

**BEFORE PALMERSTON NORTH CITY COUNCIL**

**UNDER THE**

Resource Management Act 1991

**IN THE MATTER OF**

of application RC LU5959 by Soul Friend Pet Cremations (Applicant) to the Palmerston North City Council for resource consents to establish and operate a pet cremation business, public memorial garden, woodworking workshop and spray booth for urn finishes and to undertake land disturbance and a change in use of a piece of land described in the hazardous activities and industries list without a detailed site investigation at 94 Mulgrave Street, Ashhurst

---

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF GEORGE VAN HOUT ON BEHALF OF  
Soul Friends Pet Cremations**

Noise

05 October 2021

---

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 My full name is George Thomas van Hout.
- 1.2 I am a Senior Acoustic Engineer at WSP New Zealand Limited (*WSP*).
- 1.3 I hold the qualifications of a Bachelor of Building Science from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand and a Masters Degree in Engineering (Acoustics) from Canterbury University in New Zealand. I have practiced as an acoustic engineer for seven years.
- 1.4 I have been a member of the Acoustical Society of New Zealand since 2018 and a member of the Institute of Acoustics since 2020. I have previously held the title of Vice President of the Acoustic Society of New Zealand.
- 1.5 I have experience in a wide variety of environmental noise assessment projects throughout New Zealand. These include Notice of Requirement applications, Plan Changes, Resource Consent Applications, and assisted various Councils as a Peer Reviewer for Resource Consents. I have presented affidavit to Environment Court.
- 1.6 I have been involved with Soul Friends Pet Cremations (Soul Friends) for the resource consent to develop and operate a pet cremation service, a woodwork workshop, and spray booth for wood urns since September 2020.

### **Code of Conduct**

- 1.7 I have read and am familiar with the Environment Court's Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses, contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2014, and agree to comply with it. My qualifications as an expert are set out above. Other than where I state that I am relying on the advice of another person, I confirm that the issues addressed in this statement of evidence are within my area of expertise. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express.

## **2 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE**

- 2.1 My evidence is presented on behalf of Soul Friends and relates to noise matters associated with the Proposal.

2.2 My evidence should be read in conjunction with the Updated Assessment of Environmental Noise Effects Report – LU5959, dated 22 September 2021, prepared by WSP, and is structured as follows:

- (a) summary of Noise Assessment;
- (b) comments on matters raised by submitters;
- (c) comments on Council section 42A report and specialist reporting;
- (d) proposed consent conditions; and
- (e) concluding comments.

### **3 SUMMARY OF NOISE ASSESSMENT**

3.1 The Proposal is to construct a single building on 94 Mulgrave Street which will house four cremators, a woodwork workshop, and a spray booth. A new road will be constructed to the Building. The site is within the Rural Zone under the Palmerston North City Council's (PNCC) District Plan. Details of the buildings, location, and activities are found in the application and evidence of others.

3.2 I have been involved with the Proposal since September 2020.

3.3 In September 2020, WSP was engaged to undertake an assessment of the operational noise effects associated with the Proposal. My acoustic assessment report was provided in February 2021 which included a cumulative noise assessment of the crematorium, workshop, and boarding kennels operating on site.

3.4 Since the issue of my report, the kennels and cattery which operated on site have now closed and not reopening. My report was revised to reflect the closure of the kennels and cattery in September 2021

3.5 The key noise sources associated with the general operation of the proposal are noise associated with the four cremators, the woodwork workshop and associated spray-booth, and vehicles on site.

3.6 Based on national and international guidance, noise criteria specific for this site has been developed. Differences between the PNCC noise standards and the proposed noise limits are:

- (a) Rural zone noise limits apply at the notional boundary (20 metres from the façade of habitable dwellings) under the

proposed noise limits, rather than the property boundary as outlined in the PNCC noise standards. This is in line with New Zealand Standard NZS 6801 and NZS 6802 for measuring and assessing noise in rural areas.

- (b) More appropriate noise limits have been developed for the plant nursery (84 Winchester Street), and Abattoir (102 Mulgrave Street), as these are commercial in nature. The PNCC noise standards were developed for residential dwellings in rural zones.

