

I am presenting on behalf of Australia Walkabout Wildlife Park

Acknowledging Traditional Custodians

Context for concerns:

To put our presentation into context, we need to look at Hanson’s claim that the Land and Environment Court was satisfied that noise could be managed through Conditions of Consent. This is not true. The Land and Environment Court merely noted that Walkabout Park and Rocla had agreed that noise could be managed through Conditions of Consent. The Land and Environment Court did not need to, and did not, record a decision on this.

The reality is, and Corkery who wrote the Response to Submissions is well aware, that Walkabout Park withdrew all its contentions – except Heritage contentions – under duress.

Addressing noise:

There are times when we have to relocate school workshops and other customer groups away from the so-called quieter northern areas of the park and closer to the freeway workshop areas, because of noise from the sand quarry.

We have informed Hanson that we no longer report every incidence of excessive noise because this is a waste of our time. After 12 years, we recognise that the quarry is either not able to, or not willing to, take any meaningful action to reduce noise.

Noise exceedances have been recorded from time to time. Each time these noise events are explained away as anomalies, but they keep recurring.

The problem with noise is that all the maxima are based on average noise production over a period of time which does not account for loud banging and crashing which can be very intrusive, especially when we are running Walkabout workshops in what is supposed to be the quiet bushlands of Walkabout Park.

We understand this, but we are concerned about the cumulative effects of iterative changes ^{to} the way the quarry operates. Hanson’s Response to Submissions attempts to reassure that the addition of a rock crusher will not increase noise output, but they still ask that they the noise criteria be changed.

Walkabout Park has overnight guests in cottages and tents. The rock crusher will produce more materials than they currently can. Hanson has already formally notified neighbours that they intend to do more early morning evening processing and deliveries that, although has always been allowed by their Conditions of Consent, has not been their practice.

Changing acceptable noise levels should not be done without merit and considerable due diligence, as the impacts on neighbouring businesses and residences will not be insignificant. Hanson has said that the rock crusher will not make more noise than they currently do. If they really believe this, there should be no need to change their noise Conditions.

What is more, with the addition of new capabilities, it is imperative that the consequences for being too noisy – inexplicably removed in 2012 when the quarry moved its admin buildings – should be reinstated. It is not sufficient for the quarry to merely report being too noisy and to “take reasonable steps to comply”. They should be required to comply!

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Addressing water:

The Calga valley's water supply is dropping. We have just had it confirmed by an ecologist that the reason live healthy gum trees that are nowhere near the end of their lifespan are falling down at Walkabout Park at the rate of one a week, is that the deep aquifer water is being depleted forcing the root system to spread out too superficially to give stability to these tall trees.

It is not sufficient for Hanson to just say they won't use more water. It is clear that they are going to take more materials and they are going to excavate deeper rock. More material and greater depth means increased water take. Remembering that the Department of Water likened the excavations to a hectares wide bore but a bore nonetheless, and they defined water take as all water that drains into the void whether or not Hanson uses the water, they will take more water.

It may be that they might still comply with their licensing conditions although they have not yet provided evidence to prove this. However, there is no question that they will use more water than they are able to do with their current capability.

This is a significant example for how the nature of their operations will change, even if they remain compliant.

With this being yet another step increase in environmental impact including impact on neighbours, it is time that Hanson started assisting their neighbours by supplying them with water.

At the very least, a Condition of Consent should be added requiring Hanson to provide neighbours with water if there is reasonable evidence (there will never be proof because of the multi-factorial impacts) that their operations have contributed to neighbours and the neighbouring landscape losing water.

Addressing other concerns:

I will leave it to the Walkabout Wildlife Conservation Foundation, as community representative organisation set up to safeguard the cultural and natural environment of Calga, to present on other issues that Walkabout Park has in common with other members of the community.