

NEWS

16 October 2026

Bene Merito Distinction from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland

Congratulations to our Centre Director D/Prof Lidia Morawska, who was awarded the Bene Merito Distinction from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland *“to individuals and institutions that have made an outstanding contribution to promoting Poland abroad and strengthening the country's international standing”*. The award was presented by Mrs Karolina Cemka, Head of Mission, Embassy of the Republic of Poland at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) on 25 August.

This exciting visit by a delegation of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland included fruitful discussions about collaboration and Horizon Europe programs with QUT hosts: Prof Robina Xavier, Provost; Prof Mark Harvey, Deputy Vice-Chancellor International and Vice-President Business Development; Prof Ian O’Hara, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research; Prof Troy Farrell, Executive Dean, Faculty of Science; as well as QUT academics of Polish origin including: D/Prof Lidia Morawska, Australian Laureate Fellow; Dr Andrzej Janusz, Lecturer, School of Information Systems, Faculty of Science; and Dr Iwona Czaplinski, Curriculum Coordinator, Curriculum Quality and Academic Integrity. The mission also visited our laboratory.

Visiting delegates from the mission included: Mrs Karolina Cemka, Head of Mission, Embassy of the Republic of Poland; Mrs Anna Kawalowska, Consul of the Republic of Poland; Mrs Marzena Krajniewska, Market Expert, Polish Trade and Investment; Dr Theresa Lauf, Honorary Consul for the Republic of Poland (Queensland); and Professor Alina Morawska, Director of the Parenting and Family Support Centre, University of Queensland.



Thrive Forum – Indoor air quality: dampness and mould

The interdisciplinary Thrive Forum, “Indoor air quality: dampness and mould”, was held at Charles Darwin University on 16–18 September 2026. Many of the pollutants we inhale indoors originate outdoors, but numerous pollutants also originate from indoor sources, processes, and occupants and their activities. One such pollutant is mould. The **big questions** discussed at the forum included:

1. Current lines of research in Australia: what are we learning about indoor air quality (IAQ) and mould?
2. What options exist to protect community health from mould?
3. How can indoor environments be optimised in terms of IAQ, thermal comfort, and reduction of dampness?
4. IAQ: a challenge for the government?
5. How do professional societies and organisations influence measures regarding IAQ and mould control in Australia?

The forum was attended by 160 people, including online participants. Many participants noted the remarkable variety of topics covered and the depth of the discussions.



The presenters and panellists included: **Distinguished Professor Lidia Morawska** (International Laboratory for Air Quality and Health [ILAQH], QUT, THRIVE), **Professor J. David Miller** (Carleton University), **Professor Lindy Burton** (Charles Darwin University), **Professors Rebecca Bentley and Christina Candido** (The University of Melbourne), **Associate Professor Arianna Brambilla** (The University of Sydney), **Dr Mark Dewsbury** (The University of Tasmania), **David Chin** (Department of Logistics and Infrastructure, Northern Territory Government), **Susan Bowden** (Acting CEO, Northern Territory Health), **Luke Dugdell** (Claims Hero), **Carissa Read** (Senior WorkSafe Inspector, Regulatory Compliance, NT WorkSafe, Northern Territory Government), **Dr Peter McGarry** (Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists [AIOH] Research and Innovation Sub Committee), **Vicki Callaway** (Executive Officer, Clean Air Society of Australia and New Zealand [CASANZ]), **Dr Claire Bird** (Associate Director, The Australian Institute of Refrigeration, Air-conditioning and Heating [AIRAH] IAQ Special Technical Group), **Sam Ruff** (Restoration Industry Association Australasia [RIA Australasia]), **Associate Professor Zbigniew Suchorab** (Lublin University of Technology), **Dr Cameron Jones** (Natural Institute of Integrated Medicine) and **Dr Heike Neumeister-Kemp** (Mycotec).

Launch of The Global Framework for Action on healthy indoor air

The Global Commission on Healthy Indoor Air launched the “Global Framework for Action: Advancing Healthy Indoor Air through Societal Engagement and Market Transformation”, a landmark global roadmap designed to elevate and embed healthy indoor air as a public health imperative and a market priority, ultimately institutionalising it as an everyday expectation in buildings everywhere.

