

# Section 1

## Introduction

*This section provides a brief introduction to the Environmental Assessment, introduces the Proponent and provides a brief history of the Quarry and the approvals and licences currently held to operate the Quarry. This section also identifies the personnel and companies involved in the compilation of this document.*

### 1.1 SCOPE

This document has been prepared to support an application (see **Appendix 1**) by Pacific Blue Metal Pty Ltd (“the Proponent” or “PBM”) for the ongoing operation of the Possum Brush Quarry (“the Quarry”) and to modify Development Consent DA 283/97 (Modification 3) (reproduced in **Appendix 3**) for the Quarry. The ongoing operation of the Quarry and the proposed consent modification are referred to as “the Proposal” throughout this document. The Quarry is located approximately 2km west of the Pacific Highway at Possum Brush, 4km northwest of Failford and 5km northeast of Nabiac (see **Figure 1.1**).

PBM’s application relates to:

- i) formally presenting the activities for the ongoing operation of the quarry throughout the next 30 years, i.e. Stage 2 of the Quarry; and
- ii) PBM’s proposed increase in the production levels at the Quarry throughout Stage 2 of the Quarry life.

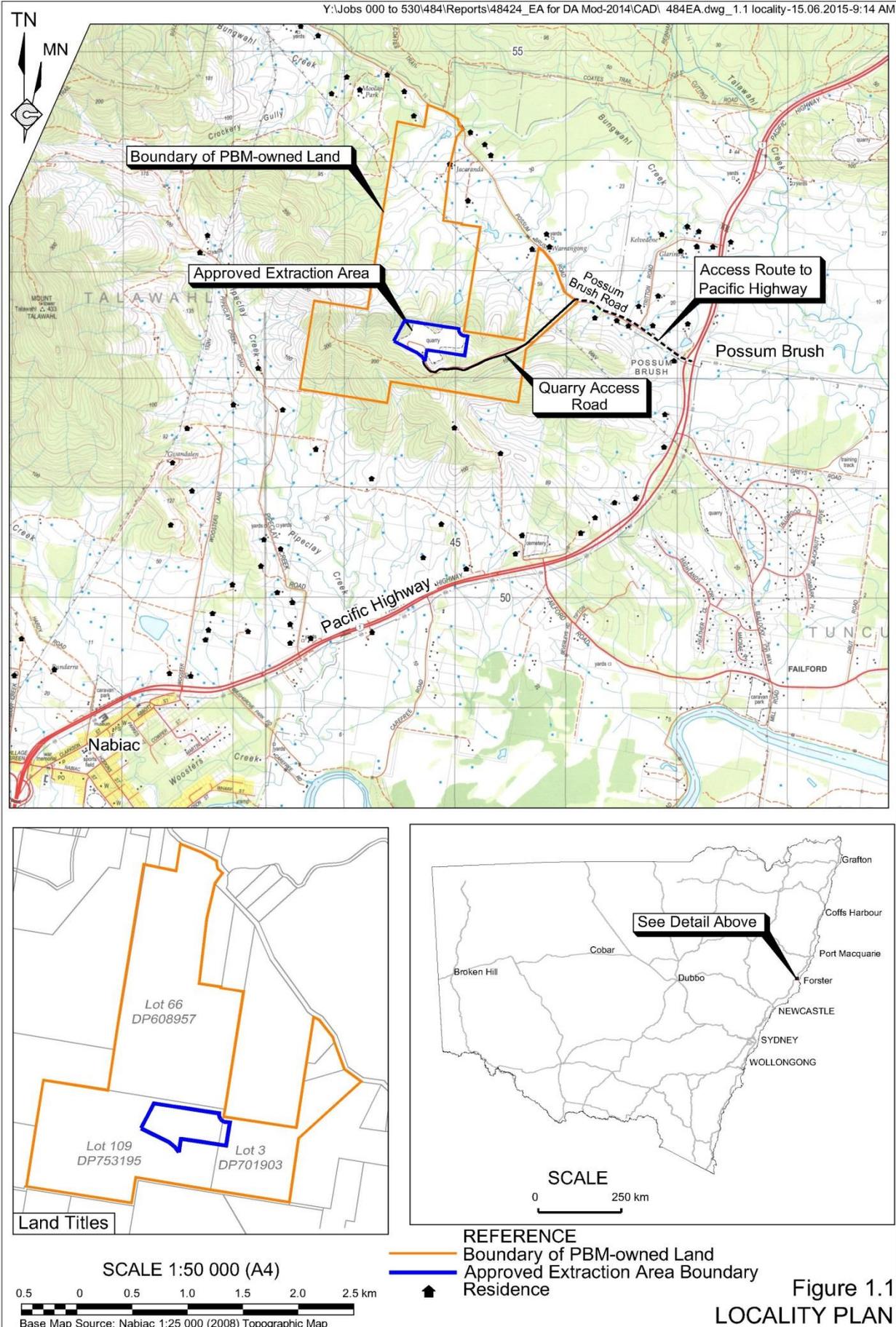
This document presents relevant background information about the existing Quarry, a review of the Quarry’s environmental performance, together with the ongoing activities and details of the proposed increase in the production levels and their likely impacts. The level of information presented in this document is considered appropriate for the likely scale of impacts that would arise from the ongoing activities and increase in production over the next 30 years, particularly given PBM’s performance over the past 20 years. For the purposes of this document, the assessment of impacts covers the ongoing quarrying operations and the cumulative impacts with the other approved activities on site.

### 1.2 DOCUMENT FORMAT

This *Environmental Assessment* has been compiled in a single volume which includes six sections of text and a set of appendices, as follows.

**Section 1:** introduces PBM and provides relevant background information for the proposed ongoing activities and consent modification.

**Section 2:** describes the status of the existing quarry and reviews its environmental performance since 1998.



**Section 3:** describes the Proponent’s objectives and the ongoing activities and increased production levels in sufficient detail to enable their assessment of environmental impact.

**Section 4:** provides a description of the local setting, stakeholder consultation and a review of relevant planning instruments.

**Section 5:** describes the predicted impacts associated with the ongoing activities and increased production levels.

**Section 6:** evaluates the quarry’s ongoing operations in terms of Ecologically Sustainable Development and biophysical, economic and social considerations. A conclusion presenting the justification for the Proposal is also presented.

**References:** list the various source documents referred to for information and data used during the preparation of the *Environmental Assessment*.

**Appendices:** presents the following additional information.

- **Appendix 1** Section 75W Application
- **Appendix 2** Correspondence from the Department of Planning and Environment and Government Agencies
- **Appendix 3** Current Development Consents
- **Appendix 4** Traffic Assessment
- **Appendix 5** Air Quality Assessment
- **Appendix 6** Noise Assessment

## 1.3 THE PROPONENT

Pacific Blue Metal Pty Ltd (PBM) is the trustee for the Possum Brush Quarry Unit Trust. The Proponent has been operating in the Possum Brush, Nabiac and Failford areas since the 1980s to provide local and regional construction projects with a range of quality quarry products, including crushed aggregates, road pavement materials, asphalt, concrete and specific fill materials from the Possum Brush Quarry and nearby Failford Quarry.

The Proponent has produced in excess of 3.8 million tonnes of products from the greywacke resource within the Possum Brush Quarry since 1998 with the products well recognised for their high quality when used for the Pacific Highway upgrades and other State and local roads between Raymond Terrace and Coffs Harbour.

## 1.4 BACKGROUND TO THE POSSUM BRUSH QUARRY

### 1.4.1 Introduction

This subsection provides an overview of the existing consents, approvals and licences held by PBM. Operations commenced at the Quarry in 1987 together with a summary of approved and completed activities, the environmental performance of the Quarry to date.

### 1.4.2 Existing Consents, Approvals and Licences

The Quarry first received approval following the grant of development consent by the then Greater Taree City Council in May 1986, to permit the establishment of a hard rock quarry and crushing plant. Objectors to the proposed quarry appealed to the NSW Land and Environment Court in June 1986, with a new DA (431-86) lodged with Council, modifying the area of extraction within the original proposal to extract from Area A only.

Council subsequently granted development consent for the new application but the determination was again appealed to the Court in April 1987. Following extensive consideration, the Court granted development consent subject to numerous conditions, including the limitation of extraction to Area A.

In 1997, PBM submitted an application for development consent accompanied by an EIS prepared by ERM Mitchell McCotter (ERM, 1997) to extract rock from Area B, an application which was approved by the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning on 25 May 1998 following a Commission of Inquiry resulting in Development Consent DA 283/97. This consent has been modified on three occasions since 1998, namely:

- i) on 4 February 2003, in response to an application to modify conditions relating to the width of the sealed section of Possum Brush Road and rehabilitation of Possum Brush Road between the Pacific Highway and the Quarry entrance;
- ii) on 5 December 2006, in response to an application to modify the conditional requirements relating to road maintenance contributions for Possum Brush Road; and
- iii) on 12 December 2012, in response to an application to extend the approved extraction area by 1 120m<sup>2</sup>, to enable the recovery of weathered rock and to improve internal access and safety around the on-site weighbridge, workshops and processing area.

