

**Submission
No 31**

INQUIRY INTO HEALTH IMPACTS OF AIR POLLUTION IN THE SYDNEY BASIN

Organisation:

Name: Mr Brian McDonald

Telephone:

Date Received: 11/08/2006

Subject:

Summary

Dear Sir/madam

I would like to make the following brief private comments to/for your "inquiry into the Health Impacts of Air Pollution in the Sydney Basin" as set out in your terms of reference.

You are no doubt aware that out of all the various forms of pollution to our environment, pollution of our air would have to be considered the number one concern. Majority of pollutants that are discharged to the air are not readily visible, harder to detect and have far more dramatic effect on the human body (as these pollutants are able to enter the blood stream directly particularly, when the size is around 2.5 microns). In addition It is unfortunate that monitoring air pollutants is far more expensive and harder to get funding for than other programs such as water quality monitoring.

(a) Briefly, the changers in the emissions of various air pollutants are as follows:

1. Increase in the use of the motor vehicle
2. Decrease in the services provided by Public transport
3. Reduction in the sales tax by the federal Government for persons purchasing large four wheels drives while
4. Reduction in the fringe benefit taxes for the kilometers travelled
5. Removal of backyard burning and the burning of garbage within residential flat and commercial buildings
6. Provision of under ground motorways tunnels without filtered exhaust systems
7. Reduction of air pollutants with local councils conducting Environmental audits on industrial premises
8. Increase number of underground car parks
9. Pollution caused by site remediation in the removal of fuel storage tanks from disused service stations under sepp 55 where site treatment can be carried out by default
10. Control burning of bushfire prone areas during periods of low inversion/s

(b) With the introduction of the Protection of the Environment Operations Act and Regulations framed there under the following improvements have been noted: -

1. Implemetal of environmental audits of industrial / commercial premises and education programs for operators of such premises, by local government.
2. Increased fines for polluters with the Councils having the powerto implement "tier one(1) .prosecutions"
3. Improved practices on construction sites with amongst other things, the control of

dust

(c) The causes of air pollution in the Sydney basin over the past three decades are as follows

1. Increase in both population and the use of the motor vehicle
2. Decrease in the services provided by Public transport
3. Reduction in the sales tax provisions for large 4 wheels drives
4. Reduction in the fringe benefit taxes for the kilometrestravelled
5. Backyard burning and the burning of garbage in residential flatbuilding and commercial buildings.
6. Provision of unfiltered road tunnels
7. Poor Quality fuels being provided by fuel companies to motorist
8. Increase number of underground car parks
9. Pollution caused by site remediation in the change of use of say disused service stations
10. Provision of a large number wood smoke by combustible stoves and heaters
11. Discharge from industrial and commercial process
12. Increase push for the use of diesel and the known health risks associated with small particulate matter (<1um entering the blood stream)
13. VOC emissions and the effects on indoor air quality

(d) The health impacts of air pollution on any "at risk" groups

As each person has no other choose but to breath the air in which we work, play and live they should be entitled to good air without pollutants. Any pollutants contained within the air we breath, just by the nature of the pollutants entering the lungs and blood stream can place that person into a "at risk" group.

It is not to recent times that we have been able to isolate Legionella that we have discovered the risk with cooling towers and thus the need to prevent any pollutants entering the air we breath

(e) The health impact of air pollution on the NSW health System

This is of great concern with the ageing population due to the "baby boomers" Although we have a reduction in smokers we still have the problem of the causes of disease by other pollutants such as asbestos and lead from old motor vehicles and children playing in soils, which have been contaminated by air pollutants from motor vehicles.

(f) The effectiveness of current laws and programmes for mitigating air pollution

The current laws have been effective in providing Councils with the ability to conduct environmental audits, Change the polluting habits of builders and developers (other then those which come under the umbrella of the Government/s).

Mandatory considerations of air quality issues at a local level would go a long way in reducing the impact of air quality on the health of local residents.

Appropriate funding is required for local government to tackle the issue of air quality on public health. At present air quality initiatives revolve around the reduction in green house gas emissions only and funds from state and federal agencies appears to be never ending. Lets see funding directed towards the health of the community.

(g) Strategies to reduce the health impacts of air pollution

1. The need to eliminate persons smoking. Where this is not possible, then the ability for another person being effected by that practice, having the legal ability to take relevant action against the offender to safeguard their ability to breath fresh air and /or recover compensation.
2. More research into the alternative methods to filter exhaust system used by industries such as spray booths, coffee roasters, dust controls, and the like so as to prevent pollution/ odours at a reasonable cost to business.
3. Increase ventilation and/or design of multiable level car parks for times of heavy use such as Christmas, pre mothers day etc, to reduce the built up of pollutants which a shopper may be subject to while going around and around looking for a parking space.
4. Provide Councils with the resources to run Air Watch programs in schools and enable the provisions of monitoring stations in major shopping Centres or CBD's To provide monitoring of pollutants at the location where people and not rely on monitoring stations

(h) Any other relevant matters

1. The state Government needs to meet the requirements of any other private developer regulated by Local Government, to comply with environmental protection requirements. I must refer to the development of both the Chatswood to Epping Railway project and the construction of the Lane Cove Tunnel, where on many occasions dust can be seen, being picked up by air currents, not to mentioned the failure to protect the waterways
2. The need for the State Government to filter discharge air from recently constructed road tunnels such as the M5 and Lane Cove Tunnel project
3. Why not give the power to Councils to issue penalty notices on the Government or their agencies where pollution caused by these bodies occurs
4. Review of SEPP 55 to amongst other things require any person remediation to any site to take all steps necessary to prevent the emission of gases and odours where such incidents occurs that Council is able to issue a penalty notice

Cheers Brian

Brian McDonald