

Outcome from PAC Assessment - Mackas Sand – Access off Nelson Bay Road

When the first accident involving sand trucks occurs, there should be “blood on the hands” of the Directors of Mackas Sand, the bureaucrats who recommended and the Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) who have just approved an alternate sand haulage road. This links onto a single lane section of Nelson Bay Road and empty sand trucks will use the Salt Ash roundabout as a U turn to return to Lot 218.

The approval of this project is not a total loss although considering the amount of time and energy that TRRA Inc has devoted to this, it may feel that way.

TRRA Inc efforts focused on the impact the additional trucks would have on Salt Ash roundabout and the hazards posed by the new intersection with Nelson Bay Road. Our main concern was road safety. The original application had no limit on truck movements and failed to consider the combined impacts of sand extraction from Lot 220 and 218.

The new access road has now been approved and the original approval of Lavis Lane retained. The transport operation times are as the original approval of 2009 - Monday to Friday - 6am to 6 pm EST and 6am to 7pm DST. Saturday -7am to 4pm. **These operating hours can be increased with the approval in writing by all those owners that would be noise affected.** Based on the approval conditions document, this would involve properties on Oakvale Road, Lavis Lane and the 3 most affected properties on Nelson Bay Road. The increased operating hours, if that happened, would be **Monday to Saturday - 5am to 10 pm. Sunday and public holidays 8am to 12pm.**

As a result of TRRA Inc and public effort, there had now been a limit placed on truck movements. Irrespective of the tonnage extracted, Mackas Sands **can only move a maximum of 8 loaded trucks plus 8 empty trucks an hour through this new intersection during the approved operating times.** If agreement can be obtained to extend transport times then on Sundays and public holidays the total permitted truck movements from both lots 218 and 220 (current Oakvale Road operation) is 10 trucks/hr (5 loaded plus 5 empty).

Although the PAC thought it necessary to include restrictions on truck movements from both sites on Sundays and public holidays they unfortunately have not included combined truck movements at other times, particularly school holiday periods.

The approvals also include a requirement for annual environmental audits. This audit should include noise, dust and truck movements.

These very small wins may have some impact on road safety as sand mining rates increase.

NOTE

We keep hearing that there will be a reduction of sand extraction from the Botany/Kurnell area and that no additional sand mining will be allowed in the central coast area. If this is the case then it is reasonable to expect that the sand mines in the Port Stephens area will have to dramatically increase production. This may not be the last application to impact on public safety until such time as Nelson Bay Road is upgraded to a 4 lane haulage road.

The public expectation would be for this to be at the expense of the sand mining operators and not the taxpayers of NSW nor the ratepayers of Port Stephens Council.

Compiled by Margaret Wilkinson/Keith Woodley based on the approval documents as publicly available. 4.10.13