



Robyn Parker MP

Minister for the Environment

Minister for Heritage

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEWCASTLE AIR QUALITY STUDY BEGINS

Environment Minister Robyn Parker today announced a study to help further the scientific, evidence-based approach to reducing impacts from harmful emissions in the lower Hunter.

Ms Parker said the study had been proposed to the Land and Environment Court, following Orica pleading guilty to nine charges for pollution incidents that occurred in 2010 and 2011 at its Kooragang Island and Botany plants.

“The *Newcastle Particle Characterisation Study*, which will be managed by the EPA, is not pre-empting the court decision but will undertake preliminary work and community consultation whilst awaiting the court decision,” Ms Parker said.

“The study design will be similar to the current Upper Hunter Particle Characterisation Study and will build on air quality work undertaken by the Australian Science and Nuclear Technology Organisation at Mayfield since 1998.

“Particle characterisation research provides valuable information on the sources of fine particulates and priorities for reducing particle emission sources.

“It examines the composition of particulate matter including fine particulates that have been linked to respiratory and other health impacts.

“Importantly this work will enable the EPA and the lower Hunter community to determine how best to direct efforts into areas of emissions reduction that are likely to yield the most effective results for better air quality for the community.

“Understanding the source of emissions, how they are affected by weather, particularly wind and then accurately predicting the effects at a local population level is a complex science that requires significant resourcing. That is why the EPA is committed to ensuring that the study is done properly and with community input.”

The EPA is actively working on reducing emissions in the Hunter through a number of programs, including:

- The *Lower Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network* - will provide an important tool for monitoring air quality in the Newcastle area. Work is progressing towards the establishment of a local area ambient air quality monitoring network for suburbs close to heavy industries and port related activities

- The *Upper Hunter Particle Characterisation Study* - a study to help determine the source of fine particles and involves CSIRO and ANSTO analysing air particle samples taken at Singleton and Muswellbrook over a 12 month period. This study is nearing completion.
- The *Dust Stop program* in the Hunter - a program which specifically targets particle emissions from the coal mining industry.
- The *Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network* – a network of monitors which provides real time information about air quality in the Upper Hunter to the public and will contribute to a broader understanding of air quality issues in the region.

MsParker said air quality was a priority area for the NSW Government, the EPA and the community.

“The EPA is meeting with the Newcastle Community Consultative Committee for the Environment tonight to further discuss air quality initiatives and ensure full community engagement in their development and implementation.”