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Hon David Parker
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Tēnā koe Minister

Application under National Environmental Standards for Air Quality - Exceptional Circumstances

Waikato Regional Council (WRC) is applying for exceptional circumstances under the National Environmental Standards (NES) for Air Quality to exclude five PM₁₀ exceedances recorded on 6 December 2019 in the Putaruru, Huntly and Rest of the Region airsheds. Our technical investigation showed that these exceedances were due to the Australian bushfires.

The bushfires are considered to be a combination of anthropogenic and natural extreme events occurring in Australia in combination with trans-Tasman meteorological conditions conducive to transport and fallout of particulate matter across areas of New Zealand including the Waikato region. These events are well beyond the reasonable control of the WRC.

The 2011 amendment of the NES for Air Quality inserted a new regulation (16A) to explicitly provide for exceedances of the ambient air quality standards under exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances are not defined in the regulations and may be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Minister for the Environment upon written application by WRC.

While the Putaruru, Huntly and Rest of the Region airsheds are not currently classified as polluted airsheds, they could become classified as polluted in the event that another PM₁₀ exceedance is recorded within 12 months of the exceedances that occurred on 6 December 2019. It is therefore important that these exceedances are exempted as a result of exceptional circumstances.

The completed application and supporting technical information are attached. If further technical information is required, please contact Jonathan Caldwell, Senior Scientist at WRC.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Ngā mihi

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Vaughan Payne".

Vaughan Payne
Chief Executive