14th June, 2019

Councillor \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Dear Councillor,

Re : Proposed Quarry in Bunyip North

I am writing to you regarding a proposal to create a large granite quarry on a greenfield site in Bunyip North.

The proponent of this new quarry is Hanson Materials, a subsidiary of the German-based Heidelberg Cement Group. Hanson acquired the original grazing property in 2006 with a view to using it for their new quarry. In addition they purchased the adjoining property that was a world class equestrian facility and more recently an adjacent cattle property. The total land now owned and planned to be used in the operation of their proposed super-sized quarry is 800 acres, a footprint larger than Melbourne’s CBD.

The surrounding area in which these acquired properties are located totally relies on natural water supply for its existence. The construction of a quarry on this huge site includes the removal of the natural undulating land, the blasting and drilling down up to 140 metres through the granite with a view to achieve the extraction of over 2 million tonnes of mineral each year for 100+ years.

In the early stages of use the removal of the hills will prevent vital surface water reaching the many creeks and dams in the area, water that is vital to the lives of the many native animals and birds in the area, and depriving the orchards, vineyards and cattle properties of water for their enterprises.

In later stages of the proposed quarry the excavation and blasting will reach below ground level and excavate up to 140 metres below this level. This activity will totally destroy all existing groundwater, stopping springs from running, terminating flows into watercourses and to the nearby rivers, eliminating the water sources in the area.

Furthermore the proponent plans to sink many bores and in doing so will deplete the artesian basin which is necessary to recharge the whole State’s water systems.

The rivers cannot survive this loss of water flow and the wildlife that use this area to live in and to traverse through to adjoining areas will equally be unable to survive.

The area is largely agricultural with orchards, vineyards and cattle farming making up most of the primary production activity – without water there will be no agriculture in the area and this will be a key loss for all concerned and the state as a whole.

I am not against quarrying for granite – indeed I use the products that are produced in these quarries. My opposition is that this proposal is to locate a huge new quarry in the middle of 200 residents and it is certain to damage our water supply, our agriculture, the environment and the amenity of the area. These losses are significantly out of proportion to the benefits to be gained from having the quarry here.

The proponent has admitted that fewer than 8 new jobs will be created by this quarry and unfortunately since 2006 there have been so many more jobs lost than this due to the closure of the Equestrian Centre, the reduction in visitors for tourism and other interests- and this is before the proposed quarry actually starts and 500+ trucks are introduced to local roads and to the already busy Highway to Melbourne.

In November 2015 the State Planning Minister recognised that this large quarry proposal had

‘potential for significant environmental effects, in particular biodiversity, hydrology, groundwater and Aboriginal Cultural Heritage values’

and ordered an Environmental Effects Statement (EES)to be undertaken.

The EES should conclude at the end of this year or early next year after Hanson and their consultants have worked on it for many years and although the proponent has in the past promised to provide expert reports progressively to the community for consideration they continually fail to do so.

What is expected is for the community to conduct a review of the many documents that will be produced and to provide comments and feedback in just 20 days after publication. This is ridiculous and patently unfair and can only result in a insufficient review of the EES and potentially the inability to point out the Planning Minister the shortcomings of the study. The community has asked DELWP for an extension of time for community review and input but at this stage no decision to assist the community has been made.

To add to the difficulties of this proposal for the Bunyip North area, we have had the horrific experience of the March Bushfires. The community has lost over 30 homes and 100 outbuildings, plus fencing and infrastructure, and residents are in deep shock and under immense pressure addressing all that needs to be done to recover from the devastation. We don’t need the threat of a new super-sized quarry in our backyards to distract us from this necessary recovery work which is likely to take 5 years or more.

So Councillor, I urge you to bring an end to this devastating quarry proposal. The community wishes you to be aware of the overwhelming downside of the proposal and for you to actively participate in the protection of this pristine environment and its natural attractions and beauty.

Furthermore, the area of Gippsland and its surrounds are part of the Strategic Food and Fibre supply chain for Melbourne and by introducing this type of industry in an agricultural area would certainly eliminate the plans for clean and fresh food supply to Melbourne from a nearby location. It would seem to me that having your food sources nearby and your industrial commodities further out is a better approach to guaranteeing our food supply and sustaining our State’s agriculture.

I look forward to your assistance in obtaining these outcomes.

Yours Sincerely,