

Section 6

Evaluation and Justification of the Proposal

6.1 ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

6.1.1 Introduction

Throughout the design of the Proposal, PBM has endeavoured to address each of the sustainable development principles. The following subsections draw together the features of the Proposal that reflect the four principles of sustainable development, namely:

- the precautionary principle;
- the principle of social equity;
- the principle of the conservation of biodiversity and ecological integrity; and
- the principle for the improved valuation and pricing on environmental resources.

6.1.2 The Precautionary Principle

The Precautionary Principle identifies that if there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.

In preparing the Proposal, the Proponent engaged the specialist consultant team identified in Section 1.5 to provide advice and to assess the three key aspects of the Proposal. Each of these specialists are experts in their field and provided PBM with detailed and specific advice and recommendations which have been adopted.

These specialists have also undertaken an assessment of the Proposal and determined, based on their experience and expertise, that the Proposal would not significantly impact on the particular aspect of the environment the subject of their assessment.

This approach demonstrates that throughout the design of Stage 2, the Proponent and its consultants have, by undertaking an appropriate level of research, monitoring and evaluation of the Stage 1 operations, adopted an anticipatory approach to potential impacts. The proposed controls, safeguards and/or mitigation measures have therefore been planned with a comprehensive knowledge of the surrounding environment and the potential risk of environmental harm degradation posed by the Proposal.

6.1.3 Social Equity

Social equity embraces value concepts of justice and fairness so that the basic needs of all sectors of society are met and there is a fair distribution of costs and benefits to the community. Social equity includes both inter-generational (between generations) and intra-generational (within generations) equity considerations.

If approved, the Proposal would ensure intra-generational equity through:

- its commitment to provide ongoing employment and training opportunities for members of the community, without adversely affecting the ability of other employers in the community to maintain suitably qualified staff;
- support for the community through ongoing economic activity and infrastructure improvements (e.g. use of local haulage operators, purchase of locally produced goods and services and the continued contribution to the upgrade and maintenance of roads used by Quarry-related traffic); and
- informal support for the community through continuation of the Proponent's local-first purchasing policy and support to community organisations, groups and events.

If approved, the Proposal would ensure inter-generational equity through:

- the provision of high quality products which in turn enable the current generation to provide quality infrastructure for future generations.
- the establishment of a final landform that would be safe, stable, non-polluting, self-sustaining and provide a valuable resource for surrounding land uses, being principally the availability of water for a combination of agriculture and conservation of biodiversity; and
- ongoing weed management and habitat conservation works on surrounding Company-owned land.

The Proposal would ensure that the Quarry is as robust as possible, and that resources would continue to be available to ensure that these benefits would continue.

6.1.4 Conservation of Biological Diversity and Ecological Integrity

The protection of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological processes and systems are central goals of sustainability. It is important that developments do not threaten the integrity of the ecological system as a whole or the conservation of threatened species in the short- or long-term.

The key components of PBM's commitment to this principle centre on the wildlife corridor and 50m buffer adjacent to the extraction area. PBM has spent considerable funds over the past 17 years through numerous weed reduction and removal campaigns, improved fencing and replanting programs. The success of PBM's efforts are already evident as discussed in Section 5.9.

6.1.5 Improved Valuation and Pricing of Environmental Resources

The issues that form the basis of this principle relate to:

- the acceptance that all resources are appropriately valued;
- cost-effective environmental stewardship is adopted; and
- the adoption of user pays prices based upon the full life cycle of the costs.

In line with these objectives, PBM's principal objective of the Proposal is the ongoing operations of the Quarry to be undertaken in a manner that minimises impacts on the environment and surrounding residents, as well as ongoing commitment to the implementation of the environmental safeguards and mitigation measures to prevent irreversible damage to environmental resources.