When Development Consent DA 283/87 was originally granted, it provided for a two-staged approval with the first stage approved for 21 years (until 2019) and the second stage approved for a further 29 years (until 2048), thereby allowing extraction to proceed for a total period of 50 years. This period was considered appropriate given the quantity of resource within the approved extraction area and the Quarry's proximity to the many kilometres of the Pacific Highway that were to be upgraded between Raymond Terrace and Coffs Harbour.

PBM also operates an on-site asphalt plant within the Possum Brush Quarry, approved separately to quarrying activities by Greater Taree City Council on 25 July 2005. A copy of the Development Consent DA 1127/2005 is reproduced in **Appendix 2**. This development consent was modified on 18 November 2010 to allow night-time operations of the asphalt plant principally to meet the requirements of local infrastructure projects which can only be undertaken at night.

Further to this, PBM received Development Consent DA 769/2009 from Greater Taree City Council on 16 July 2014 for its proposal to import, process and recycle up to 10 000 tonnes of concrete, brick, tile, asphalt and soil. PBM proposes to process and blend these materials, often with the rock products produced on site.

The Possum Brush Quarry is also operated in accordance with Environment Protection Licence (EPL) 3393 which covers both the extraction and processing activities and asphalt production. This licence is renewed annually with the anniversary date being 17 August.

### **1.4.3 Approved Activities**

The activities approved at the Quarry include the extraction, processing and transportation of quarry products to be undertaken in accordance with the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that accompanied the application for development consent (resulting in Development Consent DA 283/97). The EIS referenced in the Development Consent DA 283/97 was compiled by ERM Mitchell McCotter (ERM) and is referred throughout this document as “ERM (1997)”. The blending of recycled material in accordance with Development Consent DA 769/2009 and the production of asphalt in accordance with Development Consent DA 1127/2005 would remain unchanged with no modifications proposed as part of this application. However, for the purposes of this document, the cumulative impacts of the ongoing quarrying operations and these activities are addressed in this document.

**Figure 1.2** displays the locations of the approved activities, including:

1. two extraction areas (Areas A and B) covering a total of 14.7ha;
2. a processing area and associated stockpile areas covering 2.0ha;
3. an asphalt plant covering 1.2ha; and
4. the administration office and amenities located adjacent to the approved extraction area and immediately south of the Quarry Access Road.

