



Office of the Hon Gabrielle Upton MP

Minister for the Environment
Minister for Local Government
Minister for Heritage

MD18/2424
POL Gold Coast Airport: DmC/amc

Mr Troy Green PSM
General Manager
Tweed Shire Council
PO Box 816
MURWILLUMBAH NSW 2484

By email: tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Green

Thank you for your letter to the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Gabrielle Upton MP, about air pollution monitoring in Tweed Shire and the Northern Rivers. The Minister has asked me to respond on her behalf.

The NSW Government acknowledges the importance of protecting air quality in NSW and is working with community and industry to address sources of air pollution across NSW.

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) works in partnership with government agencies, industry and the community to reduce air pollution and improve air quality. Further details on the EPA's framework for action on improving air quality can be found on the EPA website at www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/air.

Air pollution levels in NSW are continuously monitored by the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) through the NSW ambient air quality monitoring network. OEH currently operates the largest National Air Toxics Assessment accredited air quality monitoring network in Australia providing up-to-date information on air quality. Near-real time data from the network is updated hourly and is publicly available on the OEH website at the following address <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/aqms/aqi.htm>.

At the Clean Air Summit in June 2017, the Minister announced integration and expansion of the existing DustWatch network as the NSW Rural Air Quality Monitoring Network with some additional indicative monitors to be deployed. From 1 January 2018, the former DustWatch network became NSW's first rural air quality monitoring network, with 33 monitoring stations. Deployment of a rural network monitor in other regional centres remains under consideration.

The Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development is the environmental regulator for the Airport land. Although the EPA does not have any regulatory powers in relation to the activities of Air Services Australia or Gold Coast

Airport, we will continue to work with the relevant stakeholders to ensure an appropriate, scientific and risk-based investigation of pollutants originating from Gold Coast Airport.

In NSW, sugar cane can take two years to mature compared to one year in most of Queensland, and as a result generates more leaf and trash. This leaf and trash is burnt off to facilitate harvesting by managing trash and stubble and controlling pests, weeds and diseases. The industry has explored alternative methods to avoid burning. Unfortunately, infrastructure to separate the leaf and trash from the sugar cane was ineffective.

Agricultural burning is permitted under the *Protection of the Environment Operations (Clean Air) Regulation 2010* (the Regulation). It requires people carrying out agricultural burning to take all practicable measures to minimise or prevent air pollution. This includes considering the potential for smoke to impact people due to wind direction and weather conditions.

The NSW Canegrowers Association has arrangements in place to manage public concerns about smoke from sugar cane burning. If you believe that a cane farmer is not taking practical measures to control air pollution from a cane fire, in the first instance please report your concern to Doug Irby, Tweed Branch N.S.W. Canegrowers, baidji@bigpond.com, tel 02 66 771386, mob 0423 662310. Alternatively, you can report the concerns to the EPA's Environment Line on 131 555.

Further information about why sugar cane is burnt can be found at http://sunshinesugar.com.au/images/nswsugarDocs/files/Burning/BURNING_QUESTION_2016.pdf.

Smoke from wood heaters is a major cause of air pollution and the EPA has produced a council resource kit to raise awareness about the harmful impacts of wood smoke pollution and provide practical tips for wood heater owners to better operate their wood heaters. The resource kit can be found at <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/air/reducing-wood-smoke-emissions/wood-smoke-resources-for-local-government>.

If you have any further questions about this issue, please contact Ms Janelle Bancroft Acting Unit Head, Environment Management Unit - North Coast, EPA on 02 6640 2513 or at janelle.bancroft@epa.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Scot MacDonald MLC

Parliamentary Secretary for Planning, the Central Coast and the Hunter