

First Name

Sarah

Last Name

McConnell

What organisation are you from?

Individual

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

Improved monitoring and record keeping of air pollution across the state. This however needs to go hand in hand with stronger measures to prevent air pollution. It's important we know and understand the level of pollution we currently have so that we can take steps to reduce this with measurable results.

How would you build on or vary these actions?

It's not a coordinated upfront approach to preventing pollution. We need to have a transparent approach to dealing with pollution and name all of the contributing factors and the severity of their impact honestly. I noticed that there was no mention of industrial logging burns which contribute a huge amount to the pollution we see across a huge amount of Victoria around April and May each year. This needs to be listed separately from the burning done for fire prevention because it contributes a significantly higher amount to our air pollution than the general public has been led to believe. There also needs to be a stronger emphasis on the reduction and mitigation of air pollution - protection of forests, green spaces etc. It seems incredibly problematic to have an air pollution plan while the government simultaneously subsidises old growth native forest logging. Given that our Mountain Ash forests are some of the most carbon dense forests in the world, we can't afford to keep the logging industry operating in these forests - the impact on climate change and subsequent problems that will arise is a far greater cost than is currently being considered. This is a really obvious thing that needs to change if we are serious about our air quality.

Do you have any suggestions for further actions?

We need to stop industrial logging burns and instead have these coupes replanted so as to avoid unnecessary health impacts on the community. As someone who has asthma, this is something that impacts me directly and it seems negligent to allow companies to use the cheapest possible methods of regenerating the land at the cost of the health of people in these and the surrounding areas. Part of the solution to this problem would be to throw out the existing Regional Forest Agreement and see native forests protected permanently. Strengthen the Environmental Protection Agency so that they have the power to step in and enforce regulations.

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

None that should be avoided. Current industrial post-logging burning practices must be completely stopped. No renewal of the RFA's. Protection of current intact native forest. Any proposal to burn waste to generate energy must be declined. All reasons stated in above questions.

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

Areas around forests that are being logged - the Central Highlands (Warburton, Toolangi, Healesville, Baw Baw, Rubicon Valley etc) and East Gippsland. They've been absolutely hammered by the logging industry and have suffered unfair consequences with some residents having to leave during post industrial logging burning months.

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

No.

Do you have other suggestions on how to secure a clean air future?

As above.