

SUBMISSION FROM CLEAN AIR CANBERRA RE: PROPOSED MONARO ROCK QUARRY

About Clean Air Canberra

Clean Air Canberra is a network of residents and citizen scientists committed to protecting public health and the environment from the harmful effects of air pollution. We work in collaboration with environmental and health experts in Australia and internationally to raise awareness about air pollution, particularly suburban residential wood smoke, and to advocate for stronger public health protections and environmental safeguards.

Opposition to the Proposed Monaro Rock Quarry

Clean Air Canberra strongly opposes the development of a new rock quarry near Royalla due to its likely adverse effects on public health, air quality, the environment, and the amenity of the surrounding communities, including the Tuggeranong Valley in Canberra, home to approximately 105,000 residents.

Clean Air Canberra also strongly objects to the complete lack of community consultation with residents of the Tuggeranong Valley regarding the proposed Monaro Rock Quarry, particularly given the potential environmental and health impacts of the project. Despite the clear implications for air quality and public health, no effort has been made to inform or engage with the community. Residents of the Tuggeranong Valley and Canberra community generally have only been made aware of this proposed development through local media reports, not through any formal government or proponent communication processes.

The most significant health risk posed by the proposed Monaro Rock Quarry is public exposure to **respirable crystalline silica (RCS) dust**, a known cause of **silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and lung cancer**. Studies have proven RCS dust can travel for several kilometres. The risk is especially high for vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing respiratory conditions.

Key Health and Environmental Concerns

1. Silica Dust and Respiratory Illness

- **Crystalline Silica Exposure:**
The rock material to be quarried is known to contain high levels of silica. Activities such as drilling, crushing, and screening release fine RCS dust into the atmosphere. Inhalation of these particles has been definitively linked to silicosis, lung cancer, and other chronic respiratory illnesses.
- **Vulnerable Groups:**
Children, people with asthma or existing respiratory disease, and elderly residents are particularly susceptible to the harmful effects of silica dust.
- **Long-Distance Exposure:**
RCS dust is capable of remaining airborne for extended periods and can travel kilometres from the source, placing communities well beyond the immediate quarry site at risk.

2. General Dust and Airborne Irritants

- Quarry operations will generate substantial dust, contributing to eye, nasal, and throat irritation, and potentially exacerbating asthma and other respiratory conditions.

3. Heavy Vehicle Traffic and Diesel Pollution

- The quarry will result in a significant increase in heavy truck movements along the Monaro Highway and surrounding access roads six days a week, raising the risk of accidents and adding to traffic congestion.
- Diesel emissions from these vehicles will further degrade air quality, particularly in **Tuggeranong Valley**, already identified as an **air pollution hotspot** due to elevated levels of winter residential wood heater smoke.
- Residents in suburbs such as Theodore, Richardson, Chisholm, Macarthur and Gilmore, located close to the highway, will be exposed to increased levels of noise, vibration, and diesel exhaust six days a week.

4. Noise and Light Pollution

- Quarry blasting and continuous operations will produce sustained noise and light pollution, disturb local wildlife and diminish the quality of life for nearby residents and leading to lower property values.
- Chronic exposure to such disturbances is associated with **sleep disruption, stress, and negative impacts on mental health.**

5. Water Quality and Environmental Degradation

- There are concerns that dust and chemicals associated with quarry operations could contaminate local waterways and flood zones, threatening ecosystems and potable water sources.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Clean Air Canberra urges the relevant authorities to **reject the proposed Monaro Rock Quarry** on the basis of its likely significant and cumulative impacts on **public health, air quality, traffic safety, environmental integrity, community wellbeing and property devaluation.**

The region surrounding Royalla and the Tuggeranong Valley already faces environmental pressures, including poor air quality during winter months. Introducing a large-scale quarry operation into this area will only intensify those issues and place further strain on the health and amenity of the local population.

We call for a precautionary approach grounded in medical evidence, environmental science, and community wellbeing. The health and well-being of residents in Royalla, Tuggeranong and surrounding areas, now and into the future, must take precedence over short-term industrial interests.

Given the serious concerns outlined above, we respectfully submit that this project **must be rejected in full.**

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References

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