

**Submission  
No 15**

**INQUIRY INTO HEALTH IMPACTS OF EXPOSURE TO  
POOR LEVELS OF AIR QUALITY RESULTING FROM  
BUSHFIRES AND DROUGHT**

**Name:** Mr Les Johnston

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I am pleased that you have set up this inquiry into the health impacts of exposure to poor levels of air quality resulting from bushfires and drought.

My experience living in Balmain during the bushfires was that I found it impossible to breathe deeply throughout the period of high air pollution days. I had childhood asthma and I felt like that was returning. I refrained from outside activities as much as possible. I think that was a common response of many other residents.

In my professional experience, I am concerned about successive Government's inaction to address the life years lost caused by air pollution in Australia. The smoke caused by the 2019-20 bushfires will have caused many people with a range of health conditions to have an earlier death.

The current air pollution regulatory framework in NSW is failing to protect the health of the NSW community from exposure to air pollution.

Ageing coal fired power stations and an ageing motor vehicle fleet are both major polluters of the air we breathe. The Lithgow, Hunter valley and Central Coast power stations make a significant contribution to air pollution in the Sydney basin. Because of the age of these power stations, the regulatory limits are much more generous than would apply if the power stations were built in 2020. It is time tougher regulations were imposed.

Motor vehicle pollution must also be addressed. The failure of the Federal Government to impose tougher emission limits coupled with the growth of SUV vehicles has meant that air pollution levels in Sydney have not been reduced to levels recommended by the World Health Organisation and updated in the NEPM air quality parameters. NSW needs to act to speed up NEPM reviews so they incorporate the latest scientific evidence rather than remain up to 20 years out of date.

Climate science predicts that there will be more intense bushfire periods in the future. 2019-20 was just a sign and worsening events should be expected in the future. Action to reduce pollution from controllable sources must be taken as a hedge against future air pollution events arising from bushfire seasons.

I note that no updating of the Load-Based Licencing (LBL) Scheme has taken place. This must be completed and real costs charged to drive air pollution reduction. Each motorway tunnel stack must be included in LBL and pollution charges applied so that toll road operators are provided with a pollution reduction incentive. This measure will assist to improve air quality in the Sydney air shed.

Electric vehicles must be encouraged by the rolling out of charging stations, setting of pollution charges on vehicle registration and other measures.

The expansion of cycling and pedestrian connection networks so that these forms of transport are encouraged.

Shore based power needs to be applied for all cruise ships at both Circular Quay and White Bay. Shore based power is now a standard facility at all major ports and it is an easy fix to a major local air pollution source in the centre of Sydney.

Thank you for considering my submission.