

# **SUBMISSION TO NSW DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT**

## **RE: DRAFT NORTH COAST REGIONAL PLAN**

31-May-2016

### **Introduction**

Charles & Jane Higgins  
65 Logans Road, VALLA 2448  
Organic Macadamias – Valla  
Registered Nurse

The Nambucca Valley a magnificent place to live and bring up a family. We have lived in many parts of Australia and this area tops it for its natural beauty and quality of life.

### **Key concerns**

#### **Expansion of mining**

We have great concern regarding the threat of mining in the area.

We have lived in the area for ten years and have had family members close to the Valla Quarry and seen them live with the day to day operation of the quarry, go to the Environmental Court, its expansion; noise, explosions, dust, trucks, deteriorating road when the trucks travel backwards and forwards and expansion of operating hours.

As we entered our driveway ten years ago we could see the beautiful Mt England, now that same view has been scarred by the ever expanding Valla Quarry, we can also hear and feel explosions – we live some 4km as the crow flies, this never used to be the case. If this quarry has been allowed to expand beyond its original conditions what lays in store for any future mines – a life of misery as already experienced by many local rural Valla residences.

Any future new mining is not compatible with Goal 1 & 2 of the Draft North Coast Regional Plan.

The real value is the primary production that occurs on top of the land;

- The macadamia farms, the mangoes, avocados, bees, beans, and cattle, employing a large number of people in small businesses. Many of these industries are certified organic meaning that they are truly sustainable.

Mining is an extractive industry that can never be described as sustainable. We believe it is wrong to describe mining as sustainable in Direction 1.5.

Mining is incompatible with Goal 1, that of protecting productive farmland. The type of mining that is proposed in EL-6702 is for the locally occurring minerals of molybdenum, arsenic and antimony. These are very toxic minerals that are best left in the ground. Extraction and processing of this ore would pose an unacceptable risk to the natural waterways and would violate Direction 1.3 (Safeguard aquatic habitats and water catchments). The current clean up of contaminated waste from a former processing site at Urunga is one that should never have happened and should never be risked again.

Since purchasing our farm and converting to organic farming we have seen a return of soil health and water quality to our farm, mining can't do that.

### **Aboriginal heritage**

The Nambucca Valley has a very strong indigenous living heritage, the Gumbaynigrr people. The

Gumbaynigrr language is spoken and actively taught in schools and in the community. This living heritage needs to be protected, valued and shared. Many historical sites exist in the Valla area such as Pickets Hill, Mt England and Bollanolla that also need to be protected.

### **Managing land use conflict**

The Valla Quarry is an example of how poor planning by Council leads to ongoing land use conflict. It has led to two actions in the Land and Environment Court (2002 and 2014) as it has expanded in size and rate of extraction.

### **Protection of waterways**

The main waterway in Valla is Deep Creek and its tributaries. A report by Letcho, Telfer, Ticehurst & Merritt (May 2007) notes that ‘Deep Creek Estuary has important environmental, social and economic values. The Estuary contains extensive areas of seagrass beds, mangroves, saltmarsh and wetlands.’ Areas of vegetation also have high conservation value in regard to threatened species.

We perceive that the protection of this waterway, as outlined in Direction 1.3, is critical for safeguarding the productive farmland and the flora and fauna that makes Valla such a desirable place to live. The waterways are also an important part of the oyster, fishing, boating, tourist and water recreation.

Any threat to the health of the waterways needs to be taken seriously, be it from mining, forestry, disturbance of acid-sulphate soils, or farm run-off.

### **Developing a prosperous economy**

We love our community and the natural environment that surrounds it. It is why we live here and why we are passionate about its future. Tourism is a vital part of the economy.

Visitors often return to Valla for holidays and events, you only have to visit the ‘V Wall’ at Nambucca Heads to view the many years some families have been coming to the area. This year marks the fortieth annual Drag-Ens Hot Rod run to Valla. Each year these hot rod enthusiasts converge on Valla for a week of activities. Of similar duration is the bi-annual VW Spectacular. Both of these events attract hundreds of participants and thousands of spectators.

We would like to endorse Direction 4.1 (Expand the tourism sector) and Action 4.1.1 (Facilitate the nature-based, events and cultural tourism sectors). This is a direction that, we feel, will provide opportunities for long term employment and income for local residents, without destroying the natural beauty and risking water quality and natural habitats of threatened species.

### **Services and infrastructure**

Valla Beach is a seaside village with known growth restrictions. Residents do not see the lack of services as a liability but as an asset. For example, there is no shopping centre in Valla Beach. The nearest is at Nambucca Heads, a ten minute drive away. But it is the lack of commercialization in Valla Beach that gives the place its seaside character. There are a couple of cafes that do a very good trade to locals and visitors. The Valla Hall sits quietly in hatched land for mining – focal and valued asset to the Valla community. We do not want to see a duplication of the Gold Coast.

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

Nambucca Shire Council’s Mission Statement is; The Nambucca Valley will value and protect its natural environment, maintain its assets and infrastructure and develop opportunities for its people. **The Council’s Vision is Nambucca Valley – Living at its Best.** Please protect our beauty, air, water, farm land and quality of life, please no more mining. The natural resources are fragile, and easily destroyed. Mining is such a short term option for growth and supposed prosperity.

We feel that the designation of Valla as a Potential Mineral Resource threatens the very nature of the community we love. It creates uncertainty and conflicts with many of the Goals and Directions in the Plan.

**Thanks, Charles Higgins Jane Higgins**

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