

Greens NSW

Air Quality Policy



Revised May 2014

Principles

The Greens NSW believe:

1. Clean air is a universal right.
2. The earth's atmosphere is a public, natural asset that must not be privatised through rights to pollute.
3. Air pollution, both indoor and outdoor, is harmful to the health of people, life, ecosystems and environments. Air pollution is the greatest environmental cause of premature human death globally.
4. Air quality standards for both indoor and outdoor environments should be as rigorous as possible, recognising that some pollutants have no known safe level.
5. Principles of environmental democracy require governments to carry out regular monitoring of the major air pollutants and air toxins, publish the results and estimate the cost to society of exposure to air pollution.
6. Consistent with the polluter pays principle, polluters should contribute to the health and environmental costs of their pollution.
7. Government policies should aim to minimise air pollution at source, rather than focus on dilution and dispersion techniques.
8. Air quality targets should be set, and incentives and regulations introduced, so that best practice is adopted across the wide spectrum of human activities.
9. Emissions from new developments and transport should be considered in the context of existing air quality and future needs.
10. Coal dust, from the mining, transportation and storage of coal, poses an unacceptable risk to the health of communities. Airborne particulates, including PM 10 and PM 2.5 and Ultra-Fine Particles, lead to health effects including cardiovascular disease, hospital admissions, asthma, heart

disease and congestive heart failure and increase hospital admissions and mortality rates.

Aims

The Greens NSW will work towards:

11. Policies that ensure New South Wales complies with all mandatory and advisory standards in the Australian National Environment Protection Measures (NEPM) for Ambient Air Quality and Air Toxics, targeting even greater reductions for pollutants with no known safe levels;
12. Adequate resources to complete all outstanding Air Quality NEPM reviews as soon as possible and ongoing reviews (to be completed within one year of commencement) at least every five years;
13. Supporting ongoing research into the relationship between human health and air quality, including the cumulative and synergistic effects of air pollution.
14. The development of air shed management plans in relevant areas throughout NSW as a means of monitoring and addressing air quality issues.
15. Multiple approaches to management of air pollution, including regulatory control, taxation measures, technology transfer, requirements to use emissions-control technology, emission targets and market mechanisms such as carbon pricing;
16. Environmental Protection Licences (EPL) for industrial and commercial activities based on stringent air emission reduction targets, and annual licensing costs set according to independent estimates of the health and environmental costs of air pollution;
17. Pricing mechanisms for all air emissions that reflect the full environmental, ecological and health costs of major air pollutants;
18. Implementing 'polluter pays principle' and the 'precautionary principle' to the fullest extent;
19. The release and total publication of air emissions data from both government and commercial sources;

20. Extensive air quality monitoring in all 'hot spot' areas, including locations affected by coal or other mining, vehicle emissions, wood smoke, and airports ensuring that all data are publicly available and readily accessible via the web;
21. Banning persistent bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs) such as brominated flame retardants, endosulfan and mercury that cannot be safely managed in the atmosphere;
22. Ongoing public education on the sources of air pollution and the health impacts of both indoor and outdoor air quality;
23. Increase levels of air quality and toxics monitoring in and around potentially hazardous waste management sites.

Reducing particulates

As air pollution by particulates with a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometres (PM2.5) is the pollutant most closely linked to adverse health effects including premature mortality and has no known safe level, the NSW Greens will urge the NSW Government to:

24. Measure and report PM2.5 in all areas that may exceed the PM 2.5 standard;
25. Update air particle monitoring as a matter of urgency so that PM2.5 is measured according to the National Environment Protection Council (NEPC) reference method;
26. Introduce policies to reduce urban and rural air emissions from point sources (large emitters) and diffuse sources (small emitters) to achieve the NEPM PM2.5 standard in all locations as soon as possible;
27. Adopt further measures to significantly reduce PM2.5 pollution below the current NEPM standards;
28. In relation to wood heaters, to reduce the concentration of PM2.5 the Greens NSW supports:
 1. reducing wood heater emissions by at least 90% on current levels;
 2. a new health-based standard for wood heaters;
 3. prohibition of new heaters that do not meet this standard;
 4. a moratorium on the installation of new wood heaters until the new health-based standard has been developed;

5. the gradual phasing out from urban areas of all wood heaters that do not comply with the new health-based standard;
6. research and development of affordable non-polluting domestic heaters;
7. support to communities, specifically targeting low-income households, to retrofit or replace dangerous heaters.

