



Geoff Sharpe: Public Access Address to Council

9 September 2025

Good morning Mayor and Councillors. I would like to thank you for allowing me to address you today. My name is Geoff Sharpe and I live on the north side of Co]ngo Creek, my property borders the Creek adjacent to the Congo Quarry. My wife and I purchased the property in 1980 and we have since lived and raised a family there.

We have been an integral part of the Congo Community for nearly 45 years. In those years I have driven and cycled through the quarry to access Congo to visit my family, friends and of course the beach. You can appreciate my surprise when I read through the judgement of the ill fated Supreme Court Case one of the agreed facts was that the public used the road "from time to time". Since 1980, the only time the road was not used was when the few occasions when the causeway crossing Congo Creek was flooded.

In the early 1980s, the Quarry was initially small scale affair with one loader and one or two trucks now it is extracting on an industrial scale.

Since the road closure, I have seen the original 1979 development application for the Quarry. In this application a hatched area was clearly drawn south of the original "track in use" where extraction was proposed. The subsequent Development Approval has several condition attached, three of which were;

- **Only mining their own land**

This condition means the paper road (which is excluded from the title) is excluded from the DA.

- **Permission is required for any tree removal.**

There appears to be no application in the council records for tree removal or subsequent permission given.

- **After the completion of mining the land needs to be restored to the satisfaction of the Council.**

It seems that the Council has the legal right to have the land holder restore the paper road that runs through the property.

In 1983 the State Government formalised the many quarries and mines throughout state. In the application, the Landowner stated that:

that the expected life of the pit was 15 years, taking it to 1998. That is: the life of the mine is already 27 years longer than expected.

No large trees would be removed from section of the property north of the track in use.

It is my view that there is no legal right for the landholder to mine on the northern side closer to Congo Creek on his current development approval. He has the legal right to submit a new development application but the Council has the right to deny it.

The mining of the sand closer to Congo Creek could cause environmental problems. I have a Masters Degree in Environmental Pollution Control. The fine sands were laid down in fairly recent sedimentary processes somewhere between 10000 to 6000 years ago. When the sediments are deposited there are often adjacent organic materials trapped as well. This organic matter can decay slowly in the absence of oxygen, in so called anaerobic conditions. The sulphurous compounds produced when exposed to the oxygen in the atmosphere, form acid sulphate compounds. In recall a time in the 1980s my neighbours (who live opposite the quarry) dug a shallow well from which a strong rotten egg smell, this is a classic example of acid sulphate soils. The expansion of the mine to north, and the leaching of acid compounds would have a severe impact on the relatively pristine creek, a most loved waterway for tourists and locals alike.

I appreciate that the fine sands are of significant value to the landholder. However, the extraction of these sands is limited to DA.

The amount of sand removed is also another issue. I understand that if there is removal of over 30000 tons a year from the existing site, there needs to be an impact assessment for the State Pollution Control Commission or the Environment Protection Agency. Does Council hold records of how much sand is removed annually?

Turning to more personal issues

I have a more personal reason for the reopening of the road. My son, his partner and our granddaughter have lived in Congo 15 years and have just finished building in the Congo village. What was once a pleasant 3 minute commute from my house to theirs is now a 25 minute trip via the Princes Highway and the infamous Bingie turnoff . Childcare and picking my granddaughter up from preschool has been difficult.

Lastly in a bush fire situation my wife and I and many other households on North Congo Road are in a dire position. During the last bushfire scare, when the road was open, our Bushfire plan was to escape to the beach in the Congo Village.

With any fire from the West, Northwest, North and Northeast we have no escape route, with access through the Quarry now denied. The Royal Commission into Bushfires clearly recommended that towns should have two roads in. Arguing that similar villages like Potato Point have only one does not justify a village that has two should lose one.

The Council can - and should - reopen Congo road, including via compulsory acquisition if needed. If there are no mining rights to the northern side of the property, than the compensation would be minimal.

Thank you.