

INQUIRY INTO HEALTH IMPACTS OF AIR POLLUTION IN THE SYDNEY BASIN

Organisation: Baulkham Hills Shire Council

Name: Councillor Sonya Phillips

Position: Mayor

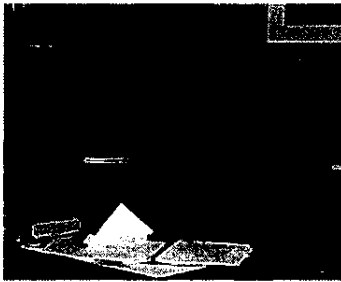
Telephone:

Date Received: 15/08/2006

Subject:

Summary

Office of
the Mayor



8 August 2006

The Hon Patricia Forsythe MLC
Committee Chair
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Our Ref: 7016892

Dear Ms Forsythe

**INQUIRY INTO THE HEALTH IMPACTS OF
AIR POLLUTION IN THE SYDNEY BASIN**

Thank you for your letter dated 16 June 2006 advising of the Legislative Council's Inquiry into the Health Impacts of Air Pollution in the Sydney Basin and the opportunity to participate in the Inquiry. As the current Mayor of Baulkham Hills Shire Council, I request that you take the following as a submission for consideration.

The Council of the Shire of Baulkham Hills is gravely concerned about the effects of declining air quality on the residents of the Shire, particularly due to the lack of transport infrastructure and the effects of motor vehicle emissions on clogged road networks. In addition the smoke issued from solid fuel heaters is of concern.

These problems have been exacerbated by the large increases in the population of the Shire. In order to have an impact on these pollution sources there needs to be leadership and controls from the State Government and actions on a regional level.

The greatest impact on air quality in the region is the air pollution from motor vehicles. Particulates from diesel engines can exacerbate respiratory problems and add significantly to the visible pollution seen as haze above Sydney. Emissions from

petrol engines, such as oxides of nitrogen, can irritate the membranes of the respiratory system and mixed with other vehicle exhaust products, such as unburnt hydrocarbons produce photochemical smog and ozone, a significant respiratory irritant to our residents.

Council has been stressing to the NSW Government the need for improved transport alternatives for our residents through the construction of the Norwest Rail Link. As a result of the lack of transport alternatives, residents of our Shire have one of the highest car ownerships in the State, and Council for a long time has been concerned about the impacts on both the environment and the health of its residents as a result of vehicle emissions. This increasing number of vehicles significantly adds pollution to air, which due to the air drainage patterns of the Sydney Basin, are already polluted from flows along the Parramatta Valley. These adverse impacts will greatly increase with the development of the North West Sector as a result of the State Government's Metropolitan Strategy.

I would like to impress upon the members of Standing Committee No.2 the urgent need for the State Government to progress with plans to provide the Norwest Rail Link as soon as possible in order to reduce the impacts of air pollution on the residents of this Shire and Sydney as a whole.

In regards to the Health Impacts of Air Pollution within the Baulkham Hills Shire Council local government area, a review of the complaints received by Council that relate to air quality and reported impacts on health, are largely directed at domestic wood-fuelled heaters. If heaters are not operated properly or an inappropriate fuel is used, a home heater can generate a significant amount of smoke. Under some atmospheric conditions such as temperature inversions, even correctly operating heaters can cause a problem.

The relatively or apparently low cost of running a wood heater does not incorporate the cost of discharging waste into the air and the associated discomfort this smoke and odour causes local residents. The recent amendment to the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* shows an acknowledgement that there is a problem. Whilst the additional controls contained within this Act are a step in the right direction they do not overcome the problem and they place a heavy onus on Councils to monitor and police the controls without public advertising or financial support. It is requested that the Committee consider other controls such as restrictions on the use of wood heaters during adverse atmospheric conditions e.g. atmospheric inversions and that these be heavily advertised through the media (television) during these times.

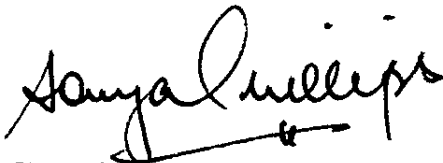
Other significant causes of air pollution often associated with impacting peoples' health are bushfires which can't easily be controlled as well as hazard reduction burning which can be controlled. Uncoordinated hazard reduction burning without consideration of atmospheric conditions and wind direction have caused serious pollution over Sydney in the last couple of years. It is requested that the Committee consider the benefits of greater control and co-ordination of such burns.

Other sources of complaint relating to air pollution and impacts on health relate to dust. This has been a growing problem due to the extremely dry conditions of late. This is an area for which Councils do have appropriate authority and the ability to control problems however it does merit consideration by the Committee as this issue does generate considerable public concern.

I would like to impress upon the members of Standing Committee No.2 the urgent need for the State Government to progress with plans to provide the Norwest Rail Link in order to reduce the impacts of air pollution on the residents of this Shire and Sydney as a whole.

Should you require any further information please contact Council's Manager – Health & Environmental Protection, Mr Robert Dennis, on 9843 0304 during normal business hours.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sonya Phillips', with a horizontal line drawn underneath the name.

Councillor Sonya Phillips
MAYOR