

## Air quality is everyone's business

Improving air quality requires action by all sectors of the community, including Government, industry and individuals. EPA has been working with these groups for nearly 30 years to improve Victoria's air quality.

Pollutants are measured and monitored by industry, EPA and the community to ensure that safe levels are not being exceeded, exposing the population to health risks or nuisance.

Air monitoring data shows that air quality has improved significantly during this time, however, there are still breaches of air quality objectives for visibility (fine particles) and ozone.

### Local air quality management

The draft *State Environment Protection Policy (Air Quality Management)* introduces two new concepts for the protection of local air quality:

#### 1. Intervention levels

Intervention levels are health-based criteria that can be used to assess local air quality data. If intervention levels are exceeded the development of a NEIP may be triggered.

#### 2. Neighbourhood Environment Improvement Plans (NEIPs)

NEIPs are a new mechanism through which local communities and other stakeholders can work with emission sources in their neighbourhood to manage and improve their local environment.

### Regional air quality management

The draft SEPP (Air Quality Management):

- maintains controls of industry emissions, and the approach of continuous improvement of performance
- introduces new measures to manage and reduce motor vehicle emissions

- reinforcement of compliance with Australian standards for new wood heaters sold in Victoria
- introduces measures to encourage the replacement of non-compliant wood heaters and discourage reliance on open fires
- provides for the development of guidelines to minimise the impact on air quality of controlled burning, on public and private land. These guidelines are developed in cooperation with fire protection agencies.

These measures will be implemented through the development of an Air Quality Improvement Plan (AQIP). A draft AQIP for the Port Phillip Region was released in June 2000.

### What you can do

To have your say about how our air quality should be protected, copies of the draft policies, draft PIA and accompanying background papers can be downloaded from EPA's website: [www.epa.vic.gov.au](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au) or may be obtained from:

#### EPA Information Centre

Herald and Weekly Times Tower  
40 City Road  
SOUTHBANK 3006  
(03) 9695 2722

Submissions on the draft policies, draft PIA and background papers are welcome. The closing date for submissions is 30 April 2001. Submissions should be directed to:

#### Project Manager - SEPP (Air Quality Management)

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# Protecting Victoria's Air Environment

## Review of State Environment Protection Policy (AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT)

Air quality in Victoria is protected by two State environment protection policies or SEPPs, which are adopted by Government to protect Victoria's air environment. These policies are now being reviewed.

This is your opportunity to express your views about how our air quality should be protected



## Protecting Victoria's air quality environment

The policies that set air quality standards to protect our air environment are:

1. *State Environment Protection Policy (Ambient Air Quality)* which sets out a number of objectives to protect our air environment including:

- health-based regional air quality objectives for several common pollutants
- visibility objectives
- vegetation protection objectives.

This policy also indicates how pollutants are to be monitored and reported.

2. *State Environment Protection Policy (Air Quality Management)* which provides a framework to meet the SEPP (Ambient Air Quality) goals. It also sets out the program for assessing and managing emission sources (including industry emissions) to meet SEPP (Ambient Air Quality) objectives.

Draft variations of the air quality policies and a draft Policy Impact Assessment (PIA) have been released and submissions are invited for public comment.

A series of background papers explaining some of the policy issues and the reasoning behind the proposed variations have also been released. Comments are invited on these papers.

Updating the policy will ensure Victoria's air quality continues to improve.

There are a variety of reasons for examining and updating the **SEPP (Air Quality Management)**. These include:

- the development of new approaches to air quality management;
- increased understanding of the health impacts of pollutants;
- the emergence of international concerns about global warming (the enhanced greenhouse effect) and depletion of the ozone layer;

- changing community concerns and priorities.  
Varying the current policies will update Victoria's approach to air quality management to take account of these issues and other developments in air quality management.

The provisions in SEPP (Air Quality Management) have not undergone a comprehensive review since they were first introduced in 1981.

It is important to ensure that the strategic framework for protecting our air quality is working effectively. The community's expectations for improving air quality must be considered.

Victoria's air quality doesn't always meet community expectations. The air quality in some neighbourhoods is under stress due to local sources of emissions, such as busy roads, industry and wood heating.

### What are the key pollutants ?

The *State Environment Protection Policy (Air Quality Management)* classifies air pollutants as belonging to three broad categories:

1. Common air pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide, ozone, particles (PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>), carbon monoxide, lead and sulfur dioxide.  
The common pollutants are pollutants that have many sources and are widely spread. These include emissions from your car. These pollutants are monitored routinely by EPA.
2. Hazardous air pollutants, or HAPs, such as benzene, 1,3-butadiene and formaldehyde.  
HAPs have fewer sources and tend to impact more at a local level than the common pollutants. These pollutants are monitored by EPA through special studies of potential problem areas.
3. Air pollutants that cause a nuisance, affecting people's quality of life, such as coarse dust and odour.