In doing so, PBM has and would continue to invest considerable resources in the management and mitigation of environmental risks. In addition, PBM contends that the Proposal, if approved, would ensure that the Quarry is sufficiently robust to enable sufficient resources are available to undertake all environmental-related tasks and meet any commitments made to the local communities.

6.1.6 Conclusion

The approach taken in planning for this Proposal has been multi-disciplinary and involved consultation with the community, a range of Specialist Consultants and various government agencies. Emphasis has been placed on the ongoing implementation of appropriate safeguards and mitigation measures to minimise any additional and potential environmental, social and economic impacts that may occur as a result of the Proposal. The design of the Proposal has addressed each of the sustainable development principles and, on balance, it is concluded that the Proposal achieves a sustainable outcome for the local and wider environment.

6.2 JUSTIFICATION OF THE MODIFICATION

6.2.1 Introduction

In assessing whether the Proposal is justified, consideration has been given both to the predicted residual impacts on the local and wider environment and the potential benefits the Proposal, if approved, would have for PBM, surrounding landowners and residents within, the local community, the Greater Taree LGA and to a lesser extent, NSW and Australia. Further justification arises from the ongoing implementation of the controls, safeguards and mitigation measures for impact minimisation proposed by PBM and the incorporation of the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development.

This subsection discusses the above in terms of biophysical and socio-economic considerations. It also discusses the consequences of the Proposal not proceeding.

6.2.2 Biophysical Considerations

The following presents an overview of the range of residual impacts on the biophysical environment should Stage 2 proceed in the manner proposed.

- Traffic
- Air Quality
- Noise and Blasting
- Surface Water
- Visibility

The impacts of the ongoing Quarry-related traffic have been assessed as acceptable, i.e. for the current configuration of the Pacific Highway and its intersection with Possum Burhs Road. PBM's ongoing payment for road maintenance and commitment to a range of safeguards and controls would result in its Quarry-products delivered safely with minimal impacts upon other motorists. Beyond about 2020, when the section of the Pacific Highway near Possum Brush is reconstructed, interaction with other motorists will be further reduced.

The impacts of the Proposal on air quality within the area surrounding the Quarry would continue to be minimal. Detailed modelling of air quality at the maximum production levels and worst case scenarios has established that predicted concentrations of PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} and dust deposition rates would continue to be well within the EPA's air quality assessment criteria.

The Quarry is now sufficiently developed that extraction and processing operations are generally undertaken in areas with sufficient topographic protection for the Quarry to comply with the EPA's noise and blasting criteria i.e. in conjunction with the adoption of a range of noise and blasting controls. Activities within the Quarry and trucks travelling to and from the Quarry would continue to be periodically audible albeit, at a level within the EPA's criteria.

Surface water is managed within the Quarry through a series of sediment control dams and a sump within Extraction Area A. The surface water collected is sufficient to meet the on-site requirements for dust suppression and processing.

The ongoing operation of the Quarry would not involve any further clearing of vegetation within the extraction area, hence there would be no further impacts for matters relating to Aboriginal and historic heritage, soils and ecology. PBM would however, continue to manage the 15ha wildlife corridor and 50m buffer to improve habitat value and connectivity of adjoining remnant vegetation.

The Proposal would therefore provide for the extraction and processing of the identified resources, while not imposing any significant adverse environmental impacts upon local residents or surrounding environment.

6.2.3 Socio-Economic Considerations

PBM would continue to endeavour to operate the Quarry and manage all potentially adverse impacts such that amenity of the adjoining landowners and local community would remain acceptable.

The Proposal, if approved, would continue to provide a range of economic benefits to the local and wider communities, including the following.

- Continued employment of approximately 32 full-time equivalent positions until 2045.
- Annual expenditure of in excess of \$12 million for wages, contractors, goods and services, rates and contributions.
- Employees would continue to preferentially sourced locally.
- Ongoing provision of pavement materials to local and regionally significant projects, ensuring the flow-on benefits would be maintained within the local area.

