

As I sit here on a Saturday evening, at exactly 8.48pm, in the quiet idyllic rural countryside, I am greeted in the background by explosions from Brandy Hill Quarry. I live 2.3kms from the quarry, I have had assurances from the quarry manager that there is no way i could hear or feel, but I can assure you, as sure as night follows day, that the level of environmental, industrial, social and physical pollution being lumped upon the community is real. No doubt.

The quarry continually advertises that their operations are limited, but there is no doubt whatsoever that crushing operations can be heard well past the 10.00pm 'advertised' time frame. It is of course important to note that the the quarry does state that although there is no restriction currently listed for crushing/production, they are certainly intending to formalise their right to do so, by including it in the preliminary application under section 4.1 Ancillary Infrastructure.

It is a common occurrence for me to be woken up in the night, hearing the crushing operations in the quarry, to the degree that I sometimes get only 3 hours of sleep per night, as with the continued noise I am unable to return to normal sleep.

It is not fair and reasonable that the Hanson shareholder should be rewarded at the expense of my health.

Please note the common signs and symptoms associated with sleep deprivation. All are well documented and researched. There is no disputing these facts:

1. **Sleepiness causes accidents.** Sleep deprivation was a contributor to some of the biggest disasters in recent history: the 1979 3-Mile Island Nuclear disaster, the massive Exxon Valdez oil spill, and the 1986 nuclear meltdown at Chernobyl.
2. **Sleep** plays a critical role in thinking and learning. Lack of sleep hurts these cognitive processes in many ways. It impairs attention, alertness, concentration, reasoning, and problem solving. This makes it more difficult to learn efficiently.
3. **Sleep disorders and chronic sleep loss can put you at risk for:**
 - Heart disease
 - Heart attack
 - Heart failure
 - Irregular heartbeat
 - High blood pressure
 - Stroke
 - Diabetes

4. Lack of Sleep Kills Sex Drive

Sleep specialists say that sleep-deprived men and women report lower libidos and less interest in sex. Depleted energy, sleepiness, and increased tension may be largely to blame.

5. Sleepiness Is Depressing

Over time, lack of sleep and sleep disorders can contribute to the symptoms of depression. Sleep loss often aggravates the symptoms of depression, and depression can make it more difficult to fall asleep.

6. Lack of Sleep Ages Your Skin - Most people have experienced sallow skin and puffy eyes after a few nights of missed sleep. But it turns out that chronic sleep loss can lead to lacklustre skin, fine lines, and dark circles under the eyes.

When you don't get enough sleep, your body releases more of the stress hormone cortisol. In excess amounts, cortisol can break down skin collagen, the protein that keeps skin smooth and elastic.

Sleep loss also causes the body to release too little human growth hormone. When we're young, human growth hormone promotes growth. As we age, it helps increase muscle mass, thicken skin, and strengthen bones.

"It's during deep sleep -- what we call slow-wave sleep -- that growth hormone is released," says sleep expert Phil Gehrman, PhD. "It seems to be part of normal tissue repair -- patching the wear and tear of the day.

7. Sleepiness Makes You Forgetful

In 2009, American and French researchers determined that brain events called "sharp wave ripples" are responsible for consolidating memory. The ripples also transfer learned information from the hippocampus to the neocortex of the brain, where long-term memories are stored. Sharp wave ripples occur mostly during the deepest levels of sleep..

8. Losing Sleep Can Make You Gain Weight

When it comes to body weight, it may be that if you snooze, you lose. Lack of sleep seems to be related to an increase in hunger and appetite, and possibly to obesity. According to a 2004 study,

people who sleep less than six hours a day were almost 30 percent more likely to become obese than those who slept seven to nine hours.

Recent research has focused on the link between sleep and the peptides that regulate appetite. “Ghrelin stimulates hunger and leptin signals satiety to the brain and suppresses appetite,” says Siebern. “Shortened sleep time is associated with decreases in leptin and elevations in ghrelin.”

Not only does sleep loss appear to stimulate appetite. It also stimulates cravings for high-fat, high-carbohydrate foods. Ongoing studies are considering whether adequate sleep should be a standard part of weight loss programs.

