

Hon Phil Twyford

MP for Te Atatū

Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control
Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth

Associate Minister for the Environment
Associate Minister of Immigration



23 February 2022

PT02252/CORM-421

Simon Upton
Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment

Anna.hooper@pce.parliament.nz

Dear Simon

Thank you for your email of 14 December 2021 about Aotearoa New Zealand's air quality standards following your reading of *Our Air 2021*.

The Government has welcomed the release of the World Health Organization's (WHO) updated global air quality guidelines. This update confirms the need for PM_{2.5} standards in Aotearoa New Zealand but also confirms that there are no safe levels of air pollutants at a population level. The new guidelines mean that a new approach to managing pollution is needed for cities that were previously 'clean'.

There is an opportunity here to reassess whether the way we manage air pollution reflects the evidence that there are no safe levels of air pollution. The Government takes the issue of health impacts from air pollution seriously and is keen to find a solution that strikes a balance between improving air quality and supporting people to live in warm, dry homes.

For particulate matter, while we agree that long-term exposure has the most damaging health effects, managing daily limits is essential to address the strongly seasonal nature of our domestic particulate matter sources.

The proposed amendments to the National Environmental Standards for Air Quality (NESAQ) that we consulted on in 2020 aimed to align the NESAQ with the then current understanding on the health impacts of particulate matter exposure and adopted an integrated approach that considers both clean air and warm homes outcomes. Iwi and key stakeholders were largely supportive of the proposed amendments. We paused the progression of these proposed amendments in anticipation of the WHO releasing updated guidelines - which were repeatedly delayed due to other pressing priorities for the WHO. We now know that the proposed amendments are not sufficient and no longer in line with international guidelines.

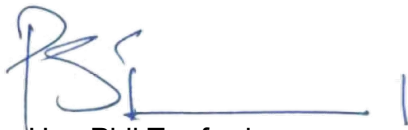
As you know, the Government is focused on delivering reform of the resource management system. Work is underway to understand how to appropriately transition existing national direction instruments into the new system. Due to the timing of the WHO update, and the subsequent work required to implement their guidelines, we expect to incorporate any amendments to the NES-AQ or other air quality policy into the new system.

The Ministry for the Environment is awaiting a further evidence update to inform the approach to integrate air quality policy, including limits and targets, into the system reform. The updated *Health and Air Pollution in New Zealand* (HAPiNZ) study is expected to be released by April 2022 (this work has also been significantly delayed due to Covid-19 impacts). This study evaluates the effects of air pollution on human health across Aotearoa New Zealand and the resulting social costs and will update the previous 2012 report.

Officials from the Ministry for the Environment and the Ministry of Health are working together on implications of the WHO 2021 update for air quality management in Aotearoa New Zealand.

We appreciate your continued advice to improve the management of air quality in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'P. Twyford', followed by a horizontal line and a vertical tick mark.

Hon Phil Twyford

Associate Minister for the Environment