BEFORE THE COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED ON BEHALF OF CENTRAL OTAGO DISTRICT COUNCIL

Under	The Resource Management Act 1991 (the **Act**)
In the Matter	of Resource Consent Application RC250077 for the purpose of mining at Sandy Point, Queensberry
Between	**AWA KOURA MINING LIMITED** **Applicant**
And	**CENTRAL OTAGO DISTRICT COUNCIL** **Territorial Authority**

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF DANIEL WALKER

DATED 13 OCTOBER 2026

GALLAWAY COOK ALLAN LAWYERS
Phil Page/Hannah Perkin
phil.page@gallawaycookallan.co.nz
hannah.perkin@gallawaycookallan.co.nz

PO Box 143
Dunedin 9054
Ph: (03) 477 7312
Fax: (03) 477 5564

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF DANIEL NORMAN WALKER

Introduction

1. My name is Daniel Walker. I am a director and the majority shareholder of Awa Koura Mining Limited. I live in Golden Bay, and I am a goldminer.

2. At 7 years old I was first shown how to pan for gold by an elderly neighbour, since then I have pursued a career in gold mining. I have read every book on mining in New Zealand that I could get my hands on. I have trawled through the thousands of Crown Minerals archives of exploration and mining reports. I have panned, sluiced and suction dredged in many South Island creeks, streams and rivers that bear gold, and many that don't, and I still do to this day. I ran my first alluvial mining operation near Collingwood in the 1980s and for 20 years established and built up a large alluvial mining operation in Mongolia which ultimately employed 450 people.

3. In 2018, leaving the running of the Mongolian operation to my family, I returned to New Zealand to retire. However, the allure of gold mining was irresistible. Together, with a few key partners, we established Awa Koura Mining and her sister companies to conduct exploration & mining activities across the upper and lower South Island.

4. We are a 100% New Zealand owned and operated business. We employ local staff and use local contractors and suppliers wherever practical. We provide staff with incentives to excel and profit share when times are good.

5. We are also acutely aware of our environmental responsibilities. We mine elsewhere in Otago and on the West Coast. We are regularly audited and have an excellent compliance record. We run late-model

machinery and equipment with strict maintenance regimes. We meet or exceed our health, safety and environmental obligations.

Scope of Evidence

6. My evidence covers:

   (a) Background and rationale for proposal,

   (b) Description of proposal,

   (c) Operational matters,

   (d) Comment on proposed conditions in the section 42A report.

Background

7. The site is located southeast of Luggate and north of Queensbury, in the Rural Resource Area of the Central Otago District. The area is locally known as Sandy Point. The site was subject to an exploration permit where sampling identified a shallow gold resource.

8. The site's gold deposit is relatively shallow and can be extracted progressively using alluvial mining methods. It is well suited to a small-scale short-term operation. It is not comparable to the scale or the duration of the likes of Macraes mine or the proposed Santana Bendigo-Ophir mine.

9. Otago and the Clutha River have a rich history of mining. It is little wonder that we were to eventually find a mineable resource within its catchments.

10. Mining contributes over $2.8 billion to New Zealand's GDP.[1] It supports employment, regional economic activity and export earnings.

11. Gold remains an important mineral resource which is used in a wide range of applications, including electronics, cars, jewellery, aircraft, dental implants, health care, fine arts and signwriting. Gold is unusual because it is non-allergenic and biologically inert and almost chemically inert. I quote from a New Zealand Geographic article published in 2005:[2]

> Perhaps most striking, gold is virtually indestructible: all of the gold ever mined on Earth—guesstimated at about 145,000 t—still exists today, and is as brilliant as ever. It has not tarnished, rusted or corroded because, as one of the least reactive metals, gold is unaffected by air, heat, moisture and most solvents.
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> It is also the most malleable and ductile of all metals: you can stretch a Troy ounce of gold (31.1 g) into a wire 80 km long, or hammer it out into a super-thin sheet 3 x 3 m wide. Moreover, you can work gold countless times—melt it, pour and quench it, stretch it, hammer it out, roll it up, re-melt it, again and again—and it will show no sign of fatigue or weakness. Throughout, it will retain its colour, its aura, its structure, its perfect composure.
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> This retention of qualities under the most testing conditions; the metal's exceptional conductivity of both heat and electricity; its superb reflectivity (pure gold reflects up to 99 per cent of infrared rays; the mirror of the world's largest telescope, in Hawaii, is coated with gold)—all make the perfect metal an invaluable and highly sought-after material.

