

## **Friends of Minnamurra River Incorporated**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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### **A DAVID AND GOLIATH BATTLE: LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUP TO LAUNCH CAMPAIGN TO SAVE MINNAMURRA RIVER'S ANCIENT FOREST AND ENDANGERED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES FROM MULTINATIONAL CORPORATION'S SAND MINES**

Friends of Minnamurra River, a small incorporated local community association dedicated to the river's ecological sustainability, is soon to launch what it calls a public campaign of David and Goliath proportions to have the NSW government stop the cutting and clearing of protected 400-year-old trees in the river catchment to make way for two sand mine pits with a total maximum life of only four years.

The campaign, to be launched in the second half of April, will detail serious defects and omissions, as well as legal and administrative questions, that FOMR has found in the administrative process and assessment by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) of an application by the multinational building products' supplier, Boral Australia, to establish two new sand mining pits in the Minnamurra River catchment at Dunmore, between Kiama and Shellharbour.

A two member NSW government-appointed Independent Planning Commission (IPC) late last year approved the two new sand mining pits on assessment advice from DPIE.

FOMR says its campaign will show:

- The public does not have any idea of the total destruction of rare and ancient ecosystems as well as the large number of threatened bird and animal habitats that will be lost forever in the native vegetation clearance for the mining;
- DPIE did not provide all the data and assessment information essential for the IPC to make a fully informed decision on whether or not to approve the sand mines;
- There is a good chance that the IPC may not have approved the mines if it had received all relevant assessment data and information;
- The NSW government already has the regulatory power to stop the mines proceeding and to order a full and proper assessment under new and existing legislation.

“When we launch the FOMR campaign and show all that was wrong with the entire process leading to the IPC's decision to approve the two mining pits right in the middle of some of the rarest and most sensitive ecosystems on the planet, people will ask ‘how can that happen’ and ‘will a government really allow that environmental destruction to happen’, Mr Will Chyra, chair of FOMR says.

“The eyes of the world will be on us too and world citizens will certainly question Australia’s commitment to conserving increasingly rare and irreplaceable habitat for such small sand recovery and negligible economic return.”

Mr Chyra says the FOMR have found that there are Regulations currently in existence which will allow the relevant NSW government ministers to stop the mines.

So far, he says, the entire issue has been handled only by the two IPC members and by DPIE bureaucrats and neither the relevant Minister nor Cabinet has been made aware of the seriousness of the potential environmental destruction to occur or the public controversy it will become for the government.

However, the MP for Kiama, Gareth Ward, in a speech to parliament has expressed his strong opposition and that of local communities to the sand mining proposal and both the Kiama Municipal Council and Shellharbour City Council have also expressed their strong opposition in writing to the IPC and NSW government.

The FOMR campaign will also reveal why federal government intervention to stop the sand mines is possible.

Mr Chyra says the stakes are very high and few people will have any idea of the full extent of the environmental destruction and perversity of the entire assessment and planning process around the application for sand mine pits in the river catchment until FOMR launches its campaign and releases evidence and details.

But he summarised just some of the impacts that the DPIE concedes the new sand mine pits will have:

- Destruction of 4.5ha of rare, ancient and high quality bird and animal habitat, Bangalay Sand Forest, a State-protected Endangered Ecological Community comprising 100 to 400-year old trees;
- Risks to the Critically Endangered SE Littoral Rainforest, protected under NSW legislation and listed under the federal *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC Act).
- Risks to another Endangered Ecological Community, Coastal Saltmarsh, protected in NSW and listed as vulnerable under the EPBC Act and for which the NSW government has developed a “Save Our Species” recovery program to try to reverse the continuing loss of this high value EEC, and
- The cutting and clearing of an additional 3.0 ha of high value native vegetation, unique to the Minnamurra River catchment area.
- DPIE also says that six fauna species listed as threatened under the NSW *Biodiversity Conservation Act* have been recorded in the mining site to be cut and cleared.

Mr Chyra says the FOMR, as the young David in the forthcoming campaign battle, has established a Go Fund Me web page for those who want to contribute to FOMR’s battle to save “our precious and irreplaceable environment and animal and bird habitats”.

The Go Fund Me Page is at: <https://au.gofundme.com/f/save-the-minnamurra-river-from-boral-sandmines>

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