3.7 On 8 October 2020 I visited the existing workshop and crematorium to undertake noise measurements of the existing workshop equipment and existing crematorium chambers and stacks that is to be relocated to the proposed building. These measurements were used in the noise modelling and analysis.

3.8 I have assessed noise from three scenarios:

- (a) Workshop including spray booth operating only;
- (b) Workshop including spray booth and cremators operating concurrently;
- (c) Traffic entering and exiting site.

**(a) Workshop including spray booth operating only**

3.9 The workshop including spray booth operating solely complies with the proposed noise limits.

3.10 There is a marginal 2 dB exceedance of the PNCC District Plan daytime noise standards at 102 Mulgrave Street and 83 Winchester Street (52 dB  $L_{Aeq}$ ) when assessed at the boundary of the site. This is deemed acceptable due to these sites being commercial in nature.

**(b) Workshop including spray booth and cremators operating concurrently**

3.11 When the workshop including spray booth operates concurrently with cremators operating, the proposed noise limits are achieved.

3.12 There are technical non-compliances with the PNCC noise standards at 83 Winchester Street (4 dB), 102 Mulgrave Street (2 dB), and 114 Mulgrave Street (7 dB) during the daytime. In addition to these properties, here is also a technical non-compliance at 106 Mulgrave

street (1 dB) during the evening period (1900 to 2200 hours). All of these properties are zoned rural.

3.13 83 Winchester Street and 102 Mulgrave Street properties are commercial in nature and are therefore considered less sensitive to noise than the PNCC noise standards which were developed for residential dwellings.

3.14 There is currently no house on the 114 Mulgrave Street property. Therefore, there is no notional boundary to assess noise against.

3.15 Nevertheless, for 114 Mulgrave Street, as outlined in the evidence of others, the location which a dwelling could be constructed as of right on this property would be constrained to the northwest or southeast portion due to the stream and flood prone area. I understand after speaking with Ms Manderson that constructing a dwelling in the south-eastern portion of the site, which is closest to the proposed crematorium would be difficult due to setback distances from the boundary, stream and flood-prone land. It would also require a consent to construct two accessways across the stream. This is further described in the evidence of Ms Manderson.

### **(c) Traffic entering and exiting site**

3.16 Noise from vehicles entering and exiting site have been assessed separately as the peak period when staff arrive or depart will occur when the cremators and workshop do not operate. Noise from vehicles is predicted to achieve the proposed noise limits and PNCC noise standards.

## **4 MATTERS RAISED BY SUBMITTERS**

4.1 Six submissions were received regarding the proposal. Four of the six submitters raised noise as a concern. Concerns of the submitters can be summarised as:

- (a) Noise from seven-day operation.
- (b) Noise from the workshop.
- (c) Noise from vehicles on public roads (Mulgrave Street).
- (d) Cumulative noise associated with the proposal and the existing (now closed) kennels and cattery.
- (e) Noise mitigation controls.

(f) Noise from any change in land-use.

**(a) Noise from seven-day operation**

- 4.2 Typical hours of operation for cremations and noisy activity in the workshop will occur during the weekdays (Monday to Friday). This was assessed in my acoustic report.
- 4.3 From discussions with the Applicant, some routine cremations may occur on Saturdays and a single cremator may be used from time to time due in response to unplanned client contact for a deceased pet. This sporadic and unplanned work is to only occur between 1100 and 1500 hours Saturday and Sunday. Due to the unplanned nature, it is unlikely that this will occur every Saturday and Sunday. There may also be occurrences where a customer may request a service on a Saturday or Sunday. This activity is less than the worst-case activity predicted in my acoustic report.
- 4.4 Workshop activities may operate between 1100 and 1500 hours on a Saturday at times as demand requires.
- 4.5 Noise from this weekend work can be managed via a Noise Management Plan (NMP) which is proposed as a condition of consent. As part of the NMP, a contact number will be provided to the adjacent residents and a complaints register to be kept. Where necessary, the Applicant can work with the adjacent neighbours who may have special events occurring during the weekends (birthday party, open homes, etc.) so cremators do not run during this period as far as practicable. Workshop and cremators should be managed so that they do not occur concurrently on the weekend.