29. To reduce the concentration of PM2.5 from other sources the Greens NSW supports:

1. Increased uptake of the NSW Diesel Retrofit, Clean Fleet and Smoky Vehicle schemes;
2. Optimal filtration of emissions from motorway tunnels and power stations;
3. Incentives to use more sustainable and less polluting alternative fuels in place of diesel;
4. Scrapping the most polluting diesel engines;
5. Serious consideration of Low Emissions Zones such as those that have successfully reduced PM2.5 pollution in several European cities;
6. Stringent monitoring and enforcement of licence conditions and other appropriate measures to reduce particle emissions from mining, and from the transport of minerals;
7. Reducing and eventually banning other major sources of PM2.5 such as burning off stubble or other agricultural and forestry waste including regeneration burns;
8. Supporting agricultural practices that reduce soil erosion from wind.

Reducing ground-level ozone

Given that CSIRO modelling shows that ground-level concentrations of ozone are likely to increase, the Greens NSW supports:

30. Low emission modes of transport over high emission modes of transport;
31. Reducing vehicle use by encouraging the use of public transport, walking, cycling, and car pooling;

32. Reducing emissions from lawn mowers, outboard engines and wood burning; and

33. Other measures as set out in the Greens NSW transport policy.

Reducing oxides of nitrogen and carbon monoxide

To reduce oxides of nitrogen and carbon monoxide, the Greens NSW support the measures set out above in relation to ground-level ozone as well as supporting the reduction of indoor exposure by:

34. banning the installation of new unflued gas heaters in homes and schools; and

35. phasing out existing unflued gas heaters with subsidies in cases of financial hardship.

Reducing lead

Given the level of toxicity of lead especially to children, the Greens NSW support:

36. Spot checks to ensure that lead levels remain as low as possible in high-risk areas such as near mines, smelters and battery factories;

37. Interest-free loans to property owners to eliminate lead hazards in affected buildings;

38. Mandatory testing of suspected buildings before renovation or demolition;

39. Mandatory notification of lead risks for prospective buyers or tenants; and

40. Other measure to protect people from lead-contaminated buildings and the surrounding soil,

Reducing air toxics

Recognising that air toxics cause serious health problems such as cancers and genetic damage and are linked to reduced IQ, learning difficulties, the Greens NSW supports:

41. Urgent action by the NSW Government to achieve compliance with the air toxics NEPM standards, and the aiming for the more stringent standards that are being set in other countries for the most hazardous toxins such as PAH (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons) and benzene;

42. a reduction in the use of motor vehicles and domestic wood heaters to reduce air toxics.

Reducing chemicals affecting indoor air quality

Given its serious health impacts, the Greens NSW urges the NSW government to address indoor air quality through:

43. Increased research, introduction of measures and regulations to improve indoor air quality.

Prevention and mitigation of the effects of coal dust

The Greens NSW:

44. Supports measures to eliminate or reduce the source of coal-dust pollution especially by shifting from coal to renewable energy sources;

45. Opposes the development of any new coal mines or the expansion of existing coal mines, and the expansion of coal handling infrastructure because, d During the transition to a low-carbon-emissions economy, the nation's energy and metallurgical needs can be satisfied by existing coal mines.

46. Supports, in and around communities affected by nearby coal mining, coal storage and coal transportation, an increase the number of air-quality-monitoring stations for monitoring PM 2.5 and PM 10 that operate and report continuously;

47. Requires coal companies and transportation companies to cover loads and stockpiles of coal when they are moved, to wash coal-transport containers after use, and to fully enclose coal-processing equipment.

End and reduce the use of off-road diesel

The Greens NSW supports:

48. Moves to end the use of the dirtiest forms of diesel, especially 'off-road diesel' and require that all diesel subsidies be cancelled.

Other policies related to this policy:

- EIA and pollution
- Environment
- Bushfire Risk Management
- National Parks
- Transport
- Waste Elimination
- Coal and Coal Seam Gas
- Climate Change and Energy