



**NEW HOPE
GROUP**

RESPONSE TO ADVERSE COMMENT

*Senate Standing Committee on
Community Affairs*

Inquiry into the impacts on health of air quality in Australia
Brisbane Public Hearing of 11 June 2013

July 2013

New Hope Group response to adverse comment made at the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, Impacts on health of air quality in Australia, Brisbane hearing on 11 June 2013:

GORDON, Mr John, Spokesperson, Stop Brisbane Coal Trains: You have the Brisbane stockpile at the Port of Brisbane, which is not best practice, and it is blowing in the wind.

Mr Gordon's statement is not correct. Queensland Bulk Handling (QBH) operates significant dust mitigation measures at the Port of Brisbane. Queensland Bulk Handling conducts regular dust monitoring on site, with dust levels consistently meeting strict statutory standards.

Further, QBH only handles coal which has a naturally high moisture content. The coal is also washed during processing, further adding to its moisture content and lowering the potential for dust.

Coal handled by QBH is recognised on an international scale as a low Hardgrove Grindability Index (HGI)¹ coal rated between 35 and 39. This is a hard coal containing low levels of fines (small particles) and therefore low levels of dust.

QBH has operated at the Port of Brisbane for 30 years and has received only one complaint from the public in that time. It is worth noting that the complaint occurred only after a local media outlet featured allegations about dust from a coal protest group.

HUTTON, Mr Peter Drew, President, Lock the Gate Alliance: When they do the explosions to dislodge the coal, if the ground is a little bit too damp then you will get oxides of nitrogen released. That is what has happened there. That is poisonous. You get the brown clouds come across and then sirens go off everywhere and everybody nearby has to immediately go indoors and close the doors and windows.

CHAIR: I should describe for the Hansard that we have been shown a photo of what you have just described.

Mr Hutton: Yes. It is a brown cloud of oxides of nitrogen. That happens on a regular basis, and it happens on a regular basis with all open-cut coalmines.

Blast fumes do not occur 'on a regular basis'.

Only very rarely, a fume may be created during blasting.

For example, from July 2012 to June 2013 New Acland conducted 119 blasts and during this period there were no fume events from blasting of any concern.

Risks of fume events are managed through a comprehensive management plan as prescribed by the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999.

¹ Australian Coal Association Research Program,
<http://www.acarp.com.au/Downloads/ACARPHardgroveGrindabilityIndex.pdf>

Every blast at New Hope operations is methodically assessed for vibration, noise and fumes – with trained specialists taking into account ground conditions, weather, wind speed and wind direction.

Stringent measures are taken to ensure blasts conform to strict guidelines and limits. These include continual review and improvement of blast design, the implementation of safety exclusion zones and an ongoing monitoring program.

A blast fume occurred at New Acland on 5 September 2011 and photographs of the event featured in some media reports. The fume was closely monitored and was well within the regulated operational limits.

Monitoring of this event found that the fumes dissipated before reaching the boundary of the mine, posing no threat to neighbours or their livestock.

Mr Hutton: We have the expansion of existing mines. That is the cheapest option for many of the companies. They want to expand an existing mine if they can do that. For example, Acland—if you went to Jondaryan, you know Acland—is going to expand.

The New Hope Group has developed a continuation plan for its New Acland operations to ensure that current jobs and economic benefits to the Darling Downs region can continue.

The revised New Acland Coal Mine Stage 3 Project plan significantly compromises on community concerns associated with the previous proposal and was developed following extensive consultation with local stakeholders.

The revised project plan continues the mine operation to 2029, ensuring the jobs of more than 300 locals, 160 full time equivalent workers and 2300 indirect jobs through suppliers and contractors.

Continuation of the mine will also maintain economic benefits of \$110 million that are injected into the Darling Downs economy each year, and the injection of \$300 million into the wider south east Queensland economy each year.

Mr Gordon: No-one knows if they are veneering. These New Hope guys, from what I can tell, are such cowboys, they probably veneer once in a blue moon, if they do.

In 2013 the New Hope Group installed a profiling and veneering station at its Jondaryan rail loading facility at a cost in excess of \$1 million.

The station became operational on Thursday 2 May 2013 and since this time; all coal train loads leaving the company's New Acland mine have been veneered.

New Hope proactively initiated the profiling and veneering despite independent testing consistently showing that dust levels from coal trains met strict government requirements.

Mr Gordon: They are saying they are veneering out of Acland from this transportable veneer thing that no-one has seen—they have seen a couple of pictures. They are profiling with what is like a sandpit bar, apparently. It is not best practice at all.

Mr Gordon's statement is not correct. The New Hope Group has veneered all coal train loads leaving the company's New Acland mine since its new profiling and veneering facility started operations on Thursday, 2 May 2013.

The profiling and veneering station at Jondaryan was built at a cost in excess of \$1 million and features the latest computer-controlled technology that ensures the coal loaded into each train wagon is profiled and veneered effectively.

The facility also includes the ability to sweep clean the sills of each wagon. Only a handful of other coal profiling and veneering facilities are currently using this technology in Australia.

These photographs show the profiling and veneering station at New Hope's Jondaryan Rail Loading Facility, which started operations on Thursday, 2 May 2013.



Close up photograph as a train enters the profiling and veneering station.



Wider photograph showing the profiling and veneering facility structure.