Developed by over 200 global experts across 40+ countries including D/Prof Lidia Morawska and Plum Stone from our team who served as Co-Chairs, this ambitious roadmap provides a coordinated strategy to make healthy indoor environments the norm for everyone, everywhere. The far-reaching roadmap sets out nine interconnected levers of market transformation, 40 strategic focus areas and nearly 180 recommendations to drive systemic change and deliver healthier indoor air at scale.

Unveiled during Climate Week in New York, just one year after the Commission’s launch at the United Nations, the Framework provides a comprehensive and coordinated strategy for tackling one of the world's most consequential yet underrecognized public health challenges. It calls on governments, multilateral organisations, public health institutions, businesses, building practitioners, researchers, financial institutions, professional organisations and communities to move beyond isolated interventions and align the policies, investments, innovations and everyday decisions that shape the air people breathe indoors.

Thrive celebrated a pre-launch of The Global Framework for Action on 17 September following the Thrive Forum (Indoor air quality: dampness and mould) held in Darwin. An introduction by Lidia Morawska and a presentation from Jason Hartke was followed by a pre-launch toast with the team.

Remarks from International WELL Building Institute (IWBI) President and CEO Rachel Hodgdon and IWBI Executive Chairman Rick Fedrizzi at the Official Launch held on 22 September can be viewed at [IWBI's YouTube channel](#).

[Download a copy of The Global Framework for Action](#) | [Follow the Global Commission on Healthy Indoor Air](#)

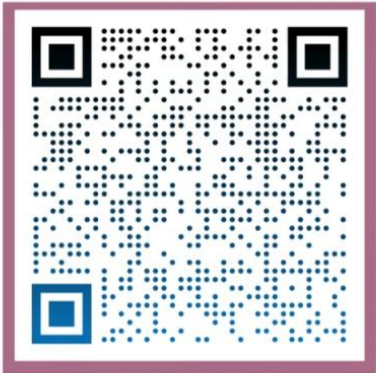
DRIVING LONG-TERM IMPACT

Our Shared Vision

Build a world where healthy indoor air is expected, measured, valued, financed, governed and continuously improved.

Official Debut

Launching during Climate Week NYC on September 22





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P-Block Project updates

AirGradient ONE selected as the monitor for the P-Block Project

By Hamesh Patel & Alicia Josa-Cullere

The team has achieved a major milestone in the project. After five months of monitor scoping, protocol development, testing and data analysis, the most suitable air quality monitor for the P-Block Project has been selected.

Four monitors supplied by Kaiterra, AirGradient, Mote Koala and Synetica were short-listed and underwent extensive laboratory and real-world testing to evaluate their performance. The monitors were exposed to a range of concentrations of pollutants from lab-generated aerosols and varying concentrations of CO₂ ([see P-Block's Monitor Testing for more information](#)).

The monitor performances were evaluated against international guidelines, and other factors including technology, data security, service and maintenance requirements, and cost were also considered.

Although all monitors performed well, after careful consideration of the project's wider objectives, the AirGradient ONE was selected as the most suitable monitor for the P-Block Project.



About AirGradient: 'AirGradient pioneers affordable, open-source and accurate air quality monitors. We empower thousands in 70+ countries with accessible monitors to track their air and fight for cleaner environments globally. Our open platform lets users build, customize, and deploy their own monitors. Sharing our

commitment to open data, we partner with OpenAQ to make air quality information universally available.'

Work is now underway to investigate appropriate monitor placement along with other logistical considerations, such as mounting hardware and monitor security, with installation of the network beginning on P-Block Level 8 later this year.



The AirGradient ONE being tested in the laboratory.

Open source air quality monitoring: AirGradient visits P-Block to share their vision and expertise

By Hamesh Patel & Alicia Josa-Cullere

Achim Haug, Founder and CEO of AirGradient, visited the team to share the story behind the technology, the company's open-source philosophy, and its growing global impact. AirGradient ONE monitors were recently selected for P-Block's IAQ monitoring network.

Achim's journey into air quality began out of necessity while living in Thailand. During the region's severe agricultural burning period, air pollutant concentrations frequently reached 50 to 100 times above the World Health Organization guidelines. This posed a huge risk to the health of local communities, including schools. In response, Achim launched a community-led project in which residents assembled do-it-yourself air quality monitors from recycled plastic containers and built simple air purifiers using off-the-shelf fans and filters to improve classroom air quality.

'We couldn't stop the fires so quickly, but we could engage with the children', Achim recalled. They invited local students to learn about safety and advocacy.

