

# Clear Air for All Victorians:

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Comment from John Forrester

What do you think are the best value actions that are likely to help improve future air quality?

## 1. Improving our understanding of where and when air pollution occurs

State wide emissions inventory which gives a better understanding of when and where pollution occurs, and the effects of emission reductions.

- Renewing and expanding our air quality monitoring network
- Making better use of air quality information available through sources like satellite data and air quality modelling systems.
- Increasing the amount and accuracy of air quality information available in a range of formats like websites, social media and smart phone alerts, in real time.
- Increasing the ability for local communities to receive rapid, clear and relevant information on air quality when there is an emergency event.

*Response: Much more of this monitoring is needed.*

## 2. Empowering communities

- Better partnering with communities to identify and address local air quality challenges that affect them, using innovative approaches to minimise pollution sources and emissions.

*Response:*

*This one is an 'in' for third party rights – i.e. give the community the capacity to take offenders to VCAT and/or to court for community identified or other EPA determined pollution events*

*VCAT should be free for the public to access. If vexatious actions are a concern then have an assessment panel determine if the action can progress to VCAT, based on certain parameters*

*EPA could allocate a portion of fines or environmental levies to a fund which when built up to a certain size, could fund a determined number of actions over time, in the same way a foundation invests its money and only spends the interest earned.*

## 3. Reducing the occurrence of air pollution

- Strengthening Victorian equipment standards, such as for wood heater emissions.
- Increasing the government's own use of clean technologies and emission reduction practices.

- Increasing national advocacy, recognising the importance of cost-effective and consistent national approaches to reducing air pollution.
- Using the planning system to encourage the development of walkable neighbourhoods to decrease the dependence of communities on motor vehicles.
- Establishing an 'exemplar industry' program to promote and recognise best practice in business and industrial air quality management.

*Response:*

- A. *Smoke from prescribed burns in Melbourne in autumn 2018 reached Werribee creating haze, smell and irritation to our throat and eyes.*

*My workplace, a P-9 school, had a school yard with smoke in the air which possibly caused concern for students in recess periods, and walking to and from school, and may even have caused some parents to continue to use their cars to travel short distances to school.*

- B. *I have very little control over the back fence neighbour's wood heater which fills my house with smoke, and stops me using the backyard, and makes us dry our washing on a side-of-the-house line as the rotary clothesline is in the smoke zone. In winter 2018 this has been particularly bad:*

*For three weeks in July 2018, my neighbour has had a wood fire burning and the smoke is released 10 metres from my bedrooms and living area. The wood heater burns day and night, and at times the smell is acrid and causes quite some discomfort. The smoke smell and therefore particles has been inside my house for the whole period. Late afternoon Sunday 22 July my garage was full of smoke as a result of a burst of smoke from the heater.*

- C. *This also raises the facts that:*

- *The wood heater's owner's house is 30 years old, with probably the original wood heater.*
- *Family income in that house is low and use is made of fencing materials, and noise in the evening and at night emanating from a hydraulic press of some kind to split some wood and an electric saw to cut the wood. Some concern exists as to the use or not of treated pine materials as fuel.*

*So some sort of financial incentives are needed here to assist with replacement of old heaters, and to cut fuel bills.*

#### **4. Tackling emerging air quality challenges**

Making sure we can rapidly respond to emerging pollution risks identified through increased monitoring, and advances in medical, scientific and technical knowledge.

Increasing investment in science to identify risks and trends.

Improving guidance on the location and design of sensitive uses (such as education, childcare and aged care facilities) exposed to significant road traffic emissions.

*Response:*

*Agreed, but, as in sensitive urban stormwater design, don't just encourage or offer guidelines, set definite targets and mandate them.*

*Encourage community to monitor own neighbourhood through use of approved technology and reporting systems, displaying data for all to share and allow the community to know who to call on & how to take action.*

**5. How would you build on or vary these actions?**

*Response: Give third party rights to the community so it will assist with monitoring, and/or take action for the long-term health of the community.*

**6. Do you have any suggestions for further actions?**

*Response:*

- A. Raise the standard of diesel fuel so that unsightly smoke, smell and particles do not affect health.*
- B. Enforce existing rules on vehicle emissions*
- C. Encourage initiatives which remove old diesel burning vehicles off the road*
- D. Create a third party rights fund*

**7. Are there any air quality actions you believe should be avoided? Why?**

*Response: Prescribed and other burn-offs should be minimised.*

- A. The fires and their smoke are a health issue.*

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/news-and-events/healthalerts/smoke-exposure-due-to-seasonal-planned-burns-may-affect-health-may-2018>

- B. It was prescribed burn smoke that made Melbourne's air quality poor over all of Melbourne on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> May. (Herald Sun May 1<sup>st</sup> 2018)*

*"When we deal with bushfire smoke and wood smoke, the main pollutant is a particle called PM2.5 — which is a small size, meaning it can be inhaled deeply into the lungs." EPA's Chief Environmental Scientist Dr Andrea Hinwood (Herald Sun May 1<sup>st</sup> 2018)*

*I had a sore throat and watery eyes for a week or more at that time.*

- C. The burns are also a form of industrial pollution as they are not all for safety as 77 out of 115 in early May were from the central highlands burning clear felling logging waste.*

<http://theconversation.com/logging-burns-conceal-industrial-pollution-in-the-name-of-community-safety-96712>

*The issue here is that if the forests weren't logged in a clear felling/burn-off manner we wouldn't have to have that smoke.*

- D. The prescribed burns are completed for safety reasons, but impact heavily on other matters in the bush or on grasslands such as health and abundance of flora and fauna, water quality, soil erosion and moisture retention. Considering the damage prescribed burns do to these*

*features which enhance a satisfactory state of the environment, liveability and human health, the community loses.*

*The point is that the logging and burn-off industry is carrying out industrial pollution and causing health problems for the young and old, asthmatics or some who are ill, and inconveniencing the public, all under the guise of safety.*

**8. Are there particular areas of air quality (either pollution sources or geographic regions) you think the government should target for air quality improvement? Why?**

*Response:*

*A. Diesel fuel. To lessen cancer and other health concerns.*

*B. Burning fossil fuels. To lessen climate change impacts.*

*C. Wood heater smoke.*

*○ To improve air quality. The river valley near my house is a popular place for morning or evening walkers on pathways constructed for that purpose. It is in that valley where the smoke accumulates overnight from a number of wood heaters or fires used for heating inside houses.*

*○ To lessen reliance on wood sourced from the floor of precious forests which are the last refuge of some wildlife.*

**9. Are you able to provide any data or information that will help government assess the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of air quality management actions?**

*Response:*

*No, but it must be possible to look at health data to enact modelling to see what will happen to our air in growing suburban density if public transport does not take over from private fossil fuel vehicles.*

*Health impacts can surely be costed and therefore point out the long-term costs of smoke in urban environments.*

**10. Do you have any other suggestions on how to secure a clean air future?**

*Response:*

*Encourage revegetation of the land*

*Encourage no-till farming*

*Discourage clearing of the land by roads and/or farming and/or burning*

*Discourage open-pit and/or aggressive mining techniques*

*Encourage public transport*

*Encourage electric vehicles*

*Encourage the retention of green wedges*

*Actively discourage the conversion of farmland to suburbia*

*Strengthen planning laws to keep open liveable spaces for community*

*Mandate rather than suggest, guide or let industry set own monitoring or evaluation*