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Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Legislative Council
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

**Submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and
Public Affairs.
Inquiry into Cockburn Cement Ltd, Munster.**

Dear Chairman and Committee Members,

I write today to make a submission to your Committee's inquiry into Cockburn Cement Ltd, Munster. At the outset, I wish to express my concern with the establishment of this inquiry, its broad terms of reference and what it is designed to achieve.

Cockburn Cement Limited (CCL) and specifically its plant in Munster has been in operation for almost six decades and in that time it has contributed a great deal to the people of Western Australia.

It has provided ongoing employment for hundreds of Western Australians, contributed significantly towards State and community development, enabled by the domestic production of cement and lime. Essentially, CCL has been integral to Western Australia's growth and many families' livelihoods.

It is therefore with grave concern that I see the establishment of an inquiry into CCL. Whilst I do not wish to dismiss the importance of the The Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs and its duty to hold inquiries, I do question the timing of this inquiry and the motivations of those who have sought to bring CCL before this committee.

I will now address directly the terms of reference:

1. Health, environmental, dust, odour, property and other concerns arising out of the operation of the Cockburn Cement Ltd plant, Munster

Mr Chairman and Members, it is inevitable that with the operations of industry throughout Australia emissions are produced that need to be monitored and restricted to ensure the ongoing health of the population. This is achieved by both Federal & State levels of government whose departments are responsible for regulation and monitoring emissions (as is demonstrated by a screenshot from the Western Australia Department of Environment & Conservation website below).

The screenshot shows the website for the Department of Environment and Conservation. The header includes the department's logo and the tagline "Our environment. our future." Below the header is a navigation menu with links for "About us", "Our environment", "Management and protection", "Pollution prevention", "Parks and recreation", "Community and education", "News", and "Shop". The main content area is titled "Pollution prevention" and includes a search bar, a "Menu" section, and a "Categories" section. The "Categories" section lists "Contaminated sites", "Controlled waste", "Licensing and regulation", "Waste management", "Air quality", "National Pollutant Inventory", and "Noise". The "LANDSCOPE" section is also visible. The main text describes the department's regulatory powers and lists its responsibilities, such as regulating emissions, monitoring air quality, and managing hazardous wastes.

CCL Munster operations are subject to regulation and monitoring with these considerations forming a major part of the company's 'license to operate'. Furthermore, Cockburn Cement, as required, submits the emission levels from its operations to government, so that government can both determine appropriate conditions for the company to operate, as well as inform the public via such means as the National Pollutant Inventory. [Link](#)

Essentially, this means that operations at Munster are continually monitored and reported by both the company and the government and that the responsibility they both have to ensure people's health and well-being are adequately considered, is irrefutable.

Mr Chairman and Members, the issue of property and other concerns of CCL Munster operations are also important, however, these issues need to be considered fairly with numerous factors taken into account.

Among the factors that should be considered is that CCL Munster operations are long established at its present location and have been impacted by urban encroachment, not the other way around. Indeed, one only needs to look at photographs housed in the State Library of Western Australia from the period 1963 to 1980 to see that cement and lime production has been present at the location for many decades. [Link](#)

I believe it very important for the Committee to recognise and acknowledge the significant investment that has been made over decades to ensure CCL could carry out the domestic production of cement and lime, in an area determined by decades of planning, to be suitable to for industrial purposes.

2. The adequacy of action to address the above concerns

Mr Chairman and Members, I touched upon earlier in this submission the significant level of monitoring and regulation with regard to industrial emissions. As I see it, it is in the best interests of both government and company to continue to vigorously regulate and monitor industrial emissions.

Given the importance of the issue to both government and company, I do not see the present situation as being inadequate. I do acknowledge that as time progresses, additional and improved ways of dealing with emissions will emerge and it will remain in the interests of government and company to ensure that emissions are regulated and monitored to achieve the best outcomes possible.

With regard to the issue of property and the urban encroachment on industrial areas, I believe the decisions of the past effectively constrain the ability to adequately address or redress those concerns.

Fairness should be the ultimate arbiter in addressing or redressing decisions of the past and as I have outlined above, CCL Munster operations have been established and carried out at a place and in a way that is consistent with its purpose and they have done so for a very long time. I fear that this point is often lost in the charged environment of a passionate public debate and that fairness and equality is disregarded.

3. The process of issuing and amending licences;

Mr Chairman and Members, I am reticent to address this term of reference in great detail, except to highlight once again the importance of Cockburn Cement to the State of Western Australia and that the attributes of certainty and fairness should be considered when issuing and amending licenses.

It would I believe be detrimental to the State of Western Australia, should this inquiry recommend that licenses be issued and amended in a way that departs from the competent investigation of issues. I do not see the present process lacking in that regard or being either inadequate or unfair.

4. Any other relevant matter

Mr Chairman and members of the committee, with regard to this term of reference, I take the opportunity to highlight the importance of domestically produced cement and lime, such as produced by Cockburn Cement in Munster.

Lime, for example is a vital industrial substance with operations around the State of Western Australia relying on lime to produce goods that create the wealth that contributes to this State's ongoing development.

One of these instances is the utilisation of lime by Cristal Chemicals at their production facility at Kemerton near Bunbury. According to the Kemerton Industrial Park website, Cristal and Millenium Inorganic Chemicals combine to form the world's second-largest producer of titanium dioxide and a leading producer of titanium chemicals. [Link](#)

Without domestically produced and available lime, this operation would simply not be as viable and the invaluable employment and economic benefits that Cristal and Millenium Inorganic Chemicals provide to Bunbury and the whole of the South West region, would be in jeopardy.

Similar circumstances can be found around the state in relation to the processing and manufacture of gold, steel, alumina and asphalt. In all, lime is essential and domestically produced lime integral to countless company's ability to operate efficiently and effectively.

Cement too, especially domestically produced cement is vital to this State as both government and private companies focus on building infrastructure to further develop opportunities for all Western Australians.

Domestically produced cement provides with numerous advantages over using imported cement from either the Eastern States or internationally. Just one example is distance. Cement produced in Western Australia inherently has less distance to travel to its place of employment than imported cement. The large expanse of Western Australia means that imported cement, whether it be from the Eastern States or foreign countries, would require transportation over long distances with all the associated imposts such as transportation costs and environmental impacts

Indeed it is worth noting that cement produced in Western Australia, is done so more efficiently whilst emitting less carbon emissions than cement produced in Indonesia, China and India.

It is clear to me, and I hope now to the committee, that cement produced domestically here in Western Australia is not only advantageous, but also necessary to the future of this State and its people.

Closing

In closing, I would like the committee to be aware of the current positions I hold within the Liberal Party of Australia (WA Division)

President	Bunbury Branch
Senior Vice President	Forrest Division
State Council Delegate	Forrest Division

Mr Chairman and members, despite my holding the above positions, this submission and the text within is my own and should not be associated with the Liberal Party.

I would also like the committee to be aware that my brother is presently employed by Cockburn Cement Limited, but again, this is my submission and should not be associated with Cockburn Cement Limited.

I thank the Chairman and members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs for their consideration of my submission.

Yours Sincerely



Findlay M Osborn

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