What began as a volunteer initiative has since scaled into a global social impact enterprise with over 16,000 monitors sold, more than 85,000 downloads of open-source designs and over 7000 community members globally. AirGradient relies on an open-source framework under Creative Commons licenses (CC-BY-SA). All hardware schematics, printed circuit board designs, and firmware are publicly accessible on GitHub, allowing researchers, non-profits, and developers to inspect, customise, and deploy units freely without subscriptions or vendor lock-in.

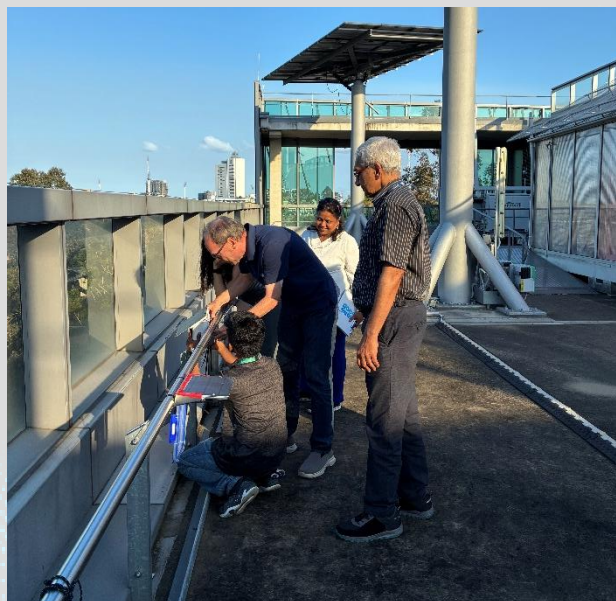
Achim highlighted how this open approach engages rapid community innovation, enables volunteer software integrations, and builds long-term trust across global research initiatives. AirGradient hardware currently operates across the following major international deployments:

Solomon Islands: A project with UNICEF and UNSW deploying 39 outdoor air quality monitors, co-located alongside other instrumentation to track the island's air pollution.

Laos: A nationwide deployment of 160 monitors alongside the UNICEF Office of Innovation, expanding coverage from a single embassy monitor to hundreds of units for AI-driven forecasting.

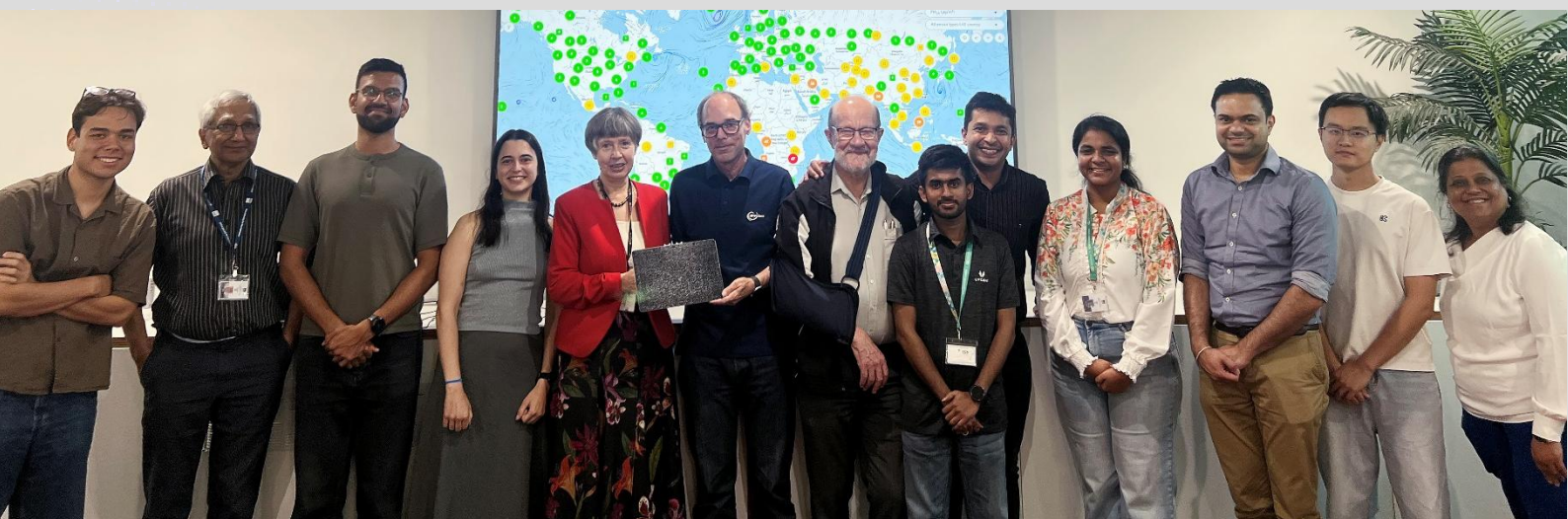
United Kingdom: The [SAMHE](#) initiative, placing indoor air monitors across 1300 UK schools in partnership with five UK universities (University of Cambridge, Imperial College London, University of

York (through the Stockholm Environment Institute's York centre), University of Surrey, University of Leeds) and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).



