

Hon Simon O'Brien
Committee Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
Perth, WA 6000

16th December 2013

Dear Mr O'Brien,

Petition No 20 - Opposing Proposed Sand Mines in Wellard / Oldbury

Thank you for the opportunity to present a submission in regard to the above mentioned petition. I am concerned that these proposals will have a significant detrimental impact on the environment and may not be properly considered by government.

Executive Summary

Two sand mines proposed to be developed in a rural lifestyle residential area of Wellard/Oldbury should not be allowed, as they will:

1. Destroy the habitat of threatened and endangered bird species;
2. Destroy remnant banksia vegetation that is largely in 'very good condition' and is nominated as a 'threatened ecological community'; and
3. be an inappropriate development for the area, and is likely to have a significant impact on the quality of life of those residing nearby (due to increased traffic, noise and dust).

Background

Two mines are proposed on opposite sides of Banksia Road, Wellard. The first is on Crown Land within the City of Kwinana on mining lease 70/915, granted by Hon. Normal Moore MLC in November 2012. We understand that no formal mining proposal has been submitted the Department of Mines and Petroleum (**DMP**) at this stage. The second is on private land within the Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale, it currently has been referred to SAT with regard to planning approval. A request for a clearing permit was submitted in 2012 and is currently being reviewed by the Department of Environmental Regulation (DER), a previous clearing permit request was rejected and rejected again on appeal to the Minister for Environment in 2010. The total area of the two proposed mines is more than 60ha, and occupied residential lots surround both

Native Bushland Clearing

Development of the proposed mine sites will result in the clearing of more than 30ha of banksia woodlands, the majority of which is considered to be in 'very good condition'. Banksia woodlands on the Swan Coastal Plain have been nominated by the Urban Bushland Council WA as a 'Threatened Ecological Community' (**TEC**) to the Federal government under the EPBC Act, and is currently under consideration. The State Government is also undertaking a 'Strategic Assessment of the Perth and Peel Regions', which will set direction for conservation in the area. The 'precautionary principle' would suggest that clearing of banksia woodlands should be delayed until these considerations are completed.

Cumulative impact of Clearing

Since the clearing permit was refused for the second proposed mine in 2010, over 60ha of native bushland within 5kms of these sites have been approved for clearing, either for sand mining or for

subdivision. This has caused a significant impact on both flora and fauna in the area, damaging ecological linkages and feeding habitat for many bird species, including Carnaby's Cockatoo.

In the Ministers' determination to uphold the appeal for the clearing, it was noted that the site had been "identified as part of a regional ecological linkage" and a "landform and landscape protection area". The importance of this area has since only increased.

Impact on fauna

A recent preliminary fauna survey conducted for the City of Kwinana site indicates more than 90 animal species on the first proposed mine site. Identified species includes significant, threatened and endangered species, as well as species protected under the Federal EPBC Act. A previous fauna survey of the Serpentine-Jarrahdale site, documented 23 bird species on that site (2008). Both surveys had identified the presence of Carnaby's black cockatoo, the Quenda, and the Rainbow Bee-eater, known to nest in the area. These sites provide a significant refuge for native fauna in an increasingly suburban area.

Wetlands and Acid Sulphate Soils

There are a number of wetlands within a 5km radius of the proposed mine sites. The Second site is within 60m of a 'Resource enhancement' wetland. The nearest wetland has a moderate to high risk of Acid Sulphate Soils. The impact of clearing, mining and changes to the water table could result in contamination due Acid Sulphate soils.

Basic Raw Materials

Neither of the sites are listed as significant Basic Raw Materials under the State Planning Policy 2.4-Basic Raw Materials, and it is unlikely they will be due to environmental and development issues.

Dust and Water usage

The sand mining process will utilise 'dry screening', likely to cause dust pollution that will impact fragile vegetation, household water supplies (all homes in the area use rainwater) and be likely to impact residents health. To control the dust, groundwater would be utilised, however the Department of Water advises no further water allocation is available, which would inhibit dust control. The proposed mines sit on a high ridge, catching prevailing easterly winds in the summer months with most homes on the west of the site and likely to be impacted by dust.

Impact on residents

There are more than 60 homes within 500 metres of the sites, with homes immediately adjoining each site. In addition, a subdivision for a further 1500 homes has commenced 3 km from the sites. The properties surrounding the sites are all 5 acre residential lifestyle special rural lots. Property owners are not allowed to clear native bushland and must only plant native plants outside their building envelopes. The proposed industrial activity of the mines, replacing pristine native bushlands is inconsistent with the rural lifestyle residents have chosen by living in this area.

With thanks, S. Sturgeon.

Note: This complaint has not been taken to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman)