

Friends of Skeleton Hill will fight Quarry Proposal All the Way

A group of Chiltern residents has come together under the banner Friends of Skeleton Hill, to oppose Cemex current proposal to commence a new quarry on Skeleton Hill.

The group was officially formed at a meeting attended by over thirty residents on May 14 and membership has quickly grown to over fifty, including a number of people from across North East and other areas of Victoria and NSW. It aims to gradually increase its membership numbers into the hundreds.

Friends of Skeleton Hill media and PR co-ordinator Pat Murdoch said “the group would like to make it absolutely clear that we are not opposed to the continuing presence of a quarry near Chiltern. However, the current proposed location on Skeleton Hill is in terms of negative visual impact, the worst possible location that Cemex could have chosen. The removal of a significant part of the hill, starting right at its summit, will permanently degrade the integrity of this highly valued landscape feature so close to our town and the Chiltern-Mt.Pilot National Park.”

When asked about possible alternative sites, Pat said “ it is interesting to note that Cemex has claimed in a document they presented to the Minister for Planning, that the option for a quarry in the Indigo Valley was not acceptable to the Indigo Shire Council due to lifestyle property amenity and road traffic impacts. Enquiries we have made with Indigo Shire indicate that this claim is absolutely untrue. Quite correctly, Indigo Shire has never ruled in or out, any site that Cemex might be interested in.”

Friends of Skeleton Hill have already been active in making submissions to both the State Minister for Planning and the Federal Minister for the Environment who is currently assessing the possible impact of the proposed quarry on nationally threatened species of flora and fauna associated with Skeleton Hill. It is expected when Cemex lodge their planning application with the Indigo Shire Council, Friends of Skeleton Hill will be a focal point for Shire residents wishing to register their concern about the proposal.

Pat Murdoch commented on Cemex poor community engagement performance to date, saying, “coming into town and telling individuals and groups what you propose doing to Skeleton Hill, is not community engagement.” She said, “Friends would be very interested in sitting down with Cemex to discuss possible alternative sites, and we look forward to this happening. If a suitable alternative site can be found, hopefully the economic contribution the quarry makes to the region, including jobs, will continue.”