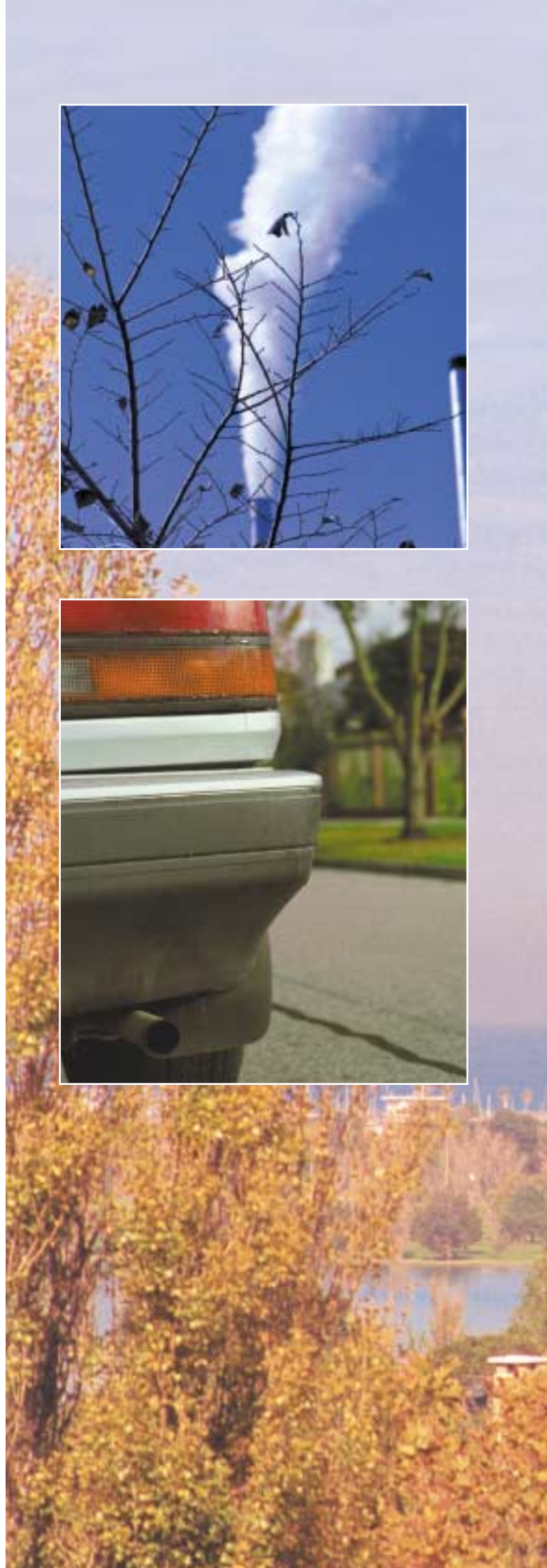
### How do the policies protect the air environment ?

EPA believes that both *State Environment Protection Policy (Ambient Air Quality)* and *State Environment Protection Policy (Air Quality Management)* provide the means to ensure that Victoria's air quality is protected at both a local and regional level, but that they need to be updated to reflect developments in air quality management and our understanding of the issues.

#### **State Environment Protection Policy (Ambient Air Quality)**

The policy sets air quality objectives for the common air pollutants. These objectives are designed for:

- **protection of human health**  
The reduction of negative effects of pollutants on human health such as respiratory illness, hospital admittance and premature mortality.
- **visibility**  
The visibility objective sets a means for us to measure



acceptable air quality by judging visibility. For example, if you can 'see the Dandenongs' from Melbourne city, the air quality is of a very high standard.

- **protection of vegetation**

Air pollution can affect vegetation so objectives are set to protect the present and future growth and development of our vegetation.

The SEPP (Ambient Air Quality) also sets goals for each air pollutant to be reached by 2008.

These objectives were derived through the development of the National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM) for Ambient Air Quality.

### **State Environment Protection Policy (Air Quality Management)**

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This policy establishes a framework to ensure that the objectives in SEPP (Ambient Air Quality) are met, ensuring air quality continues to improve.

The SEPP (Air Quality Management) sets out criteria to assess the design of proposed industry premises. These criteria relate to the common pollutants and HAPS. The design criteria may be health-based or based on odour. These criteria are used with EPA's regulatory models to assess the impacts of emissions from proposed industrial premises.

### **New air quality management policy proposals**

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To ensure that our air quality objectives are met and that Victoria enjoys continuous air quality improvement, a series of new key policy proposals have been developed. These are outlined below.

#### **Policy principles**

Principles of environmental management are drawn from agreements between governments of Australia and well-established environmental management principles. These principles guide the development and implementation of policy actions. Some of the most important principles are:

- **precautionary principle** - where there are threats of serious

or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation

- **eco-efficiency** - individuals and businesses should ensure the delivery of competitively priced goods and services that satisfy human needs and bring quality of life, while progressively reducing ecological degradation and resource intensity throughout the lifecycle to a level at least in line with the Earth's estimated carrying capacity
- **waste hierarchy** - wastes should be managed in the following order of preference: avoidance; reuse; recycling; recovery of energy; treatment; containment and disposal

#### **Response to global issues**

There is growing international concern about the potential impacts of global warming. The management of greenhouse gas emissions and energy efficiency in industry is therefore incorporated into the draft SEPP (Air Quality Management). Applicants for EPA works approval and licence will have to demonstrate that they have considered greenhouse and energy issues in the design of their processes and facilities.

#### **Stricter control of emissions from industry**

The draft SEPP (Air Quality Management) encourages continuous improvement and eco-efficiency in the management of emissions. It focuses on less reliance on traditional end-of-pipe solutions. Generators of air pollutants will have to achieve better levels of waste reduction by shifting away from emission control towards waste avoidance, reuse and recycling.

#### **Environmental quality objectives for the State Environment Protection Policy (Ambient Air Quality)**

Three ambient air quality objectives in the SEPP (Ambient Air Quality) are being reviewed as they were incorporated from the original 1981 air policy without review when *State Environment Protection Policy (Ambient Air Quality)* was declared in February 1999.

These objectives are the visibility objective and the protection of vegetation objectives. EPA proposes to retain the visibility objective in *State Environment Protection Policy (Ambient Air Quality)* but remove the vegetation objectives.

