



Hon Andrew McNamara MP
Member for Hervey Bay



12 JUN 2008

Minister for Sustainability,
Climate Change and Innovation

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Cnr Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letters dated 16 April 2008 concerning Petition No. 1005-08 and 2 May 2008 concerning Petition No. 1056-08 regarding the impact of acid sulfate soils on the waterways around Carrara. I acknowledge the seriousness of the impacts that are caused by previously disturbed acid sulfate soils within the Carrara floodplain area.

The vacant floodplain area adjoining the Palm Meadows Golf Course contains acid sulfate soils that were disturbed during lawful land clearing and drainage works conducted over 50 years ago. The disturbance has resulted in the oxidation of acid sulfate soils and the constant production of sulfate, acid and iron in the soils during dry seasons. During and following significant rain events, the sulfate, acid and iron drain to the Nerang River causing the poor water quality and fish kills described by the petitioners.

In February 2000, Palm Meadows Golf Club, the Gold Coast City Council and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) commissioned a report on "Issues and Options for Environmental Rehabilitation of Witt Avenue Drain, Carrara, Queensland". The report concluded that there are three rehabilitation options: water treatment only at a cost of approximately \$1,175,000 plus \$40,000 per year; intermediate rehabilitation and water treatment at a cost of approximately \$12,400,000; and optimal rehabilitation at a cost of approximately \$18,600,000.

Palm Meadows Golf Club, in conjunction with the Council and the EPA, conducted a trial of a water aerator in the pond on the golf course which drains into the Witt Avenue canal. The trial found that the levels of dissolved oxygen in the water increased; however, this does not of itself rectify the poor water quality in the canal. For that to occur, the water draining into the canal would have to be neutralised or the acid sulfate soils that are the source of the poor water quality would have to be treated. Based on the report commissioned in 2000 and the water treatment trials conducted to date, the cost of complete remediation of this periodic environmental issue is likely to exceed \$15 million.

In the past, the Council and the EPA have agreed the costs of remediation would be best placed on developers within the area. Where a development application for the vacant floodplain land is made to the Council, the State Planning Policy (SPP) 2/02 Planning and Managing Development Involving Acid Sulfate Soils may be triggered and conditions

Level 17
160 Ann Street Brisbane 4000
PO Box 15155 City East
Queensland 4002 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3336 8032
Facsimile +61 7 3227 6309
Email sustainability@ministerial.qld.gov.au
ABN 65 959 415 158

can be imposed on the development approval requiring rehabilitation of the acid sulfate soils. Under the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*, the SPP has effect when certain development applications are assessed, when planning schemes are made or amended, and when land is designated for community infrastructure. The Department of Natural Resources and Water (DNRW) is the lead State agency with respect to acid sulfate soil matters and is a formal advice agency with respect to development on acid sulfate soil.

Until an application is submitted to the Council, the EPA continues to monitor the water quality of the Witt Avenue canal system during significant events and ensures that the Council maintains the system by flushing between the Palm Meadows Golf Course and the canal inlet at Witt Avenue.

In response to this petition, I have requested the EPA to undertake further consultation with the Council, DNRW and Palm Meadows Golf Club to determine whether any newer and more cost effective treatment options for remediation have been developed since the study in 2000.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention. If any further information is required, please do not hesitate to contact Andrew Connor of the EPA on telephone 3225 8820.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew McNamara". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Andrew McNamara MP
Minister for Sustainability,
Climate Change and Innovation**