



The Honourable Scott Emerson MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads

Our ref: PET10434

Your ref: Petitions

6 MAR 2013

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to a petition number 2037-12 lodged with the Legislative Assembly by Mr Neil Symes MP, Member for Lytton on 14 February 2013 about legislation to enforce use of tarps on Aurizon's (formerly QR National) coal freight trains.

The petition drew attention to recent media reports about the effects of coal dust emissions on the Wynnum-Manly community and other affected towns in Queensland, and requested legislation to enforce use of tarps on Aurizon's coal freight trains.

With respect to coal rail transport, there are a range of reasons why loaded coal wagons are not covered. World-wide, coal is transported in open coal wagons for the most part because of the efficiency this brings in the loading and unloading of coal. Loaded coal wagons are also susceptible to spontaneous combustion and the open wagon helps prevent heat build-up that might lead to combustion.

The recent media reports arose primarily as the result of a number of complaints about coal dust from trains in the Tennyson area. In response the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection undertook a coal dust monitoring study at Tennyson during September-October 2012.

The *Tennyson Dust Monitoring Investigation Report* has now been released by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection. The investigation found dust levels were within acceptable levels. 24 hour average PM₁₀ fine particle levels did not exceed national standards and were found to be 47 percent below these standards. Deposited dust, also known as dustfall, was also tested and found to be less than accepted dust nuisance trigger guidelines.

However, in addition to this initiative, the Department of Transport and Main Roads has also been working with Queensland Rail, the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection and the South West System User's Group (comprising coal miners, Aurizon Limited and Queensland Bulk Handling Pty Ltd), to explore the development of additional measures to reduce coal dust emissions on the West Moreton Rail System.

As a result of this collaboration, the South West User's Group has now committed to the development of a comprehensive Coal Dust Management Plan covering rail transport to the Port of Brisbane to be completed by July 2013.

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As part of this plan the New Hope Group, which accounts for over half of the volume of coal sent through the Port of Brisbane, has committed to the installation of coal wagon veneering systems at its New Acland Coal Mine, commencing April 2013. Due to wet weather the installation of rail corridor monitoring equipment was delayed.

Veneering involves the spraying of a bio-degradable polymer binding agent onto the surface of loaded coal wagons before they leave the mine rail-loading facility. The veneering forms a crust which, based on the roll-out of a similar program on the Central Queensland rail network, has reduced dust emissions by up to 75 percent.

If the veneering proves effective in reducing dust levels on the South West Rail System, the South West User's Group anticipates that the remaining two South West miners will follow suit by the end of 2013.

In addition as part of the Coal Dust Management Plan, an ongoing Coal Dust Monitoring Program is to be established with dust monitoring sites at seven locations along the rail corridor, including at Oakey, Toowoomba, Ipswich, Tennyson, Annerley and Morningside. The Coal Dust Monitoring Program will provide ongoing measurement of air emissions and support the implementation of the planned Coal Dust Management Plan.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Scott Emerson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Scott Emerson MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads