

To:
The Hon Matt Kean, MP
Minister for Energy and Environment,
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Correspondence to:
Debra Smith, Secretary,
Blue Mountain Unions & Community,
52-52A Great Western Highway.
MOUNT VICTORIA NSW 2786
airwatch.bm-community-union@mail.tidyhq.com

RE. Request for the extension of the Lithgow Blue Mountains Air Watch air monitoring project.

Dear Mr Kean,

We are writing to express our thanks to your department and, in particular, our gratitude to the team at the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) Regional Infrastructure section based in Parramatta and their work on the above Air Watch project with our organisations.

We also write to request an extension of the Lithgow Blue Mountains Air Watch to provide air quality monitoring services over the next 5 years given the heightened future risks from bushfires and the public health issues confronting our communities as a consequence.

As you may be aware a number of community groups and organisations from the region came together in 2017 resulting from concerns about our ambient air quality.

Following consultations with the EPA including the then Department of Environment and Heritage, it was agreed with community organisations, local government and the local health district to commence ambient air quality monitoring using eleven KOALAs (Knowing our Ambient Local Air-Quality) and one Pod in May 2019 for a period of 12 months.

The community participants were instrumental in identifying suitable locations in Lithgow, Katoomba, Wentworth Falls and Springwood. They included siting KOALAs in 8 local schools, 3 in Lithgow, 3 in Katoomba and 2 in Springwood. The near real time air quality has been used by the schools in their science and geography studies.

To date we have only received limited public data from the Air Watch and University of Western Sydney. We understand the Blue Mountains Lithgow Air Watch website has received over 3000 'hits' in the initial period. The site has been shared on social media and with the Blue Mountains Gazette and Lithgow Mercury.

The Blue Mountains World Heritage listed National Park hosts a reported 5 million visitors each year with many coming from urban areas to take 'the air'. Recently our nation has experienced devastating bushfires. Here in the Blue Mountains we have been able to monitor the air pollution generated from these fires and plan our activities accordingly, this has been particularly beneficial for the young and those suffering medical conditions.

We understand the rate of hospital admissions for respiratory, cardio thoracic and other smoke related conditions has spiked across NSW leading to concerns about the medium to long term effects of air pollution in our communities.

We believe there is a place for the air quality monitors in research into the effects of both bushfire smoke and the smoke generated through controlled burning. We support pre-season hazard reduction, while noting the NSWRFs Fire Commander Shane Fitsimmons commented that while controlled burning is an important tool, it needs to be balanced against the potential health hazards of its smoke.

We also note the EPA's own predictions that both rail and road freight transport are set to increase in the future, posing further challenges to our communities' air quality.

Future research and planning using our air monitor data is currently providing an air quality baseline, which we argue is essential to the State Government's planning into the future, in our case without adding extra cost.

In the light of the above, we request you extend the Lithgow Blue Mountains Air Watch project for a 5 year period, as was the case in the Hunter Valley and Central Coast Air monitoring, based on the existing EPA and community partnership.

We thank you for your consideration of this request. Given the current Air Watch project is scheduled to end in May this year, a response to this request is needed well in advance of the shutdown date in order to allow implementation and change.

As such we request a response to be provided in the next month.

In the event you have any queries about this request, please contact Peter Lammiman 0410 153 157.

Yours sincerely



Debra Smith
Secretary,
Blue Mountains Unions and Community
(Blue Mountains Unions Council Inc)

Endorsed by:
Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

John Tognolini, Secretary
Blue Mountains Teachers Association

Gerard Hayes, Secretary
Health Services Union NSW, ACT, QLD

Dr Richard Styles
Doctors for the Environment

Lithgow Environment Group (LEG)

Mayor Mark Greenhill
Blue Mountains City Council (enclosed)

cc:
Trish Doyle MP. Member for the Blue Mountains

Paul Toole MP. Member for Bathurst

Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District

Maggie Davidson MAIOH PhD
Lecturer Environmental Health and Management
School of Science and Health

Western Sydney University Air Watch

Jacinta Hanniman
EPA Metropolitan Infrastructure Section
Parramatta



22 January 2019

Office of the Mayor
Reference File: 20/13971

Hon Matthew Kean
Minister for Energy and Environment
GPO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Minister,

Blue Mountains Airwatch air-quality monitoring project.

I write as mayor of the Blue Mountains to request that you extend the Lithgow - Blue Mountains Airwatch project beyond May 2020.

Blue Mountains City Council has supported the project from the start and is represented on the project steering committee.

The project provides air-quality monitoring services accessible on the internet and the project was established in May 2019, and was scheduled to run for a year to provide a base line of air-quality.

See attached EPA FAQ Airwatch and bluemountains.sensors.net.au

Given this year's experience of bushfire smoke which will continue for many months, and the heightened future risks from bushfires, I am concerned about the public health issues confronting our communities as a consequence.

In Lithgow and the Blue Mountains the public has been able to monitor the air pollution generated from the recent bushfires fires and have been able to plan activities accordingly. This has been particularly beneficial for the young and those suffering medical conditions. Numerous other communities have had access to air quality monitoring too and locally there are 11 quantitative units at township level as well as a major qualitative monitoring pod in Katoomba.

After discussion with a variety of active members of community organisations within the Blue Mountains; including those represented on the project steering committee. I would like to request that you extend the Lithgow - Blue Mountains Air Watch Project for another 5-year period. This was the case in the Hunter Valley and Central Coast Air Quality Monitoring, based on the existing EPA and community partnership.

The current Airwatch project is scheduled to end in May 2020 and in the event you have any queries about this request, please contact Jane Lambert on 4780 5000.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MARK GREENHILL', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

MARK GREENHILL OAM

MAYOR