9. Lack of Sleep May Increase Risk of Death

In the “Whitehall II Study,” British researchers looked at how sleep patterns affected the mortality of more than 10,000 British civil servants over two decades. The results, published in 2007, showed that those who had cut their sleep from seven to five hours or fewer a night nearly doubled their risk of death from all causes. In particular, lack of sleep doubled the risk of death from cardiovascular disease.

10. Sleep Loss Impairs Judgment, Especially About Sleep

Lack of sleep can affect our interpretation of events. This hurts our ability to make sound judgments because we may not assess situations accurately and act on them wisely.

Sleep-deprived people seem to be especially prone to poor judgment when it comes to assessing what lack of sleep is doing to them. In our increasingly fast-paced world, functioning on less sleep has become a kind of badge of honour. But sleep specialists say if you think you’re doing fine on less sleep, you’re probably wrong. And if you work in a profession where it’s important to be able to judge your level of functioning, this can be a big problem.

“Studies show that over time, people who are getting six hours of sleep, instead of seven or eight, begin to feel that they’ve adapted to that sleep deprivation -- they’ve gotten used to it,” Gehrman says. “But if you look at how they actually do on tests of mental alertness and performance, they continue to go downhill. So there’s a point in sleep deprivation when we lose touch with how impaired we are.”

There are no circumstances where a level of noise that interrupts people sleep would be considered appropriate to approve.

If a resident was to propose to operate an airfield, 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week, with no restrictions, it would never get past the planning stage. If a resident were to operate a music festival, 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week, knowing full well that the associated noise, infrastructure, traffic and impacts upon the peace and wellbeing of local residents were to be interrupted, there is no way it would pass the planning stage. Just because this is an existing plant does not mean that the operator has the right to further impact upon the residents.

The impacts upon the residents in the surrounding area are very real, and it is well documented (evidence can and will be provided) that concrete recycling and batching plants should not be located within 5 miles / 8 kms of residential areas. The townships of Seaham, East Seaham, Glen Oak, Ballickera, Brandy Hill, Osterley, Duckenfield, Hinton, Wallalong, Butterwick, Dunns Creek, Paterson, Woodville, Morpeth and Largs are all inside or bordering the 5 mile/8km suggested health guideline.

Using the 2011 Census figures, which are now 6 years old, and will have increased, the population of that area was equal to 8,993 residents. Each and every one of these individual residents is going to be affected by this quarry expansion. It is already impacting upon the daily lives of these residents in the form of bridge work, road interruptions and traffic flow not considered to be normal within a rural environment, along with noise, dust and damage to housing.

Indeed there is already very clear evidence, as I go through my daily drive, of the significant damage being caused to the roads by the heavy haulage vehicles, in particular on bends, on medians, and on tight corners. The surface of the road is being torn up, one pothole at a time, to the point where great lengths of road will require significant replacement in the near future. As a rate payer, it would not be fair for me to foot the bill for repairing a road for damage caused by a business operating to a level beyond what is reasonable.

I regularly transit these roads outbound between the hours of 0500 and 0900. I regularly transit these roads inbound between the hours of 1500 and 1900. I can assure you, beyond any doubt, and without any bias in any way shape or form, that the drivers of the quarry trucks are not to a standard considered acceptable. I regularly observe trucks driving so close behind me, that I can not even see the rego plate to get the number and record it. I regularly observe drivers cutting corners in what I would consider to be a dangerous fashion. I regularly observe drivers crossing double lines, and i regularly observe drivers using mobile phones whilst driving.

It is only a matter of time before one of these drivers contributes to a serious traffic incident which will have serious consequences upon the community in which they operate.

It will be very easy for Hanson and the State Govt to dismiss this as speculation, and forecasting events which may never take place.

This statement is very much a Risk assessment, based upon the commonly used business/project matrix of "Likelihood of occurrence vs Consequence".

The simple statement, using laymen Project management terms is that:

"There is a risk that due to the increased frequency of movements, combined with the currently observed poor quality of driver behaviour and operations, **a very serious traffic incident is going to occur, resulting in** injury to property or person, to a level which would be considered unacceptable, given that the State Govt and BHQ know full well in advance the likelihood of this occurring".