AirGradient maintains strict internal calibration protocols while offering low-cost hardware. Every manufactured unit undergoes testing inside an environmental chamber co-located with a European Union reference-grade instrument (Palas FIDAS 200). Their devices are also being co-located around the world and are externally validated.

With installation of the P-Block air quality monitoring network set to begin on Level 8 in October, Achim's presentation provided valuable technical and practical insights into the open-data platform that will soon deliver live IAQ data to the project. For more information, see the project website: <https://pblockproject.com/>



P-Block welcomes academic and industry visitors to see research in action

P-Block hosted two notable visits recently, each bringing a different perspective to the project.

Professor Christhina Candido, from the University of Melbourne, is an architect specialising in healthy building standards and the Director of the Sustainable and Healthy Environments (SHE) Lab.

The SHE Lab collaborates with a network of universities and industry and government stakeholders across the world. It has produced more than 400 research outputs assessing different indoor environments, including workplaces, schools, and residential buildings, with the aim to close the gap between building design and actual performance.



During her visit, Prof Candido shared findings from one of her lab's major projects, which used data from around 8000 buildings with the WELL Building Standard certificate. This project showed that pairing objective monitoring data with occupant experience could provide more information about the reasons for discomfort in indoor spaces than either of the approaches separately. It also highlighted that good indoor environmental quality is a result of good design.

P-Block also welcomed a team of facilities managers from the Facility Management Association of Australia Connect Conference (FM Connect), which was being hosted in Brisbane (3–5 August 2026). They were interested in seeing how the P-Block Project's research could translate into real-world facility management. After a visit to the main areas of the P-Block building, members of the P-Block team shared progress on the monitoring network, AI building optimisation, and the digital twin,



providing an overview of the potential impacts of the project and its translation into ongoing building operations. Together, the two visits reflect the diverse interest in P-Block's work, from the academic research community through to the people who manage buildings on the ground.

Pictured L-R: Punsara Don, Mohammad Sarmadi, Christhina Candido, Dilani Madhubhashini, Samitha Wijewantha, Kavindi Hewage.

WHO Webinar: “Clean air, healthy lives: From air quality guidelines to standards to healthy lives in the Western Pacific”

The World Health Organization (WHO) hosted a webinar titled, “*Clean air, healthy lives: From air quality guidelines to standards to healthy lives in the Western Pacific*” on 7 September. The session was led by Josselyn Mothe, Technical Officer, WHO Asia-Pacific Centre for Environment and Health in the Western Pacific Region (ACE). Among the presenters was our Centre Director D/Prof Lidia Morawska who gave a presentation titled, “*What air pollution is doing to our health*”. The discussion highlighted a clear message for the health sector: clean air is a health intervention, and health professionals have an important role in turning evidence into action.

Across the Western Pacific, air quality standards are an essential bridge between scientific evidence and public policy. But standards alone are not enough. Progress depends on effective implementation, reliable monitoring, enforcement, public participation and strong health-sector leadership. The health opportunity is substantial. WHO modelling presented during the webinar estimated that achieving the WHO guideline level for annual $PM_{2.5}$ could avert approximately 1.12 million deaths each year across countries and areas with available data. Importantly, meaningful health gains can also be achieved through progressive reductions using WHO interim targets.

For the health sector, the pathway forward is clear: quantify health impacts, identify vulnerable populations, communicate risks clearly, advocate for health-protective policies, and help ensure that cleaner air translates into measurable improvements in health. [Watch the recording](#) | [More information](#).

The ‘Safer shared air: Indoor air, health and productivity’ conference, 3rd annual Parliament House event



The full day conference will explore indoor air quality (IAQ) as a silent driver of chronic disease, the economic opportunities that exist, and how we can translate the evidence into world-leading national reform. This event will examine how better IAQ can improve health and wellbeing, and workforce participation, and will discuss what a national healthy air strategy could look like (and why we need one). Among the speakers is D/Prof Lidia Morawska.