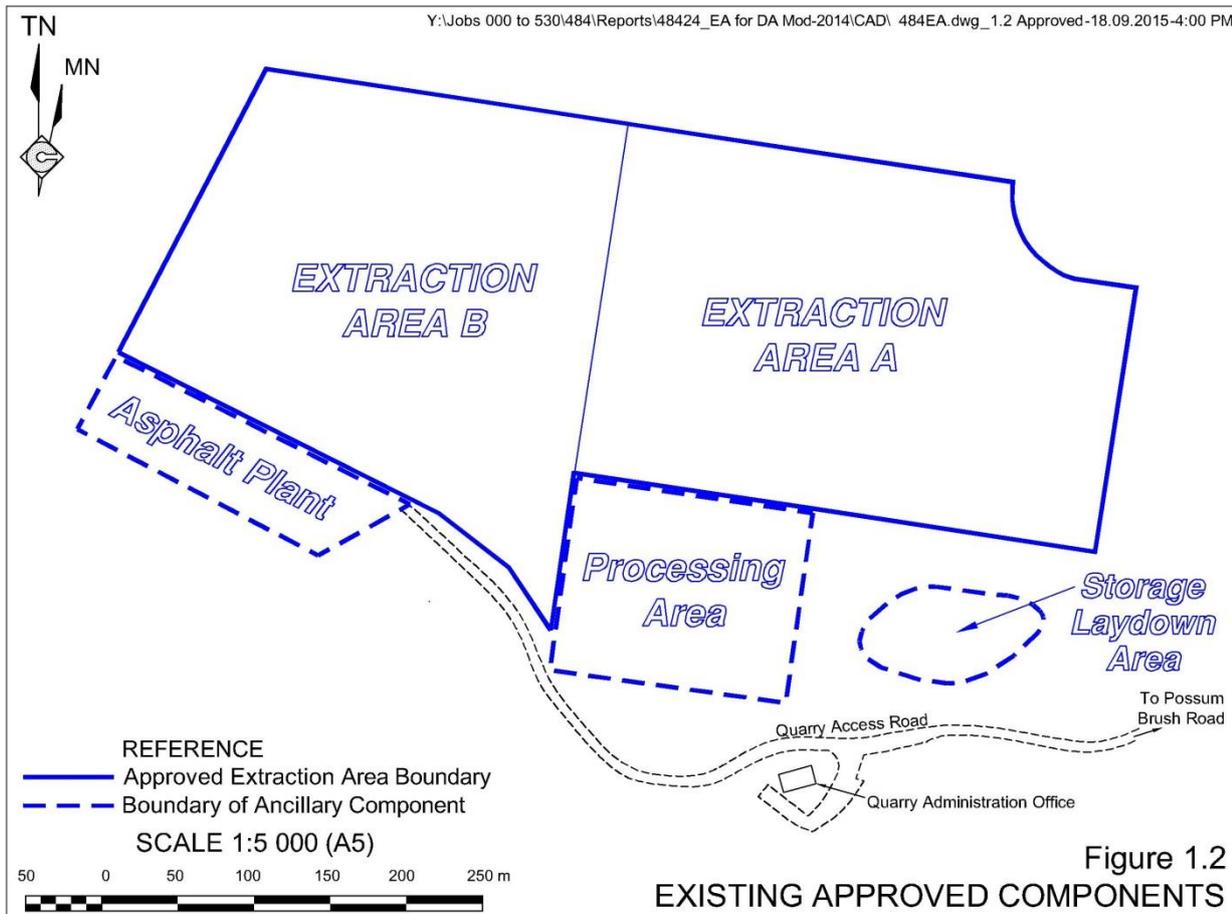
The approved areas of quarry-related disturbance with PBM’s property are collectively referred to as the Quarry Site.

### **1.4.4 The Need for a Modification**

With the average annual production level increasing beyond the approved average for Stage 1, PBM decided it would be appropriate to apply for a modification of Development Consent DA 283/87 that would allow for an increase in the average production level and to provide the Secretary of the Department of Planning and Environment with the information requested in *Condition 4* to allow the second stage to commence, i.e. with higher production levels.

After discussions were held with the Department of Planning and Environment in late 2014, it was decided to formally lodge an application under Section 75W of the EP&A Act to:

- i) formally present and assess the activities for the ongoing operational life of the Quarry for a period of 30 years – essentially Stage 2 of the Quarry, as originally envisaged in *Condition 4* of Development Consent DA 283/97; and
- ii) increase the average production level at the Quarry from 200 000tpa to 370 000tpa.



This document has been prepared to accompany the Section 75W Application to the Department of Planning and Environment. It is noted that the 30 year term for Stage 2 is the maximum term for extractive industry projects issued by the Minister for Planning and Environment. Should an approval be issued in 2015, this would result in the expiry of the Development Consent in 2045, i.e. 3 years sooner than that originally provided for in Development Consent DA 283/87. It is also noted that the resources within Extraction Stages A and B are sufficient to support the production at an average of 370 000tpa for the 30 year period, i.e. without enlarging or deepening the approved extraction area.

## 1.5 MANAGEMENT OF INVESTIGATIONS

This document has been prepared by Mr Rob Corkery, (M.Appl.Sc., B.Sc (Hons)), Principal of R.W. Corkery and Co. Pty Limited. Mr Corkery has assisted PBM in the preparation of the range of environmental documentation for the Possum Brush Quarry since 1998.

The input of three specialist consultancy firms was sought for matters relating to noise, air quality and traffic, namely:

- Constructive Solutions Pty Ltd (Traffic Assessment)
  - Mr Ben Rossiter (BEng (Env.) Hons. CI II).

- Ramboll-Environ (Air Quality Assessment)
  - Mr Scott Fishwick (BSc Atmospheric Science); and
- Spectrum Acoustics Pty Ltd (Noise Assessment)
  - Mr Ross Hodge (B.Sc. Geology (Hons));

Input to the EA has also been provided by PBM's Quarry Manager, Mr Charlie Kennett. Mr Kennett has managed the Possum Brush Quarry since 1991.

The design of the extraction area layout and stages has been undertaken in conjunction with Runge Pincock Minarco, specialist mine planners.

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