

Sydney Construction Materials Strategy

Industry calls for consideration of options

Media release

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A renewed interest in the long-term supply of sand to the Sydney construction market follows the recent refusal by the NSW government to renew an application for more sand mining at Kurnell. Key stakeholder groups, including local communities, resource companies and industry, have also expressed concern and frustration in response to the recently canvassed 'Sydney Construction Minerals Strategy' (Department of Infrastructure and Planning).

Darren Skene, director of the Australian exploration company Sydney Marine Sand Pty Limited, said the Strategy is "without vision and fails to consider all options for the long-term supply of sand to the Sydney Market." Mr Skene said he supported comments by the Director of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness, Mr Keith Muir, which highlighted the narrow focus of the NSW government, with just six potential onshore sand extraction areas at Maroota, Newnes Plateau, Shellharbour, Somersby, Stockton Bight and the Southern Highlands targeted. The DIPNR plan "essentially discounts biodiversity values of bushland around Sydney for the interests of sand extraction", Mr Skene added.

Mr Skene's company, Sydney Marine Sand Pty Limited, is keen to promote consideration of marine aggregate (marine sand extracted from the seabed and delivered to market by boat) as a responsible and reliable alternative to Sydney's long-term construction material needs. "Questions of proximity to the Sydney market and sustainability in resource management are central to our interest in exploring for offshore sand resources. Sydney Marine Sand would like to explore ancient beach deposits in deep water on the continental shelf as an option to supplement existing and diminishing sand resources onshore. Our proposal is to explore an area some 5.5km off the NSW coast in water depths of between 50 and 90 metres", stated Mr Skene.

The suitability of marine aggregate as a replacement and/or adjunct to traditional sources of sand in the construction market is little known in the wider community. Local communities should not have to accept ongoing degradation of precious land resources through sand extraction to the exclusion of other alternatives. Sydney Marine Sand P/L argues that high priority be given to assessment of alternative sand resources, and the economic, environmental and transport implications of accessing them.

"Sydney Marine Sand supports the call by community groups for a comprehensive sand resource assessment to identify a defensible sand resource management strategy. Any proposal for offshore sand extraction by Sydney Marine Sand P/L would be based on the best scientific advice, formulated as part of a government approved exploration program" he said.

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