Future and current residential development

Wallalong is an area continually discussed and mentioned as significant future residential development. It is not appropriate for the State Government to approve additional industrial extensions in area where there are going to be significantly more residences in the near term.

Giles Road itself has small acreage residential development in process.

Increasing extraction, along with approving new residential development does not go hand-in-hand, and is quite irresponsible.

Port Stephens Council itself recently approved a residential development at 15 Green Wattle Creek Road, Butterwick for a development of up to another 140 people, known as Shepherds Ground. Shepherds Ground is a land share arrangement on a significant site.

The reasons for the council approving the development include:

- Encouraging people to live in the rural environment
- providing opportunities for people to contribute to the flavour of the agricultural landscape
- provide opportunities for agricultural economy and business, via growth of fresh food for market

This rural/residential development, for the surrounding properties, was, and still is, considered to be controversial, and council was very clear about the reasons for approval.

If Port Stephens Council was now to allow this quarry expansion to go ahead, along with the concrete recycling plant, it is indirect opposition to the reasons that they approved this earlier controversial development.

Habitat and Heritage

Our property is 90 acres, small by comparison, and contains the trig point and hill top known as Little Brandy Hill. Our 90 acres is mainly forested, primarily made up of Lower Hunter Dry Sclerophyll Forest. Lower Hunter Dry Sclerophyll contains 5 primary big hardwood tree species:

- Forest Red Gum
- Grey Box
- Spotted Gum
- Ironbark (two species)
- and Stringybark (multiple species)

At our closest point, we are about 2.7kms in a straight line from the current extraction area. Any decrease to that buffer will bring the extraction and negative effects of, closer to our pristine environment.

One of the products we provide is honey, for which we are able to justify, and charge a premium for, based upon the excellent condition of this native environment.

Species of animals upon our property are:

- Wallaby
- Kangaroo
- Snakes
- Bandicoots
- Hares
- Echidna
- Goanna
- A significant amount of birdlife
- Wombats
- Dingo
- And the Koala.

The Forest Red Gum is a primary food species for the Hunter-Central Rivers population of koala. The Grey Box is a Secondary Species food source. The Stringybarks are a supplementary source, used only when necessary.

Restricting access to primary food species directly reduces population quantity, as evidenced by the NSW State Department of Environment. Copy attached.

Copy attached also of the NSW Environmental Protection Agency Koala Habitat Management for Landowners, which details species that ought to be maintained in order to facilitate sustaining our native animal population.

Noting that surrounding forest at the quarry site is at the same altitude, and the same climactic conditions, it is very likely to be made of the same mixture of plant and animal species.

Given how few green corridors remain, despite the best intentions of various bodies and organisations, it is even more important that Port Stephens Council and the State Government do not allow this expansion to go ahead.

The Lower Hunter Dry Sclerophyll forest is now considered to be rare and threatened by the Local Land Services, the State Governments own body that advises on such matters.

Indeed the Office of Environment and Heritage is putting considerable time and effort to save this species by calling it 'Iconic', and reallocating under the Management Stream designed to save species.

It would be an unusual design by the State Government to deliberately reduce quantity and quality of habitat in the very same area that they are tasking other State Government departments with protecting quantity and quality of habitat.

Summary

In short, I have no objection to the quarry operating as a business. It was there before me, and I moved to the area knowing it was there, and knowing it had a specific life-span. Road base and concrete products are a requirement for modern society.

However, I do object to the expansion for further extraction.

I do object to the 24/7 operating application. I do object to establishing concrete batching and recycling.

I do object to the very limited nature in which the applicant has gone about appearing to engage community, without actually engaging the nearest community members whom will be impacted the most.

I do object to negotiating a pointless outcome with local residents, like the provision of footpaths on Brandy Hill Drive.

Footpaths do not protect the home-grown food supply, nor ingestion of particulate matter into the body over a long period of time.

I am happy to allow the quarry to continue only in it's current form, until it runs out of the resource approved in it's current form on the current footprint, with no further approval or allowance for extraction over current site removals, and noting that Port Stephens Council has currently placed no restriction limits on the quarry operations, I ask that the council and the government place place a further restriction of strictly no operating hours outside of 06.00-19.00, as would be considered polite, neighbour-friendly and reasonable in any agricultural / rural / residential area.