

**Submission
No 26**

**INQUIRY INTO PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT
OPERATIONS AMENDMENT (CLEAN AIR) BILL 2021**

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Date Received: 30 June 2021

The former Clean Air and Clean Air Regulations have included measures to reduce permitted levels of air pollution over time. The current limits for coal fired power generation are overdue to be lowered to protect the health of residents in NSW.

Air quality measures have been reduced since the current limits were introduced in 2005. The previous limits were set in 1997, 1986, 1979 and 1972. The 2005 limits are overdue for updating. World Health Organisation (WHO) air quality guidelines have been updated and some of the NEPM guidelines have also been strengthened since 2005. Some of the current NEPM guidelines are long out of date based on current knowledge.

The public air quality monitoring network has been expanded in NSW since 2005 and the results clearly show that emissions from coal fired power stations make a significant contribution to air pollution levels which affects the health of many residents. These health costs are real and significant.

The failure to implement strengthened load based licensing costs by the Government has enabled pollution from coal fired power stations to evade pollution charges. Properly set pollution charges would have facilitated operators of such power stations seeing pollution control as a business cost. Instead, current pollution charges enable operators to see pollution reduction as a secondary consideration if at all.

The proposed regulation will provide for residents to be subject to lower levels of air pollution. The limits are much tighter but it is essential that polluters pay for the cost of their air pollution instead of being given a licence with generous conditions to pollute.