**(b) Noise from the workshop**

- 4.6 Noise measurements were undertaken at the existing woodwork workshop of the equipment that is to be relocated to the proposed workshop. Noise measurements of the existing woodwork equipment and cremators were used to predict noise from the proposed activity. This gives a high level of confidence that the predicted noise emissions will be no greater when the workshop is operating.

**(c) Noise from traffic on public roads**

- 4.7 Noise from vehicles on the roading network is not part of the applicant's site and is therefore exempt from achieving the noise standards. Therefore, traffic on roads have not been assessed.

**(d) Cumulative noise impact from crematorium and kennels**

- 4.8 The kennels and cattery that were operating on site have now closed. Therefore, there will be no cumulative noise impacts. I have provided an updated report to reflect this in September 2021.

**(e) Noise mitigation concerns**

- 4.9 One submitter raised concerns around the acoustic mitigation controls that have been considered. Part of the building location study was to locate the proposed building far away from residential receivers. This will provide as much distance as possible to reduce noise emissions.
- 4.10 An acoustic fence is proposed along the boundary to 98 Mulgrave Street to minimise noise emissions to this property. The acoustic fence is proposed to reduce noise by at least 10 dB at 98 Mulgrave Street from traffic on the access road.

**(f) Rezoning of rural zoned land to residential**

- 4.11 Multiple submitters have raised the re-zoning of 83 Winchester Street from Rural to Residential. I have discussed this with Ms Manderson (Applicants Planner). I understand that while a plan change for this site has been discussed with the community, there has been no formal plan change application submitted to PNCC. Therefore, 83 Mulgrave Street site is considered a rural zoned site as this consent predates the notification of any plan change.

**5 COUNCIL SECTION 42A REPORT**

- 5.1 I have reviewed the section 42A report, together with the specialist noise report, dated 28 September 2021 prepared by Mr. Nigel Lloyd referenced in the section 42A report, which has been used by Mr. Phillip Hindrup to assess the noise effects of the Proposal.
- 5.2 Prior to the release of the section 42A report, I discussed in high level and without prejudice our report with Mr. Lloyd and any concerns that

he had. Mr. Lloyd is supportive of the methodology and assumptions adopted in preparing the Noise Assessment and considers that the effects of the Proposal can be managed with appropriate conditions. Mr. Lloyd has reached the conclusions that he believes that the District Plan noise standards are predicted to be met, , and where they are not, the effects are less than minor.

- 5.3 Mr. Hindrup agrees with the conclusions of Mr. Lloyd within his Section 42A report.
- 5.4 I agree with the conclusions outlined within the evidence of Mr. Lloyd and the section 42A report relating to noise.

## **6 PROPOSED CONSENT CONDITIONS**

- 6.1 Mr. Lloyd has outlined recommended conditions of consent specific to noise. Mr. Hindrup has adopted these as draft conditions of consent, outlined in Appendix 1 of the Section 42A report.
- 6.2 I generally agree with all of the draft conditions of consent. I recommend that the wording of draft condition 4 of Appendix 1 of the Section 42a report is reworded to clarify:

*The pet crematorium and workshop (including onsite vehicles) activities must not exceed the following at or within any existing residentially zoned sites (at the time of this consent): ...*

- 6.3 Alternatively, a map to clarify each of the assessment sites such as one appended to my evidence could be provided.

## **7 CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

- 7.1 In summary:
- (a) It is predicted that noise associated with the proposed crematorium, woodwork workshop, spray booth, and vehicles on site comply with the proposed noise limits.
  - (b) The kennels and cattery are now closed and will not reopen. Therefore, there is no cumulative impacts of noise from the proposal and kennels.
  - (c) Consent conditions relating to noise have been developed to ensure that the noise effects are in line with the outcomes of the

noise assessment. I have recommended a slight change to condition 4 (in Appendix 1 of the Section 42a report).

7.2 I therefore consider that the noise effects of the Proposal will be acceptable.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. van Hout', is centered on a light gray grid background.

**George van Hout**  
**Senior Acoustic Engineer, WSP**  
**05 October 2021**