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[1] New Zealand Minerals Council "Economics: Our contribution to the economy" Minerals Council <www.mineralscouncil.co.nz>.
[2] New Zealand Geographic, Issue 072 March-April 2005: https://www.nzgeo.com/stories/gold/

> In our everyday lives we are surrounded by gold, albeit in the tiniest quantities. There is almost-pure gold in the mouthpiece diaphragm of your telephone and the phone jack contacts, on the surface of your CDs, and in every TV, VCR and copying machine, in which gold-coated mirrors are used to reflect heat. You'll find gold in the sensors for air-bag deployment in your car, in aircraft engines and navigation systems, in the jet nozzles of the space shuttle and in fire-fighters' protective suits.
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> Pure gold is also the key connecting element in all silicon circuitry—in the form of both bonding wire (with an average diameter of 0.01 mm) and the paste which is printed onto ceramic bases to produce circuit boards—and thus forms the neural network of our information age. Coating with gold has also long been used in architecture for non-corroding decoration, and is proving increasingly useful in the pursuit of energy efficiency. Technological advances that allow the application on glass of an extremely thin coating of gold—as little as a Troy ounce of the metal spread over 90 sq m—have led to the construction of gold-and-glass buildings. With the gilded surface reflecting the summer heat out and the winter heating in, this technology is reported to cut the costs of air-conditioning by some 40 per cent.

12. I mention all this to explain that gold is not some frippery or fashion item. Gold is not enormously valuable because people like to wear it, but because it has extraordinary properties that are vital to a wide range of uses that support all of our daily lives. .It formed the basis of our financial system and is traded as a global commodity. It is stockpiled by reserve banks around the world to manage fiscal risk and objectives. In short, it is an essential commodity required to live the modern life.

13. We have attempted to craft a responsive proposal and have been receptive to issues raised by submitters and the Council. Mining often attracts significant scrutiny. By comparison, other forms of rural land use, such as viticulture, can have substantial and enduring environmental effects without attracting the same degree of public

examination. I consider it is important to keep the temporary and limited scale of this proposal in perspective.

Description of proposal

14. There will be an active mining area of no more than 2ha. Mining will commence at the southern-most end of the site, and zig zag between the main road and the river. We estimate that the plant will move 13 metres per day, impacting only a limited area of the site at any one time. As the operation proceeds, remediation works will directly follow.

15. The site is already subject to a consent for an 8-lot subdivision. As we complete and rehabilitate each block, sections will be progressively released for development.

16. Mining will be carried out Monday-Friday for up to ten hours a day, five days a week. We had considered a seven-day working week for the site but reduced the activity to a typical working week to limit the effects on neighbours. I note that the noise peer review and the 42A report recommends 8am-5pm weekdays only for “mining activity”. If that is limited to the machinery modelled in the noise report (excavators, loaders, floating screen, and dump trucks) then I will accept that limit. To be clear, that would not prevent staff being on site and doing other work.

17. There will be five staff employed to run the operation. This is the maximum number of staff expected to be on site at any one time, although typically there will be at least three people present.

18. The core operational roles are the screening plant operator, the excavator operator and a general site operator undertaking ancillary tasks around the mine site. The screening plant operator will monitor and position the plant as mining progresses, while the excavator operator will extract and load material into the plant.

19. A further operator will provide relief cover when staff are on leave. The fifth staff member will be the mine manager, who will be responsible for site management, administration, health and safety, environmental compliance and oversight of the day-to-day operations. .

Operational matters

20. The excavators will be visible at times from surrounding properties. However, the site is an active farming property where there are frequent tractors working, ploughing fields, planting crops harvesting crops, feeding out supplements. The proposed activity will take place within an existing working rural environment.

21. Topsoil will be stripped in blocks ahead of mining, trucked and stockpiled in anticipation of rehabilitation. Once the initial pit has been established, topsoil will be progressively moved and spread over areas that have already been mined and backfilled. This process allows rehabilitation to occur alongside mining operations rather than waiting until mining is complete.

22. Mining will then be undertaken using mechanical excavators feeding a floating plant with a shaker and gravity gold recovery system. No mercury or other chemicals are used in the recovery process.

23. Fuel will be stored in double-skinned tanked, in a contained area (bunded) and located out of the flood-hazard zone, to ensure any risk to the environment is protected in the event of rupture or flood event.

24. Currently, the site often has machinery operating with oil, petrol and diesel on board. Our operations will be no different. Our equipment will all be new, or very close to new, and therefore less likely to have blown hoses of other mechanical issues that may cause a leak of petroleum products onto the land or into groundwater. Regular maintenance also

helps to minimise unnecessary squeaks and noise associated with worn machinery.

