

Our Ref: MA007769

Minister Lily D'Ambrosio
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
8 Nicholson Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Minister D'Ambrosio

Clean Air for All Victorians - Victoria's Air Quality Statement

Thank you for your letter of 5 June 2018 regarding Victoria's Air Quality Statement.

Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria's vision is for a healthy environment that supports a liveable and prosperous Victoria now and always. Ensuring Victoria protects and improves its air quality is key to delivering this vision.

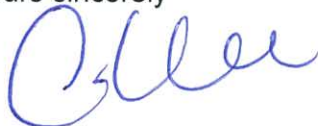
EPA is responsible for monitoring and regulating air pollution and reporting on Victoria's air quality. This responsibility is legislated under the *Environment Protection Act 1970* and the State's environment protection policies, which incorporate national standards on ambient air quality.

EPA welcomes the release of the Statement and looks forward to working closely with the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP) on the development of a Victorian Air Quality Strategy. EPA has significant expertise in air quality science and policy, environmental health and regulatory experience in achieving improved air quality outcomes. EPA looks forward to contributing its experience to the development of the Strategy.

To assist DELWP, EPA has prepared a submission highlighting key air quality issues that EPA believes should be considered in the development of the Strategy based on the available evidence on air quality pollutants, sources, trends and associated health impacts. EPA will also provide a report in the coming months that will provide a summary of this evidence to inform the development of the strategy.

Thank you for the opportunity to input into this important initiative.

Yours sincerely



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27/6/2018

Encl.
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Victoria's Air Quality Statement

EPA submission – June 2018



Environment
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EPA Victoria welcomes the release of the Statement and the commitment to developing a comprehensive Air Quality Strategy for Victoria.

Poor air quality can have serious health impacts including cardiovascular and respiratory disease, bronchitis and asthma, and can exacerbate obstructive pulmonary disease. It impacts the natural environment by impairing vegetation growth, acidifying soils and freshwater, and causing chronic health impacts in wildlife. It can also have significant impacts on local amenity, reducing the desire of people to engage in outdoor and community activities.

Air pollution occurs from a wide range of sources, with major sources in Victoria including motor vehicles, industry including power generation, domestic (such as wood heaters and garden equipment) and commercial sources, bushfires, windborne and construction dust (such as soil blown from agricultural areas and unsealed roads), planned burning and bushfires.

EPA is responsible for monitoring, regulating and reporting on Victoria's air quality and for the protection of human health and the environment from the effects of air pollution. This responsibility is legislated under the *Environment Protection Act 1970* and the State's environment protection policies, which incorporate national standards on ambient air quality. EPA also has responsibility for environmental public health with expertise in the assessment of the effects of air pollutants on health.

There have been significant reductions in many pollutants over recent decades, including carbon monoxide and lead (lead concentrations are now so low that monitoring is no longer undertaken). The EPA has been successful in reducing key emissions through regulating industry. However, for a number of pollutants, such as ozone and particulate matter, there are many more diffuse sources and little change in concentrations over the last decade. There are also specific point sources and localised areas with specific air quality issues.

In addition, there are many air pollution sources which cannot be directly regulated, in particular those from natural events such as bushfires and raised dust. Policy and program decisions by other parts of government also impact on air quality, such as in planning, transport, mining, emergency management such as planned burns, energy and agriculture policy.

Without further investment in effective action to monitor and manage air pollution, there will be an accelerated decline in Victorian air quality and an increase in exposure of Victorians to health risks from such pollution. There will be significant increases in pollutants, in particular summer smog and particulate matter due to an increased population, transport and energy demands, in combination with a changing climate.

This will likely have substantial health and amenity impacts, even simply from the increase in the number of Victorians being exposed to air pollution. Melbourne's population will double by 2031 and Victoria's population is projected to increase to 10 million by 2051. The proportion of elderly Victorians, disproportionately susceptible to the health impacts of air pollution, will also increase significantly by 2051. Together with a growing and aging population, these will likely increase health impacts, in particular cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.

Reducing harm from poor air quality can be achieved by reducing exposure to air pollution. The Strategy should look for initiatives that will result in a greater focus on air (and environmental) quality in the design and planning of our residential and industrial areas and major infrastructure precincts. Strategic planning that appropriately separates residential land uses, including vulnerable sectors of our communities, from sources of poor air quality (such as major roads and existing industry) can deliver significant co-benefits, as well as improved health outcomes and reduced costs to our health care costs. There is significant evidence, for example, that urban green spaces deliver multiple benefits, including improved physical and mental health outcomes, reduced stress, reduced heat island effect for cities, as well as reduced exposure to air pollution.

EPA encourages these issues to be considered in the development of the Strategy. To effectively protect and improve air quality, the Strategy must include a focus on whole of Government and sector initiatives and programs that will tackle diffuse sources of air pollution, including smoke from planned burns, bushfires and wood heaters, and transport.

EPA recommends a sector based approach to developing management plans under the Strategy that consider the full range of issues facing a sector, including its monitoring and assessment as well as resulting health outcomes. Such sectors would include, but not be limited to, biomass burning (planned and other), transport (including shipping and freight), industry, and strategic planning.

The Strategy should also consider the adequacy of monitoring, the types and locations as well as new science in both the assessment and prediction of air pollution and health effects so that Victoria is positioned to be able to continually adapt and improve its management of air quality over time.

EPA has significant expertise in air quality science and policy and regulatory experience in achieving improved air quality outcomes. EPA looks forward to contributing its experience to the development of the Strategy.