

Submission in response to the
Victoria Clean Air Statement

from

Ray Peck



Submitted by email to

airpollutioninquiry@parliament.vic.gov.au

on

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Victorian Air Quality Statement.

I have lived in Victoria for 71 years, was a secondary teacher for 30 years and for the last 19 years have been a senior research fellow at an educational research organisation in Melbourne. I have three children and six grandchildren. I am concerned about environmental matters and the preservation of our natural environment. I want Victoria to have the highest possible air quality standards, the cleanest possible air, and be known around the world as a clean, green, healthy place to visit and live.

On 19 February 2020 the Legislative Council agreed to the following motion:
That this House requires the Environment and Planning Committee to inquire into, consider and report, on actions to minimise the health impacts of air pollution, including, but not limited to —

- a) state-wide practical, real-time, cost-effective mitigation strategies;
- b) ensuring that Victorian air quality continues to track towards meeting or exceeding current international best practice standards and is enforced;
- c) the impact of economic and population growth on air pollution and health outcomes;
- d) strengthening commitments across all Victorian Government portfolios to reduce air pollution and minimise the impact on health; and
- e) any other related matters.

Standards

In this submission, I wish to focus on (b) ensuring that Victorian air quality continues to track towards meeting or exceeding current international best practice standards and is enforced.

I strongly support The People’s Clean Air Action Plan for Victoria developed by Environmental Justice Victoria. While it is good that Victoria’s PM2.5 standards are better than the rest of the country, and stricter than the WHO standards, the same is not the case for other pollutants such as SO₂, NO₂ and O₃.

Recommendations set 1

I endorse the following EJV recommended actions.

Action: By September 2021, legislate ambient air quality standards for SO₂, NO₂ and O₃ to the values in table 7, and regulate key emissions point-sources to ensure they are met.

Table 7: Recommended safe ambient air quality standards to protect health

Standard (in parts per billion)	Limit
SO ₂ 1-hour	60 (as 99 th centile of daily worst hour)
SO ₂ 24-hour	8 (no exceedances)
NO ₂ 1-hour	72 (as 99 th centile of daily worst hour)
NO ₂ annual	9 (no exceedances)
O ₃ 1-hour	70

Action: Periodically review the ambient standards based on epidemiological data, and revise/strengthen as appropriate. At a minimum, this should be completed every 5-7 years

Reducing pollutants at the source

Sulphur Dioxide

People with lung conditions like asthma are most affected by high levels of sulphur dioxide. My wife is an asthmatic. Sulphur dioxide originates mainly from industries such as smelting of mineral ores, oil refining and coal-fired power generation. Motor vehicle fuels in Australia have low sulphur content and are of less concern than industry as a source of sulphur dioxide.

In Victoria, the most common sources of sulphur dioxide are coal-fired power stations, diesel vehicles, oil refineries and shipping. Australia's [Energy Security Board](#) is considering mechanisms that facilitate an orderly transition from coal-fired generation to renewables.

The NRMA is calling for a ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars as early as 2025. California is phasing out sales of new internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles and by 2035, all new passenger cars and light-duty trucks sold in California must be zero-emission. Forty-five US states provide an incentive for certain EVs and/or PHEVs, either through a specific utility operating in the state or through state legislation.

Nitrogen dioxide

Breathing in high levels of nitrogen dioxide can affect health. Symptoms are more likely for vulnerable people with allergies who are sensitive to air pollution, or who have a lung condition like asthma. The main sources of nitrogen dioxide in Victoria are car and truck exhausts, coal-fired power stations and industry.

Ozone

Breathing in high levels of ozone can irritate the lining of your throat and lungs. This can make it difficult to breathe. People most sensitive to ozone include those with lung conditions, children and people over 65. My baby grandson had to be evacuated away from bushfire smoke in January 2019. Ozone forms when volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrous oxides react together in the atmosphere. This happens during warm, sunny weather. The main sources of VOCs and nitrous oxides are car and truck exhausts, bushfire smoke, coal-fired power stations and industry.

Action: The Victorian government should support and encourage the early phase-out of coal-fired power stations and diesel and petrol vehicles, providing timelines and tax incentives where necessary, as has been done in other countries and jurisdictions.

Recommendations set 2

Action: The Victorian government should remove, or at least delay the proposed EV road tax, a disincentive to early take-up.

Action: Victoria is one of the most prone places on Earth. Climate change is increasing the risk of more frequent and severe fires, and greater risk of adverse health effects from smoke. The Victorian government should

- (a) work with every Local Government Area council to develop effective climate action plans working towards net-zero emissions by 2030.
- (b) stop logging native forests so that coupes are not burnt, so that forests are not made more susceptible by drying, and so that carbon can be stored and oxygen released.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

Yours sincerely

Ray Peck

