



Hon Stephen Robertson MP
Member for Stretton

Ref: CTS 19845/10



Queensland
Government

Minister for Natural Resources,
Mines and Energy and
Minister for Trade

24 NOV 2010

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Cnr Alice and George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letter of 27 October 2010 enclosing a copy of Petition No. 1548-10 lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

The Petition relates to the proposal by the Department of Environment and Resource Management to consider the feasibility of a quarry in the Townsville State Development Area in close proximity to the coastal plain and nearby RAMSAR Wetland site 42 and to the rural residential suburbs of Alligator Creek, Nome, Julago and the southern suburbs of Townsville. The petitioners request that the House reject this proposal and source the materials required from one of the many existing quarries in the area or a location with minimal impact on the environment and rural residential suburbs.

The department is currently investigating the feasibility of establishing a quarry on State land, in the Muntalunga Range area south of Townsville, to provide quarry resources to support long term residential and infrastructure development in the region. The area being evaluated covers approximately 1,280 hectares and is part Quarry Reserve and part Pastoral Holding. No decision to progress with a new quarry development in this area will be made until the feasibility study is finalised.

The feasibility study commenced with a geotechnical survey in late 2008 and early 2009, which indicated that the quarry material from the Muntalunga Range area would be suitable for a range of applications to support infrastructure development. This survey was followed by a stakeholder consultation process conducted by the Queensland Corporate Communications Network (QCCN), which was undertaken from March to May 2010. The stakeholder consultation undertaken by QCCN included consultation with 33 stakeholders and a public meeting.

QCCN identified a range of social and environmental issues, such as those outlined in the petition, which will need to be given detailed consideration as part of the

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feasibility assessment process. In general, these issues related to the potential impacts on:

- the environment, both over the Muntalunga Range area and on surrounding land, aquatic and marine based ecosystems, including the nearby RAMSAR wetland Site 42;
- the surrounding rural residential communities;
- air quality, particularly from dust;
- neighbouring residents and industries of vibrations from blasting; and
- current traffic flows and accessibility to transport infrastructure.

Stakeholder input has helped identify what additional information needs to be gathered and assessed in the next phase of the feasibility process which is currently under way. This includes:

- developing further information on the requirements for quarry material supply and demand in the medium to long term in the Townsville region;
- identifying a range of potential alternative quarry resources in the region (a matter raised by the petitioners); and
- analysing the social, environmental and economic costs and benefits of developing any new quarry in the Muntalunga Range, as opposed to alternative sites.

This phase of the feasibility assessment will address a key point raised in the petition which requests that quarry material be sourced from sites other than the Muntalunga Range. The viability of alternate sites will be assessed as part of this study. Once this information has been gathered and assessed, the department will be able to determine whether the proposal to develop a quarry in the Muntalunga Range has sufficient merit to continue with the feasibility assessment, or whether alternate sites should be considered.

If this phase of the feasibility assessment identifies a future demand for the development of a quarry in the Muntalunga Range, a detailed evaluation of the environmental and social values likely to be impacted will be undertaken. Such an evaluation would consider site specific impacts and potential mitigating conditions and processes.

All large quarries in Queensland must comply with strict guidelines under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* to ensure there are minimal impacts on surrounding land uses and that the State's environmental obligations are not compromised.

Should you have any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Ross Miller of the department on telephone 4095 7054.

Yours sincerely



STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP