

**INQUIRY INTO PERFORMANCE OF THE NSW  
ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY**

**Organisation:** Hunter Environment Lobby Inc

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Performance of the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA)

To the General Purpose Standing Committee No 5

Hunter Environment Lobby Inc. (HEL) wishes to comment on aspects of the EPA and its role in protecting the environment of NSW, and we thank the Parliament for this opportunity to do so on this very important subject of Agency strength within NSW Legislation.

HEL believes that the EPA plays a very important role which needs to be strengthened by stronger legislation which will ensure compliance by various proponents and developments within NSW, especially the Hunter.

We also believe that there needs to be more resourcing, especially in the Hunter. As an example reinstating the EPA office in Muswellbrook would be a positive step.

Also we need to see Community representation on the Board of the EPA, this needs to be re-established. The Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network is good advancement which needs to be maintained and not used to replace current conditions of approval for dust monitoring at each mine site.

We feel, like many other environmental organisations that a healthy environment needs an effective watchdog. Our Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is all that stands between good practice and environmental disasters quite often. However many of us believe that it is now under resourced and unable to keep up with the threats facing our communities and natural ecosystems.

HEL notes that after a string of compromised results by industry, the NSW Upper House has established an inquiry into the performance of the EPA which we applaud. Coal dust and explosives pollution in the Hunter is a great concern to us, as well as the Orica pollution recently in the Hunter Estuary which affected the people of Stockton.

HEL is concerned that the EPA is not only seen to be repeatedly failing to regulate or prosecute polluters and stop environmental breaches, but in fact there are no oversight provisions on most development conditions of consent.

HEL cannot see how community faith in government provisions or conditions of consent can be maintained unless there is a real effort on behalf of the EPA and NSW Government to ensure protection for environments and community health.

HEL notes that the Industrial Noise Policy is currently under review. Since the EPA is the manager of noise pollution and issues Environmental Pollution Licences, HEL contends that this review needs to be more transparent.

HEL also notes that the EPA is the manager of the Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme which is also under review. This scheme has been critical to the maintenance of water quality within the Hunter River system for the environment and other water users and must not be compromised.

Jan Davis

President Hunter Environment Lobby Inc.