

**First Name**

Amanda

**Last Name**

Pickett

**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?**

- Strengthening Victorian equipment standards, such as for wood heater emissions.(this needs to include behavioral change, for example shutting down flues and leaving them smoking for hours should not be permitted, use of green wood and burning of toxic substances also needs to take into account. Issues such as proximity and impact on neighboring properties, as well as effects such as fall of the land and weather, prevailing winds and breezes, effects of fog and so on. There need to be real reasonable and easily enforced standards put in place so people who are unwilling to comply are forced to do so)
- 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.(needs to include public transport)
- Establishing an 'exemplar industry' program to promote and recognise best practice in business and industrial air quality management.(needs to include residential )

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

More research and resources for education, awareness and developing best practice, increased capacity for quick and effective responses and processes to deal with complaints and improved technologies.

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

Simpler procedures and more resources for dealing with complaints and compliance.

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

No

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

There are three key areas of air quality that severely impact me in Healesville: logging coupe regeneration burns, bush fire reduction burns and wood-smoke from residential wood heaters in particular. I am aware that the manner in which logging coupe regenerative burns are conducted is highly problematic. I am also aware that there are alternative ways to manage logging coupes in regards to regenerative logging practices and the current system does not appear to take into account all the environmental values of our state forests. Logging is taking place in areas that I believe would be best left as intact forest where their value in providing clean air and water is higher than their value as paper pulp. In regards to this application the forests role in providing clean air should be taken into consideration when developing the clean air statement. With this in mind I would like to see more research done in regards to best purpose and best practice for managing and maintaining our state forests. In regards to managing bush fire reduction burns it is also clear that we need a more nuanced and discreet approach that takes into account local conditions. It is clear that more research also needs to be done into when and where to burn as evidence is emerging from some studies that bush fire reduction has negligible benefits in mountainous forest terrain away from townships, that many undisturbed, intact, good quality forest eco systems burn slower and at lower heat. Finally the wood smoke issue continues to cause distress and ill health for me personally. My neighbor installed a wood heater in their old fire place. I have grown up with wood fires and while the old fireplace did

cause issues I was able to live with it. The flue of this new wood heater is situated less than 10 meters from my back door, the neighbors began by burning green wood and leaving it shut down and smoking for hours. I managed to talk with them about using dry wood and eventually the creosoted flue was cleaned and the smoke quality improved. However they continued to shut it down overnight and when they went out and leave me surrounded in thick grey smoke for hours. When I tried talking to them about it they refused to deal with the issue and continue to behave in this manner. I have talked to my local council health department, but I am required to keep a 6 week smoke diary in order to get them to visit and assess the situation. This task has been to distressing for me and I am yet to complete and deliver the required documentation. I believe the requirement to deliver the diary is unreasonable as a first response, an initial visit from the council would have been beneficial, even if they were not able to solve this problem entirely. They have offered to accept a two week dairy which I plan to provide, however I do not believe I should need to provide a diary as a first response. The outlet of the flue is at the same height at my roof line and one fairly simple action would be to make the flue higher, in addition there are better designs available for flue caps,. I believe it would be reasonable for these actions to be taken as a matter of course without the required smoke diary. As for shutting the flue down this is just not OK when other residents are in such close proximity. The neighbors could be educated in this by someone other than me. I have central heating and the smoke from this wood heater fills my whole house in seconds when it emerges, this happens on a regular basis. I have bought an industrial fan for my back porch and an air purifier for indoors which I run most of this time now, in order to reduce the impact. This issue has cost me over \$700 worth of equipment and replacement filters so far, plus additional power that I use to keep these appliances running. It has had a negative impact on my mental health and has caused hyper vigilant behavior from trying to keep a smoke diary and general anxiety. I am not able to use my clothesline to dry clothes or to work in my garden or enjoy being outside on my back porch or in my garden near the house on a regular basis. Despite being the person who is most negatively effected I have been left to deal with my neighbors alone and without support. Their refusal to communicate or deal effectively with the problem and their subsequent threats and bullying behavior, threatening to call the police and claiming I was trespassing when I attempted to communicate with them, despite all my communications being polite, calm and reasonable has had ongoing negative impacts on my capacity to live in good health in my home. I own my home and do not believe I should have to sell it in order to solve the problem. The inadequacy of the current systems for dealing with this issue effectively has contributed to my ill health. It has also enabled these people to continue to pollute my home and garden on a regular basis with impunity. There is too much emphasis on the need to prove the existence of a problem and it seems no adequate restrictions in place. I was told by council that it does not matter that I cannot put my washing out, it does not matter that I cannot spend time on my back porch or garden on a daily basis, or even that the smoke is coming into the house, they do not have any thing in place that makes these relevant issues for complaint, unbelievable! However the fact that I am suffering anxiety is something that they can consider. So that has led me to understand that basically the problem has to be so bad that I become mentally ill before we can deal with it. It is worth noting that my other neighbors have a wood heater, on the other side of my property, this heater has a high flue and is over 10 meters distance from my house on the north side and it's impact is not as disturbing and it has not caused me to feel the need to lodge a complaint. Having said that the air in my pocket of Healesville is often smoky rather than clean, there are many wood heaters and I would welcome any way we can reduce their negative impacts.

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

Yes I do have record from a smoke diary and links to relevant studies.

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

Behavioral change is key, consideration of others so important, more awareness and education around the issues and it's complexities would be great to see. More emphasis on compliance, people who are the victims of poor air quality are already suffering and should not be required to prove the need for clean air, it should be something we can all enjoy not something we have to fight for. A review of the values of our forests and their role in providing clean air and water.