25. This care taken is twofold. With our type of alluvial gold mining there is also an additional very strong incentive not to allow petroleum products to escape onto the ground or into water. When you are dealing with very fine, light gold, as in the Sandy Point gold deposit, any oil or oil products that enter the recovery system, even in minute quantities, greatly reduce our gold recovery rates, so we take extra precautions to prevent spillage and leakage.

26. Excavations will be a few meters deep into the gravels. Once excavated, because groundwater is hydrologically connected to the River surface water system, will then naturally rise to create a pond generally aligned with the river water level. The floating screen will then be manoeuvred into the screen-pond. The material will then be extracted using an excavator to feed the floating wash plant.

27. The noise assessment adopts a worst-case scenario approach. During normal operations, we will have one excavator and screen operating, with a second excavator operating at 20-30% utilisation rate. Around two to three days per month will involve topsoil stripping and stockpiling. On those days both excavators are likely to operate together with the wash plant and up to two trucks.

28. The noise assessment also considered the use of a bulldozer. However, based on our current mine planning, and the limited quantity of topsoil present on the site, I do not anticipate that a bulldozer will be required.

29. The wash plant will sit below existing ground level – on the water profile – with the pontoons mostly submerged. There will also be a cloak to provide additional mitigation of noise effects and will be typical in colour to the rural environment. With the partially submerged setting,

cloak and bunding to the sides of topsoil and overburden, the visual and noise effects of the wash plant will be reduced.

Comment on proposed conditions in the section 42A report.

30. I want to comment on noise, since that is the reason for the 42A report recommending consent be declined.

31. In my view, as an experienced plant operator, what has been modelled represents an overly pessimistic worst case scenario. Although that might give you a high degree of confidence in the predicted noise levels being conservative, it also needs to be understood that this is not a normal operational scenario.

32. The noise contours produced by Marshall Day Acoustics, and used by Mr Styles, assume that everything happens at ground level. That is different to Marshall Day's original report dated December 2025, which modelled the floating screen, excavator, and pumps operating below ground within the pit. That work was re-run in June 2026 by Marshall Day in response to the request for further information as set out below:

Depth of working pit

5. My reading of the AEE, the Dust Assessment and the Landscape Assessment is that the working face will be "a few metres deep" (AEE) and 3m deep (Dust and Landscape Assessment). However, the MDA Report states that the excavation plant and screens etc will be in a pit that is 7m deep. The additional 4m of depth adopted in the MDA Report (and so in the noise modelling) will significantly reduce the noise levels from the plant. I expect that the predicted noise levels will increase (and potentially considerably) if the plant is elevated to within 3m of the current ground levels.

Can the applicant clarify the depth of the excavation below existing ground level, and the approximate general RL of the plant when it is operating. If the plant is likely to be higher than 7m below ground level, can the applicant provide updated noise level predictions based on the actual range of depths that are likely.

The pit depth will vary across the site. However, the updated noise modelling has assumed activity at ground level as a worst case (see response to Item 3.).

33. The assumed "activity at ground level" is even worse than a "worst case scenario" because a floating screen plant will not operate sitting at ground level. And neither will the water pumps ever be operating at

ground level. It will always be working at water level in the pit. That is what floating plant does. The water level is determined by the levels in the adjacent river. I have no doubt that the noise levels that will be received by neighbours will usually be lower than the updated RFI contours predict. I do not agree that it is reasonable for us to have to comply with noise limited at the notional boundary of houses yet to be built (condition 8). We cannot plan for that as we have no way of knowing if or when or where that might happen. It is just too uncertain. On the other hand, our consent conditions are public and anyone planning on building a new house can plan around our consent term and conditions.

34. I accept the conditions about dust, and the requirement for a weather station and PM10 monitoring. I would add a not of caution, though, that as the submitters' video shows, Sandy point is already very dusty in a nor-wester. It is not going to be easy to distinguish our dust from the background environment. Good site management is the key, which is what the other conditions will ensure.

Conclusion

35. I appreciate that some object to our proposed operation. We are mindful of our neighbours, we have engaged experts and have carefully considered the potential effects. Our application addresses those concerns and implements mechanisms to mitigate or eliminate impacts. That is why I accept the limited hours of operation for the modelled plant. This is also considered as we design and build the plant or procure equipment. Innovative improvements are ongoing and are adopted to improve performance or minimise impacts. Sound risk assessment processes and good planning ensure positive outcomes for affected parties and stakeholders alike.

Dated 13 October 2026

D Walker