



P.O. Box 630
NARRABEEN
NSW 2101

The Letters Editor,
The Manly Daily,
PO Box 286,
Manly 1655

Dear Sir,

The application by Sydney Marine Sands Pty Ltd for an Exploration License covering about 60sq.km in Commonwealth controlled waters offshore from Narrabeen to Whale Beach has received some strong criticism by various State and Federal ministers. Comments reported in the Manly Daily (21st March 2003) by Bob Carr, John Brogden, Bronwyn Bishop and others were all unanimous in their concerns as to the environmental impacts any mining would have on the marine and beach environments and ecosystems. It was also reported in the Manly Daily (26th March 2003) that Pittwater Councillors were unanimous that sand mining would be an environmental disaster and they "want the State Government to place a quarantine on all marine aggregate resources off Sydney for any purpose other than beach nourishment". Pittwater Council's stand was reinforced when Cr Giles was reported in the Manly Daily (20th May 2003) that "she would be 'disgusted' with any support for commercial offshore sand mining". On the 21st May it was reported in the Manly Daily that the submission from Pittwater Council said "offshore sand deposits should be quarantined and only ever used for beach nourishment, if at all", and that it also criticises the "paucity of information and detail regarding the applicant's proposed activities, in particular investigations of marine ecological processes".

In its submission Sydney Marine Sands stated that work in the license would aim to test the suitability of the offshore marine sands as an alternative future sand source as the sand supply obtained from the Kurnell Peninsula and from the crushing of sandstone at Newnes Plateau in the Hawkesbury region is diminishing and is also seen as environmentally unsound. It may be that on environmental grounds the offshore marine sand option may be the lesser of two evils. In their submission on the Exploration Licence application, the Sydney Coastal Councils Group Inc, recognises this fact, and also a possible competing use for the sand for beach nourishment and property protection. The SCCG's recommendation was for a "quarantine on any extraction of offshore sand reserves until such time that all biophysical, ecological and economic issues and impacts are quantified to ensure that the beaches are preserved and managed for future generations". Cr Coleman was quoted as saying

(MD 22nd May 2003) “Dr Roy said the enormous offshore sand resources should be utilised, not only for beach nourishment but also as the best way to solve the sand resource problems of the future”.

The submissions by the SCCG and Pittwater Council both recognise the fact that there simply is insufficient knowledge on the effects that sand mining would have on the offshore and inshore environments, processes, habitats and the flora and fauna populations. The first priority should be obtaining an understanding of the processes involved in these environments and the current distribution of flora and fauna, and then attempting to resolve the environmental impacts sand mining would have, no matter the intended use of the sand. It should be pointed out that any offshore sand mining, whether it would be for commercial purposes or beach nourishment and property protection, would have the same impacts on the environment, whatever they may be. Secondly, the natural source of sand for beach nourishment is the fore-dunes in the active beach zone, and it is on these dunes that houses have been built that now require protection from coastal processes. What has to be decided by those that are not opposed to the mining for whatever purpose is the level of environmental impact that will be acceptable for any exploitation of this resource, but informed decisions cannot be made without a knowledge of the current marine ecological processes and the likely impacts that will occur.

Phillip Ingram

President