

## Air pollution Inquiry

### YOUR SUBMISSION

#### **Submission:**

We're sick of opening our door to get some fresh air and seeing our air purifier gauge jump from 3 ppm to 15 + ppm right next to where my daughter plays in the lounge room. And opening the door to see the wire screen caked in dust and pollution no matter how frequently it is cleaned. We are tired of feeling anxious about enjoying our small courtyard knowing we are being constantly exposed to poor air quality and odours from neighbouring industry. We are tired of walking to the local park and waiting to cross the Hyde St, Somerville Rd intersection where half a dozen old diesel trucks chug past as our daughter sits in her pram and then plays on the playground as a stream of trucks pass by.

The Westgate Tunnel Authority diverted trucks past our house for a year and no government agency, or department, or the local council would take my calls or listen to my concerns about the noise and the pollution. We are tired of advocating for fundamental human rights of clean, healthy and liveable environment and being ignored by every responsible authority.

We're tired of seeing reports in the newspaper of piles of PFAS contaminated soil lying around in parts of our neighbourhood with no transparency around how it will be responsibly managed. And most of all we are tired of inquiries such as the independent planning panel for the WGT project making sensible recommendations to reduce community harm such as including tunnel filtration which get dismissed. What is the point of inquiries if their recommendations are ignored because of the moderate costs of the filter, when the long-term community health savings and benefits are dismissed?

We were also appalled to learn during the Environmental Effect Statement process for the Westgate Tunnel project, loudly proclaimed as benefiting the community by taking trucks off the road, aimed only to not make pollution worse, as it's standard. Given Yarraville is an air pollution hotspot that seems to be a terrible missed opportunity and sets a very low bar. With little air pollution monitoring, it also seems easy to fudge the figures around what is actually being achieved, and we have no ability to hold authorities to account. Even when the extremely serious air pollution hazard event from the factory fires happened, it took a long time for the Victorian Government to acknowledge the extent of the local impact. We heard stories of families experiencing breathing difficulties from the smoke and fumes and many families' experienced red, watery eyes from the fumes coming off Stoney Creek for weeks after the event. We protested on the steps of Parliament only after which, we had some acknowledgement and support. It shouldn't have to be that hard. There is also no knowledge or investigations into any long term impacts from that event that I'm aware of. After years of watching community concerns being ignored we are looking to leave the area primarily because of the air pollution hazard. This will cost us money and cause inconvenience. It saddens us because it will cost us a community we have grown to love and proximity to our family. My family have lived in the inner west for several generations.

However, with a family history of lung cancer not linked to smoking, and knowing that air pollution strongly correlates to an increased risk of lung disease and cancer, I do not want to die at 43 like my mum did and leave my daughter without her mother, the way I was left without mine at the age of 14.

We also worry about the long-term impacts on our daughter's health, especially at such a vulnerable stage of her development. The sort of anxiety that creates shouldn't have to be a concern in a first world society that claims to have a good balance of environmental and economic management.

We have the ability to live healthier lives with less health and environmental costs in ways that do not detract from necessary economic activity. We not only have the ability to make these changes, we have a moral obligation to make these changes for the sake of many people's lives, and quality of life, and for the sake of the local environment. The people of the inner west do not deserve to be treated as second-class

citizens, as though we have chosen to live in the sewer of the city, exposed to pollutants just because it's a thoroughfare for economic activity and major arterials. It's possible for communities, infrastructure and industry to coexist in harmony if the right protections are in place.

We're also angry to hear the Victorian government want to charge electric car early adopters more to charge their cars, when electric vehicle owners have paid a premium to do the 'right' thing and reduce environmental impacts and air pollution hazards. What a joke! And our national vehicle emission standards are a joke, which is causing Australia to become a dumping ground for dirty vehicles, globally:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/mar/11/nsw-to-go-it-alone-on-vehicle-emissions-standard-to-avoid-becoming-dumping-ground> But like NSW, Victoria can set standards to protect their community, if it chooses to, since it seems highly unlikely the federal government will act on this issue.

Apart from strongly improving vehicle emission standards and improving air pollution monitoring and accountability, the Victorian Government must commit to implementing all the recommendations from the Inner West Air Quality Community Reference Group in their report titled Air Pollution in Melbourne's Inner West: Taking direct action to reduce our community's exposure.

<https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/sustainability/inner-west-air-quality-reference-group>

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