

AIR QUALITY

Why is our air quality important?

Not only does the air we breathe impact our health and well being, good air quality is critical for supporting the amenity of the places we live in, our environment, and maintaining our way of life.

The respiratory and cardiovascular effects of air pollution have long been known. In recent years, air pollution has also been identified as a cause of cancer. Sensitive individuals (for example, children, the elderly and those with existing heart and lung diseases) are particularly susceptible to the effects of air pollution. Both short-term and long-term exposure to air pollution can cause health problems.

How is Australia tracking?

By world standards, Australia has very clean air. Strategies to manage air pollution in Australia have contributed to reducing the levels of pollutants in our air.

However, levels of some pollutants, including ground-level ozone and particulate matter, can still exceed current air quality standards. In addition, population growth, urbanisation and increasing demands for transportation and energy consumption are ongoing challenges which impact our air quality.

Governments, businesses and the community will need to be active to ensure a clean air future.

In recognising the challenges to Australia's air quality, Australia's Environment Ministers have agreed to work towards establishing a National Clean Air Agreement .

- National Clean Air Agreement

Ambient air quality management

The National Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure (Ambient Air Quality NEPM) was established in 1998 to provide a common national goal to best protect human health and well being from the adverse impacts of air pollution. It provides a consistent framework to assess Australia's ambient (outdoor) air quality. It sets national ambient air quality standards for six common air pollutants as well as mandatory monitoring and reporting requirements against these standards.

State and Territory governments implement legislation, statutory instruments, policies and programmes in their own jurisdictions in order to meet the Ambient Air Quality NEPM standards.

On 29 April 2014, Environment Ministers signalled their intent to vary the Ambient Air Quality NEPM based on the latest scientific understanding of the health risks arising from airborne particle pollution.

- Proposed variation to the National Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure in relation to the standards for particles .