

INQUIRY INTO HEALTH IMPACTS OF AIR POLLUTION IN THE SYDNEY BASIN

Organisation: Campbeltown City Council

Name: Mr Paul Tosi

Position: General Manager

Telephone:

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Subject:

Summary



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The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No 2
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam

Inquiry into the Health Impacts of Air Pollution in the Sydney Basin

Reference is made to Committee correspondence dated 16 June 2006, inviting Council to provide a submission on the proposed Terms of Reference for the above Inquiry.

Council has recognised air pollution as a significant issue within the Campbelltown Local Government Area (LGA) for many years, as described in its annual State of the Environment Report. Given the potential impacts of air pollution on the local community, Council fully supports the New South Wales Legislative Council's Inquiry. In this regard, Council has reviewed the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Inquiry and has prepared a submission to assist the Committee in finalising the scope of the investigation.

The attached submission (endorsed by Council at its meeting on 1 August 2006) provides information on air pollution issues within the Campbelltown LGA and comments on the proposed ToR for the Inquiry. The submission does not contain information considered to be confidential and therefore no restriction on its distribution is required.

Council is grateful for the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed Inquiry, and looks forward to viewing the final report.

If you require any further information regarding the submission or air pollution issues within the Campbelltown LGA, please contact David Henry, Council's Senior Environmental Officer on (02) 4645 4601.

Yours sincerely

Paul Tosi
General Manager

Submission from Campbelltown City Council on the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry into the Health Impacts of Air Pollution in the Sydney Basin

This submission provides information on air pollution issues within the Campbelltown Local Government Area (LGA) and comments on the proposed Terms of Reference for the Inquiry.

1) Air pollution issues within the Campbelltown Local Area

The Campbelltown LGA has experienced sustained growth in population over the last 30 to 40 years with its population increasing from 52,285 in 1975 to 149,961 in June 2004 (latest available data). The LGA has two industrial areas located in the suburbs of Minto and Ingleburn and a number of light industrial areas.

Air pollution and its associated impacts is recognised as a significant issue in Council's annual State of the Environment Report (SOE). An indicator to monitor the trends in the level of air pollution based on the South Western Sydney Regional Pollution Index has recently been introduced into this document.

An additional factor in relation to air pollution within the Campbelltown and nearby Local Government Areas is the proximity of the Blue Mountains to the west, and ranges to the south and consequent prevailing wind patterns. These topographical features can have the effect of preventing the dispersal of fine particle pollution transported from other parts of the Sydney Basin and therefore increasing the level of localised air pollution.

Council has not carried out any assessment specifically related to the health impacts of air pollution within the Campbelltown LGA. However, health issues associated with air pollution have been recognised in the SOE reports and consequently the provision of data following the NSW Parliamentary Standing Committee Inquiry would be greatly appreciated.

The following provides a brief description of the main sources of air pollution evident within the Campbelltown LGA:

(i) Fine particle pollution

This type of pollution comes from a variety of sources within the LGA such as light industry, building sites and burning off. Council conducts monitoring and compliance activities as required to reduce air pollution associated with these sources. It also conducts targeted environmental audits of premises it considers may be causing or have the potential to cause environmental impacts.

(ii) Smoke from wood heaters and bushfires

Smoke from domestic wood heaters is a significant issue affecting air quality throughout the Campbelltown LGA over the winter months. Council has developed and implemented compliance and community awareness programs over recent years that specifically target this type of pollution.

(iii) Motor Vehicles

According to the latest available data in the 2001 Census, there are over 90,000 registered motor vehicles in the Campbelltown LGA. This figure increased by over 10 percent in during the period 2001/04 and is expected to continue to increase given the expansion of the F5

and expected population increases within the Campbelltown and adjoining Camden and Wollondilly LGA's.

(iv) Business Premises

Within the Campbelltown LGA there are currently 39 premises licenced by the Department of Environment and Conservation. Of these 39 premises, 19 premises have licences associated with the discharge of particulates into the air.

There are also 20 premises whose licences have been surrendered by the DEC resulting in Council becoming the Regulatory Authority. Council has established an inspection program to monitor compliance with the former licence conditions and overall environmental performance for those premises considered to have a high potential to cause environmental impacts.

2) Comments on the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry

In general, the 'Terms of Reference' are considered to be satisfactory, however a number of amendments that are related to the above discussion and are designed to improve the quality of the outcomes of the Inquiry are suggested as described below:

b. *The impact of NSW air pollution laws (including the Clean Air Act 1961, the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 and any regulations made under those Acts) on air quality over the past three decades.*

It is suggested that that this 'Term of Reference' would be enhanced by the inclusion of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* in the list of Acts, whose impacts will be assessed by the Inquiry. This Act is considered to be relevant to the Inquiry as approval for the construction and operation of premises is granted under its provisions.

It is considered that this amendment to the Term of Reference will allow the Inquiry to examine issues associated with the review of the potential health impacts of air pollution of proposed developments and land use activities, as part of the development assessment process. It will also provide opportunities for the Committee to consider the inclusion of strategies to reduce potential future point sources of air pollution through the development assessment process in the findings and recommendations of the Inquiry.

As outlined above, there are a number of industrial premises whose regulatory responsibilities have been transferred from DEC to local Councils, following the gazettal of the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act (POEO)* in 1997. It is suggested that the effectiveness of monitoring and regulating these premises be assessed as part of the examination of the impact of the POEO Act.

c. *The causes of air pollution in the Sydney Basin over the past three decades*

As outline above, air pollutants evident in the Campbelltown LGA can originate in other parts of the Sydney Basin due to topographical features. Council would like the Inquiry to examine this issue as part of its investigation into the causes of air pollution in the Sydney Basin over the past three decades.

It is therefore suggested this 'Term of Reference' be amended to the following:

" The causes of air pollution in the Sydney Basin (including its dispersal within the Basin by prevailing wind patterns and taking into account topography) over the past three decades".

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

The development of strategies to reduce the health impacts of air pollution as part of the Inquiry is supported by Council. However, it is considered important that the Inquiry also examines the responsibilities of Local Government and NSW Government Agencies and the availability of resources for the implementation of the strategies as part of this process.

It is therefore suggested this 'Term of Reference' be amended to the following:

" Strategies to reduce the health impacts of air pollution and the responsibility and availability of resources for their implementation".

(h) Any other relevant matter

It is considered that the 'Terms of Reference' provided to Council do not provide the Inquiry with the opportunity to assess and identify any variation in the level of health impacts associated with air pollution across the Sydney Basin. This assessment is considered important in allowing for the prioritisation of strategies developed by the Inquiry and allocation of resources.

It is therefore suggested the 'Terms of Reference' be amended through the inclusion of the following, to become the new item (d).

" The variation of the level of health impact of air pollution within the Sydney Basin".

3) Conclusion

The conducting of an Inquiry into the Health Impacts of Air Pollution in the Sydney Basin by the NSW Legislative Council is strongly supported. The suggested amendments to the 'Terms of Reference' outlined in this submission are related to air pollution issues within the Campbelltown LGA and are designed to improve the quality of the outcomes of the Inquiry in relation to these issues. The submission also suggests that the report of the Inquiry should outline the responsibilities of local Councils and NSW government agencies for the implementation of the recommendations and allocation of resources for their implementation.