

HANSON RED HILL QUARRY

Statement

HON ALISON XAMON (East Metropolitan) [5.58 pm]: I rise tonight because, once again, I wish to draw the house's attention to Hanson Red Hill quarry on the Darling Scarp. For those members who have not been following events, I will give a quick update of the situation.

In 2008, Hanson applied to extend the existing quarry footprint by 80 hectares, and a full public environmental review was carried out. Submissions opened on 23 June 2008 and closed on 18 August 2008; the proponents' response to concerns raised were finalised on 13 July 2010. On 31 January 2011, the Environmental Protection Authority determined that the proposed quarry expansion could not be made environmentally acceptable, and Hanson appealed that decision. On 14 September 2011, the appeals convener determined that Hanson's appeal could not be upheld on the grounds Hanson had provided, yet on 16 December 2011—just before Christmas—the minister upheld Hanson's appeal anyway, and is now in the process of negotiating with other government agencies to try to find some conditions that will enable Hanson to expand this quarry. The main environmental concerns that the EPA believed could not be mitigated or managed were that the expansion would require the destruction of six significant Aboriginal heritage sites, including Gogomit—otherwise known as the owl stone; it would cause a substantial loss of a valued landscape and ecological functions; it would have a huge impact on the visual amenity of a number of properties to the north and west of the proposal site; and it would remove 80 hectares of regionally important fauna habitat. Issues of noise, dust, vibration and water quality of discharges to Susannah Brook were believed to be manageable, which was certainly a surprise to nearby residents, but the Environmental Protection Authority was so definite that the proposal should not be implemented that its suggestions for environmental conditions were not included in the EPA report. So it is of great concern that the minister has seen to override the advice of both the EPA and the Appeals Convenor on this matter. This practice of ignoring the recommendations of our regulators and pushing projects through anyway is one that we have already touched on this week. We talked about this yesterday during the discussion about the Roe 8 extension.

In relation to the Hanson Red Hill quarry, the EPA's advice regarding the Aboriginal heritage sites in the area is very clear: there is a combination of sites in the area, and this is a really rare thing in the metropolitan area; the sites as a whole represent the culture and life of Aboriginal people; the impact of the proposal would be that sites that are used for the collection of traditional bush tucker and medicine would be cleared and destroyed; the likely impact of implementing the proposal would be the destruction of Aboriginal heritage sites; the proposal cannot be managed to ensure that changes to the biophysical environment do not adversely affect historical and cultural associations; and the quarry cannot be extended to the north if those sites are to be protected. The EPA is telling us very clearly that extending the quarry to the north cannot be managed in a way that protects the unique Aboriginal heritage in the area, yet the minister is out there at the moment trying to find a set of conditions that will enable the proposal to go ahead anyway. I have written to the minister on multiple occasions, but I have most recently written to the minister specifically to ask how long he will pursue working with the various agencies to try to get some form of this quarry extension and what will happen if the agencies that have already commented on this proposal and made their position clear continue to say that allowing this quarry to go ahead regardless of conditions will mean failing the people of Western Australia. I look forward to getting his response to those questions.

While I am talking about Hanson Red Hill quarry, I also point out that there has been a great deal of concern in the community that Hanson seems to find it easier to beg forgiveness than to ask permission, and I will explain what I mean by that. Some of the previous issues with the quarry at this site include ministerial conditions that were changed after they were found to be unenforceable, and they were found to be unenforceable only after complaints were made that the conditions were not being adhered to. Provisions regarding the visibility of the quarry were removed in 2004 as a result. The expansion of the west pit, which is currently the only pit, from a 20-acre quarry to a 40-acre quarry happened without an actual approval from the department. Approval was granted after the event through a section 45C application under the Environmental Protection Act. The history of planning approvals for the quarry is murky. Previous answers in Parliament from the Department of Planning have indicated that since 17 December 2009, Hanson has had approval to quarry only in a 5.4-hectare extension area, not in the main pit. I have been following up this issue recently in questions in this place and have found that the matter is now with the State Solicitor's Office for clarification of what the history of planning approval at this site has meant for Hanson's activities since 17 December 2009.

I find it astonishing that the Minister for Environment has gone into bat for the extension of this quarry while such significant questions about the operation of this quarry remain unanswered. I think it is fair to say that given this history, it is not at all surprising that residents who live adjacent to the quarry and the traditional owners of the area remain concerned about how any future expansion will be undertaken or monitored. We are finally in a position in which the government departments have made a clear and decisive recommendation about this

proposal and have found the expansion of the quarry to be completely unacceptable. I maintain that the minister's decision to go ahead in the face of this united opposition from the departments is an absolute disgrace.

House adjourned at 6.05 pm
