



Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef,  
Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts

Our Ref: CTS 27107/19  
Your Ref: A498774

1 William Street Brisbane Qld 4000  
GPO Box 5078 Brisbane  
Queensland 4001 Australia  
Telephone +61 7 3719 7140  
Email [environment@ministerial.qld.gov.au](mailto:environment@ministerial.qld.gov.au)

14 NOV 2019

Mr Neil Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie 

Thank you for your letter of 16 October 2019 regarding Parliamentary Petition No. 3205-19 concerning the Sunshine Coast Airport Expansion Project (the Project).

The Department of Environment and Science (DES) regulates the dredging activity undertaken as part of the Project. As part of this activity, the Sunshine Coast Regional Council (the Council) has conducted a number of investigations into per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination at the Sunshine Coast Airport (the Airport). These investigations have identified low levels of PFAS contamination at the Airport from the historical use of firefighting foams containing PFAS.

In regulating PFAS, the Queensland Government has committed to the national policy documents, *Intergovernmental Agreement on a National Framework for Responding to PFAS Contamination*, and the *PFAS National Environmental Management Plan* (the PFAS NEMP), which have been adopted by all state, territory and Commonwealth governments. The PFAS NEMP provides for a risk-based approach to PFAS management and provides clear guidance values for human health and species protection in freshwater and marine environments.

Using this risk-based approach, the Council has undertaken interim releases of water with very low levels of PFAS to a drain that flows to the Maroochy River. The Council has completed monitoring of surface waters and biota to confirm that the release of site waters from the Airport has not impacted on the Maroochy River. DES and Queensland Health reviewed this report and concluded that the results do not indicate a significant risk to public health and no additional precautions are required in relation to seafood consumption.

I am advised that the Council's management of PFAS at the Airport site is guided by a contaminated land contractor and a contaminated land auditor that have been commissioned by the Council.

DES has previously advised the Council that it does not support increased releases of PFAS loads to the drain that flows to the Maroochy River due to the confined nature of the receiving waterways and the extensive environmental values of those waters, including national park, high value wetlands and fish habitat areas, representing a higher risk of PFAS bioaccumulation.

In order to facilitate higher volume releases, the Council has now proposed a release of low level PFAS contaminated waters to the ocean via an underground pipeline to a location 400 metres offshore at Marcoola Beach, with a water treatment plant to be used for any waters that do not meet standards for release. The average concentrations of the PFAS of concern in the waters proposed to be released from the Airport are considerably lower than the concentrations prescribed for drinking water standards in the PFAS NEMP.

Given the low concentrations of PFAS in the water proposed for release and considering the nature of the oceanic receiving environment, DES considers that the risks to human health and aquatic species from the proposed release are very low. In addition, DES requires that the Council conducts extensive monitoring of the water being released and both the receiving waters and aquatic species to further ensure that there is a low risk to both humans and animals from any release.

In addition to the low levels of PFAS in the contained stormwater at the site, I am advised that the Council has removed in the order of 15,000 tonnes of contaminated soil from the project site to a lawful disposal facility, and that construction of the water treatment plant has been completed and is treating any water that does not meet standards for release.

I am advised that DES has held multiple meetings with the Sunshine Coast Airport Expansion Community Stakeholder Group throughout the course of the Project, which comprises local environmental and resident groups, along with Council and DES representatives. I am further advised that the Council also held a community meeting on 10 September 2019 with up to 300 community attendees to discuss concerns, with DES officers in attendance to present information on the management and regulation of PFAS at the Airport. I am advised that DES is continuing to liaise with the Council with regards to the ongoing management of PFAS contaminated waters at the Airport site.

I trust that this information has been of assistance to the petitioners.

Yours sincerely

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

Leeanne Enoch MP

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Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts**