

The air quality statement

Thankyou for the opportunity to make a submission on the Victorian air quality statement. In Victoria, 3000 people die from severe air pollution a year. This is totally unacceptable and there should be zero tolerance of deaths due to poor air quality. All industries which produce air pollution including logging burns, should have the cost of their licences in line with the amount of air pollution they produce, and harm to human health. With a zero tolerance to death from air pollution, the cost of a licence to pollute would be high enough for industries to install the state of the art technology to prevent emissions, and for logging burns, to stop this method of regeneration of the forest and encourage methods which don't use burning.

There is a need to stop post industrial clearfell logging burns. These create far more pollution than fuel reduction burns and are completely unnecessary. For example, the logging coupe Rusty on Sylvia Creek Road in Toolangi is being revegetated successfully without burning. Burning is simply the cheapest and easiest way of regenerating a coupe, but definitely not the best. Several coupes have been burned more than once and still have not been successfully regenerated. They have a monoculture of Acacias. Any air pollution caused by logging burns should be considered as industrial pollution and monitored and licensed as such. Preferably, clearfell industrial logging in native forests should be banned as this leaves a great deal of slash on the forest floor from branches and non target vegetation. Plantation forests are far better to supply pulp and wood as plantation forests are raised under silvicultural methods and do not have extra branching and non target vegetation to add to the wood slash left on the forest floor. The air quality in Healesville and Mooroolbark was extremely poor at dangerous levels during the duration of the clearfell industrial post logging burns.

Fuel reduction burns need to be far cooler and in a mosaic pattern, than the broadscale burns done at the moment. These are not cool enough as the cool burns done by the indigenous people. DELWP needs to learn to burn in this manner as demonstrated by Uncle Dave Wandin, an elder of the Wurundjeri people. This does not create large plumes of smoke, or break control lines, are better for the environment, wildlife and nearby human population. Damp forest should not be burned at all, as burning only dries the forest out and makes it more fire prone. The lyrebirds do not inhabit the burned forest and the fungi and invertebrates are destroyed. Lyrebirds turn over the forest litter on the forest floor, decreasing the flammability of the forest. Also the fungi and invertebrates decompose the debris on the forest floor, making it less flammable.

Public transport should be increased including the Doncaster rail, instead of constructing more freeways, that just become congested and increase emissions from car exhausts. Additionally, only electric cars should be manufactured to reduce emissions, and diesel buses should be replaced with electric buses.. Therefore electricity needs to be cleanly produced so that the source of energy for the electric vehicles are non polluting. This would eliminate the continued use of fossil fuels. Burning coal and drilling for oil are large producers of air pollution and should be replaced by non polluting renewable energy.

Conclusion

To improve Victoria's air quality there is a need to transition quickly from polluting fossil fuels to clean renewable energy. Replace petrol and diesel vehicles with electric vehicles, and improve public transport rather than building freeways. Ban post industrial clearfell logging regenerating burns, and regenerate the forest by other methods. Rapidly transfer logging out of native forests and into plantations and create the Great Forest National Park, and review and scale down fuel reduction burns.

Yours sincerely

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