6.2.4 Consequences of Not Proceeding with the Proposed Modification

The consequences of the second stage of Possum Brush Quarry not proceeding would be substantial for the local and wider community principally for the following reasons.

- i) Employment for up to 49 persons would not occur.
- ii) PBM’s annual expenditures on a wide range of goods and services would not occur.
- iii) The opportunity for local and regional construction projects to be supplied with premium high quality products would be foregone.
- iv) The adverse impacts, albeit within the EPA’s criteria or reasonable community expectations would not eventuate.

6.2.5 Objects of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

Modification to DA 283/97 is being sought under Section 75W of the EP&A Act and therefore needs to satisfy the objects of the EP&A Act. **Table 6.1** identifies the objects of the EP&A Act and confirms that each has been satisfied by the proposed Stage 2 operations and this *Environmental Assessment*.

**Table 6.1
Objects of the EP&A Act**

Object	EIS Coverage
a) to encourage: (i) the proper management, development and conservation of natural and artificial resources, including agricultural land, natural areas, forests, minerals, water, cities, towns and villages for the purpose of promoting the social and economic welfare of the community and a better environment,	Section 4.2 confirms that the land on which the Quarry is located has limitations for agricultural land uses and the Proposal would have negligible impact on nearby agricultural resources and production. The land is best developed to supply the high quality construction materials required for the range of local and regional products. Section 5.6 confirms that management of water and ‘natural areas’ within and surrounding the Quarry would be managed to avoid and minimise impacts on the natural environment. The residual impacts and the potential benefits associated with the Proposal are considered in Sections 5.2 to 5.9.



Table 6.1 (Cont'd)
Objects of the EP&A Act

Object	EIS Coverage
(ii) the promotion and co-ordination of the orderly and economic use and development of land,	Section 4 reviews the surrounding area and land use of the local area and Section 5 demonstrates the Proposal would not inhibit the economic use or development of land within the local area surrounding the Quarry.
(iii) the protection, provision and co-ordination of communication and utility services,	No additional infrastructure or services would be required by the Proposal and therefore no additional impact requiring specific consideration and management would result.
(iv) the provision of land for public purposes,	The Quarry is located on private freehold land and it is not proposed that this land be provided for public purposes. Notwithstanding this, it is noted that appropriate management measures have been proposed to ensure there would be no detrimental effect on downstream water courses.
(v) the provision and co-ordination of community services and facilities, and	Limited services and facilities are available within the area surrounding the Quarry. PBM would continue to pay a contribution to Greater Taree City Council for the ongoing maintenance of Possum Brush Road.
(vi) the protection of the environment, including the protection and conservation of native animals and plants, including threatened species, populations and ecological communities, and their habitats, and	Section 5.9 confirms the Proposal would have minimal additional impact on native animals and plants, including threatened species, populations and ecological communities, and their habitats. The ongoing management of the wildlife corridor and 50m buffer will be of considerable value to local native flora and fauna.
(vii) ecologically sustainable development, and	On the basis that the Proposal would have minimal additional residual impacts on the biophysical environment, it is considered to conform to the principles of ecologically sustainable development.
(viii) the provision and maintenance of affordable housing, and	The Proposal would not contribute to any additional pressure on local housing.
b) to promote the sharing of the responsibility for environmental planning between the different levels of government in the State, and	Section 4.4 reviews the relevant environmental planning legislation and planning instruments.
c) to provide increased opportunity for public involvement and participation in environmental planning and assessment.	PBM has demonstrated through its consultation strategy and liaison with the adjacent landowners and local community, a transparent approach to information distribution and consideration of community concerns. PBM will undertake all future public notifications and representations in accordance with the current CCC meetings.

6.3 CONCLUSION

This assessment has established that it is appropriate for Possum Brush Quarry to continue through its second stage of operations. A review of the environmental performance of the existing Stage 1 Quarry Operations together with a range of modelling/predictive assessments for Stage 2 supports PBM's application for Stage 2.