

## Submission on Brandy Hill Quarry Expansion

The Minister for Planning & Environment  
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Minister,

I object to any increase in truck traffic from the quarry.

I have lived on Brandy Hill Drive since 1990, having purchased our property here when Brandy Hill Drive was a new unfinished gravel road through what had previously been farmland. We accepted the quarry, used its products, and when it was a small daytime operation it was a good neighbour. Progress happens, populations increase, society becomes more 24/7 and traffic also increases on our roads. I accept that.

When the planned expansion was announced and until recently, I regarded the expansion as inevitable. I had little confidence that a few individuals could oppose a big business, and I also had little faith that the government departments that oversee these things would protect a few individuals. Port Stephens Council (PSC) is very pro-developer and previous expansions had been approved with no consideration of the community that had grown beside the quarry, and made it clear that we did not matter when it came to the lack of amenity and safety infrastructure. With this expansion being overseen by NSW Planning & Environment, I also regarded the prospect of being taken into account as slim to “buckleys”, from hearing of what happens to communities in the coal fields.

I thought the best way to get something for our community was to work with the quarry and joined the CCC, with my wife and some other residents, whom we had not known before, but shared the view that someone had to do something. Everyone has a different mix of issues, concerns and answers depending on where they live; close or far from the quarry, on an uphill or flat, a bend, or intersection, and whether the roadside is mowable or walkable and where the kids catch the bus and get off etc.

Through the CCC we managed to get Hanson to work with PSC to erect engine braking signs, and through complaining about individual noisy trucks, a reduction in the worst of the noise occurred. A small win, while the volume of trucks leapt higher as Martins Creek trucks added to the traffic. Amenity had gone south at a time when we and others realised the importance of walking for exercise and mental health. Trying to get the recommended 10,000 steps/day or more, had us become familiar with most of the streets here. The side streets are great to walk but we soon realised that Brandy Hill Drive was a problem for us and the school children and their parents. I no longer cycle on BHD, except to get to Seaham where I enjoy the off-road pathway from Brandon Park onward.

I saw one mother on her way to a bus stop to collect a primary school child. Her husband was at work with the car, so she walked, with a small child in a stroller. She walked on the outside of the guard fence in the long grass on the steep embankment across a culvert to the only bus stop with a shelter. The narrow shoulder was not safe! She said that is what she does whenever the car is unavailable. I started noticing the tracks through the grass or gravel along the road and realised the difficulties that many people have without a path.

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So we worked with the CCC, hoping to negotiate some concessions on 24/7, limiting the peak numbers of trucks/hr or per day, or on weekends, and tried to get Hanson to work with PSC to plan a pathway and other safety improvements. PSC were not very interested, as we were in the country and did not matter. The EIS was released, and it was clear that Hanson also think that we don't matter, as they had made no concessions or compromise. They want 24/7 to maintain market share, but would only send trucks out at night if they had to (ie a customer would pay them money if they did).

So as an individual, I feel used and betrayed. I worry for me and my wife's health and for our community's health, wellbeing and safety. But after the public meeting recently in Raymond Terrace, I am reminded that I am not just an individual, but part of a community that cares and shares many common values and concerns. After dealing with officers from the department of planning, and seeing the outcome of the Gunlake quarry expansion, I have a small hope that the state authorities won't dismiss our concerns because we don't matter. Minister, you and your department and the PAC have the power to make a huge improvement to the lives of many people now, and for generations to come.

We don't want the quarry to close, but please ensure that we in this area can sleep at night and get our kids safely to bus stops and move along our road corridor safely and do not have to drive our cars a few hundred meters and add to the traffic.

The cost benefits analysis from Hanson talks up the revenue, the tonnes of gravel that the state needs and the employment. It disregards the health, safety and amenity of the many people that live here or drive on the local roads. We don't want the quarry to close. The bigger question is whether the cost/benefit analysis for expanding this quarry will be better than that for other quarries, new or existing, that are closer to arterial routes and not as close to residential areas. If the rock is not quarried here it is clear that there are other quarries that will supply the market, so jobs are not lost and NSW is not deprived of an essential resource.

Restricting the operation to daylight hours, and restricting the volume of truck traffic (either by a rule and/or by limiting to a single weighbridge would make a huge difference to the people here. It may indirectly mean that the quarry can never annually dispatch much more than they do at present, but that is a reasonable compromise.

Hanson staff, from a previous quarry manager to their senior driver, has said that Brandy Hill needs a footpath, and that Hanson have the materials to build one but PSC would have to build it. If Hanson are granted approval to extend the quarry and dig a big hole in order to keep operating, then providing a footpath and the other safety and road improvements as a prerequisite is not only reasonable, Hanson expect it, and made a small reference to this at page 210 of the main EIS document!

So please listen to the many individuals who have concerns about this proposal, and also the Martins Creek quarry expansion. Martins Creek has a rail siding that must be mandated to be the main transport mode and road trucks should not be allowed to have to drive the 30 or 40km through Paterson and other residential communities like ours, in order to access arterial roads.

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With Hanson's quarry expansion, a very reasonable compromise is available by approving the ongoing operation, but adding an 8pm-7am on weekdays and from midday Saturday to 6am Monday curfew on crushing and deliveries. Deliveries must be restricted to the current 30/hour, and the transport levy must be sufficient to pay for road upgrades and maintenance (given that quarry trucks are already > 90% of all very heavy vehicles on BHD), and that a prerequisite to approval is for a pathway and off road bus stops be build according to a design and plan agreed to between the residents, bus companies and PSC.

Thank you for considering this submission from a resident who is very concerned for the future for my family, my neighbours and for the generations ahead.

Neil Ritchie

Brandy Hill, NSW