hard Rock Quarry Strategic and Conservation Plan

Dear Minister Sharpe and Minister Scully,

The undersigned community groups represent residents of the Port Stephens, MidCoast, Dungog and Maitland Local Government Areas.

We write to request the NSW Government take urgent measures to produce a strategic and conservation framework to better assess, mitigate and crucially, reduce the present and projected cumulative impacts of operating, approved and proposed hard rock quarries in our Lower Hunter region.

We are calling on relevant NSW Government Ministers and departments, our Local Members of Parliament and our Councils to cooperate to:

- Develop a *Lower Hunter Quarry Cumulative Impacts Mitigation Action Plan* to introduce standardized, scalable cumulative impact assessment and monitoring of social and environmental impacts including traffic, dust, noise, water discharges and vegetation loss with a view to reducing impacts on the community and environment.
- Quantify contemporary data on supply and demand for quarry products to guide ecologically sustainable, efficient and cost-effective provision of materials, and assess alternative sources of recycled housing and infrastructure materials, including gravel and aggregates from recycled coal-ash waste.

The attached Summary of Issues and Request: Lower Hunter Hard Rock Quarry Strategic & Conservation Planning, Feb 24, authored by EcoNetwork Port Stephens, Gloucester Environment Group and Hunter Community Environment Centre is endorsed to date by a further 12 local community groups/organizations.

We request the NSW Government produce a strategic and conservation plan in consultation with relevant authorities and community members to reduce the imminent, long-term and cumulative adverse impacts of the present ad-hoc and expanding hard rock quarry industry on our rural and rural residential communities and environment. The listed key matters of concern in our Issues Paper are relevant to a number of portfolio areas within the NSW Government.

We are of the view that poor outcomes for the community and environment are inevitable under the current NSW planning regime as each quarry development application is assessed

individually, outside of a strategic framework. This situation undermines broader, regional

strategic goals such as those set out in the Hunter Regional Plan 2041 – with the consequence of quarry development approved in areas of regional high biodiversity, rural amenity and inadequate road infrastructure. This situation presents substantial threats to our regional environment, future economy, and way of life.

Further, the review of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 final report tabled by Minister Sharpe on 24 August 2023, found that the Act is failing to meet its objectives

Indeed if implemented comprehensively, the strong recommendations in the report to adopt a “nature positive” strategic approach to biodiversity protection and development, would likely address many of the immediate and long-term impacts on biodiversity from the expansion of the quarrying sector occurring now under deficient planning and assessment processes and biodiversity protection laws.

Sound regulation and planning should see that the rural character, health, biodiversity, economy and productivity of our region are maintained and enhanced for today’s well-being, and the benefit of future generations. New industry should complement and further these goals.

We look forward to your prompt response and would welcome the opportunity to discuss a way forward with you.

In the meantime, we have commenced preparations for a public meeting to be held in Port Stephens to bring together community members and decision makers over the matters presented in our Issues Paper, and will be in touch with further details.

Sincerely on behalf of the undersigned,

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Alison Rogers, PhD.
Secretary - EcoNetwork Port Stephens
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Koala Koalition EcoNetwork
Port Stephens (KKEP)



VOWW (Voices of Wallalong and Woodville)



National Parks Association
NSW – Hunter Branch



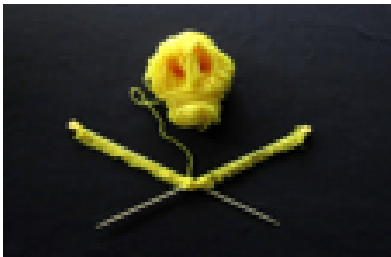
Hunter Bird Observers Club (HBOC)



Renew Hunter Region Branch



Sydney Basin Koala Network



Gloucester Knitting Nannas
MidCoast Knitting Nannas



Knitting Nannas Hunter Loop



Hunter Environment Lobby

Save Balickera Incorporated (SBI)

Ironstone Community Action Group

Eagleton Quarry Action Group