



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 2 – HEALTH

MEDIA RELEASE

PC NO. 2 – HEALTH - MITIGATING THE HEALTH RISKS POSED BY EXPOSURE TO POOR AIR QUALITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
16TH SEPTEMBER 2020

A parliamentary committee has today tabled its report on the health impacts of poor air quality resulting from bushfire smoke and drought. The committee's inquiry and report, stemming from the recent bushfires experienced across many regions within New South Wales and large dust storm events caused by drought, focuses on policy improvements and reforms that can be implemented to mitigate the risks posed by exposure to poor or hazardous air quality. In particular, it recognises the serious health risks posed by breathing in tiny particular matter found in air pollution, including bushfire smoke.

Chair of Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Health, the Hon. Greg Donnelly MLC said, 'Between October 2019 and January 2020 bushfires of unprecedented scale and duration burned across many regions in New South Wales, including areas within New South Wales. There were consecutive days where people woke up to a thick smoke haze outside their window. Breathing in this smoke was harmful to a number of people, which is why it was important for the inquiry to focus on what steps can be taken to mitigate these health impacts in the future.'

Mr Donnelly continued: 'Not only has the report captured some important information and policy reforms which need to be prioritised by the NSW Government, it also clearly outlines the economic and health burden we will face if we do not do more to manage these risks moving forward. With the next bushfire season on our doorstep, we must learn from our past experiences and implement improvements and continue our work in this area'.

The committee makes 10 important recommendations, many of which are focused on enhancing air quality measurement and reporting and improving public communication and awareness on air quality ratings and health advice. In particular, the committee recommends that there be additional air quality monitoring stations across the state, and that the NSW Government continue to work with other jurisdictions to achieve national consistency in air quality monitoring and reporting. Given the significant impact of poor air quality on workers, particularly outdoor workers, the committee has recommended the undertaking of further policy and regulatory work involving SafeWork NSW, Unions NSW, unions, employers and other stakeholders including medical and health experts. It also recommends the development of an 'air smart campaign' for the public, along with more collaborative work between government agencies on planning for and responding to bushfire events.

The report is available on the committee's [website](#).

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For further information please contact Committee Chair, the Hon. Greg Donnelly MLC on 9230 2280.