Date: 28 October 2026 | Location: Parliament House, Canberra and online | [For more information and to register](#).

Indoor Air 2026 Best Poster Award

Congratulations to members of our team including Dr Enoch Adotey, Dilani Madhubhashini, Prof Tunga Salthammer and D/Prof Lidia Morawska, who received the Best Poster Award at the Indoor Air 2026 conference held in Singapore on 14–18 June. In this study, the team investigated the use of a “smart” air cleaner with integrated real-time air-quality monitoring sensors for $PM_{2.5}$ and CO_2 . The constructed device is a modified Corsi-Rosenthal box equipped with MERV 13 filters, sensors, fans, a microcontroller, and adaptive control algorithms that automatically turn on/off and adjust the fan’s operation based on real-time pollutant levels. The automation system turns the fans on when $PM_{2.5} > 15 \mu g/m^3$ and $CO_2 > 800$ ppm. The prototype demonstrates that sensor-based automated air cleaners can serve as an effective short-term IAQ control strategy, particularly in buildings with only natural ventilation. *Pictured L-R (1): Lidia Morawska, Dilani Madhubhashini, Enoch Adotey. Picture L-R (2): Prof Chandra Sekhar, Prof Tunga Salthammer, D/Prof Lidia Morawska, A/Prof David Cheong.*





Team member spotlight

Mr Punsara Dharaka, Thrive PhD student, Queensland University of Technology

My name is Punsara Dharaka. I am from the Western region of Sri Lanka, a beautiful island known as the pearl of the Indian Ocean. My journey began when I entered the University of Peradeniya (UOP) in the biological sciences stream in Sri Lanka. I qualified for the Environmental Science (ES) Honours degree with a background in Botany and Chemistry. The ES program stands out for its multidisciplinary nature, including a diverse range of fields, such as Botany, Zoology, Chemistry and Geology. My undergraduate research focused on analysing rainwater quality in different regions of Sri Lanka, giving me experience in different aspects of analytical chemistry. I graduated in 2022 with a BSc (Hons) in Environmental Science, securing 1st-class honours.



Soon after my graduation, I joined the Analytical Research Laboratory (ARL) at UOP as a research assistant to continue rainwater analysis and contributed to several biosorption research projects focused on removing heavy metals and synthetic dyes from wastewater. Then I joined the Department of Botany at UOP as a teaching assistant for undergraduate students, later as a research assistant, and gained experience in plant resilience and adaptation to various environmental conditions, with a primary focus on bryophytes.

I joined THRIVE at QUT as a PhD candidate in 2025, which was the greatest opportunity of my career, as it allowed me to work with a multidisciplinary research team. My current PhD topic is based on the application of low-cost IAQ monitors for compliance and diagnostic monitoring. I was privileged to become part of two of THRIVE's main ongoing projects: the School IAQ Project and the P-Block Project, which will ultimately take us several steps further in improving the air quality of our indoor environments.

I enjoy watching movies and TV series and playing PC games in my free time, and Dead Poets Society, Better Call Saul, and Assassin's Creed IV are my favourite picks. I grew up in a society inspired by Buddhist philosophy, which taught us that everything in nature, including our lives, is in a continuous state of change. So, I believe that adapting to these challenges is part of learning and will help us find better solutions. I'm excited to do my best and continue growing my knowledge and experience with the THRIVE team.

As a final remark, I always like to live by this famous advice from the movie, Dead Poets Society: "*Carpe diem - seize the day, boys, make your lives extraordinary*" — Robin Williams as John Keating.

New publications



Groth, R., Niazi, S., Oswin, H., Spann, K., Gligorovski, S., Nardell, E.A., Cox, H., Joosten, S.A., Majumdar, S., Sharma, S., Menon, V.J., Monty, J., Morawska, L. and Ristovski, Z.D. [Germicidal UV for control of airborne bacteria and viruses: a critical review of efficacy and production of secondary pollutants](#). *ES&T Air*, 3(10): 2484-2502, 2026.

Zhao, B., Gammulle, H., Warnakulasuriya, T.F. and Morawska, L. [optimizing indoor air quality in HVAC systems using deep reinforcement learning with multi-objective dynamic weight reward function](#). *Building and Environment*, 303: 114917, 2026.

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