



Media Release

8 August 2023

CONFIRMED!

Mitchell Shire Council (MSC) has spent a staggering **\$1.2+ MILLION** on consultants and third parties, denying vital primary industry.

True figure likely to be much higher once council's internal costs are included.

Freedom of Information documents have revealed Mitchell Shire Council has spent at least \$1.2m, in their relentless campaign of misinformation and fear mongering against a legitimate planning application. This money has been squandered battling a project

- (a) in a location identified by the State,
- (b) using the endorsed process, and
- (c) submitted by a local family owned and operated quarrying business.

And while the true figure may never be revealed, if staff and internal resourcing is included then the financial amount and community resources wasted at the expense of the ratepayers can only be imagined.

Only last month, the council's inconsistent approach to strategic planning was demonstrated when Cr Sanderson was quoted in the Review on another legitimate planning application, "*Obviously it's not up to council to tell a business where it can build its enterprise.*".

No, it most certainly is not – yet a MILLION+ dollars have been spent trying to do just that!

This strategically targeted campaign against the long overdue development of North Central Quarry is wasting rate payers' money that could be better spent on local services and road maintenance. This process may well take longer than the life of the quarry!

The application is, and has always been, for a short-term quarry, so the land has many uses and housing may become a future land use, as has been the case for quarries globally.

Finally, the true cost (or at least part of it related to third party costs) can be made public, after the Council spent more money trying desperately to withhold or conceal funding figures, relationships with stakeholders and other details relating to the use of third parties and consultants brought in at great expense.



CONUNDRUM HOLDINGS

And many believe this is only the tip of councils' expenditure, given they have:

- Set up, maintained, and staffed a small advocacy group.
- Paid staff to canvass locals with petitions at markets and at public buildings.
- Supplied T-shirts, meeting rooms, food and drink, and media support.
- Distributed false and misleading pamphlets, flyers, and posters.
- Inserted reply-paid objection flyers into the entire Shire's rates notices.
- Erected, updated and re-erected widespread anti-quarry signage, finally down this week after nearly 2 years.
- Run online forums and social media platforms full of incorrect facts.
- Funded a trip to Melbourne to protest during a Panel hearing.
- Created and distributed blatantly inaccurate video content.

Conundrum Holdings Managing Director Ron Kerr:

"Now this has been confirmed, we are saddened that an authority that should be doing more about road maintenance and local services has devoted so much money and resources to deny this vital primary industry.

Quarry resources, where possible, must be as close as possible to their market, minimising energy use, friction and wear of vehicles and therefore our carbon footprint. North Central Quarry's resource offers Melbourne's north just that."

"After years of inaction and delays, we implore the Victorian government and particularly the Planning Minister to clearly outline the future for this application and help deliver jobs, opportunity, and a vital short-term quarry resource."

ENDS

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