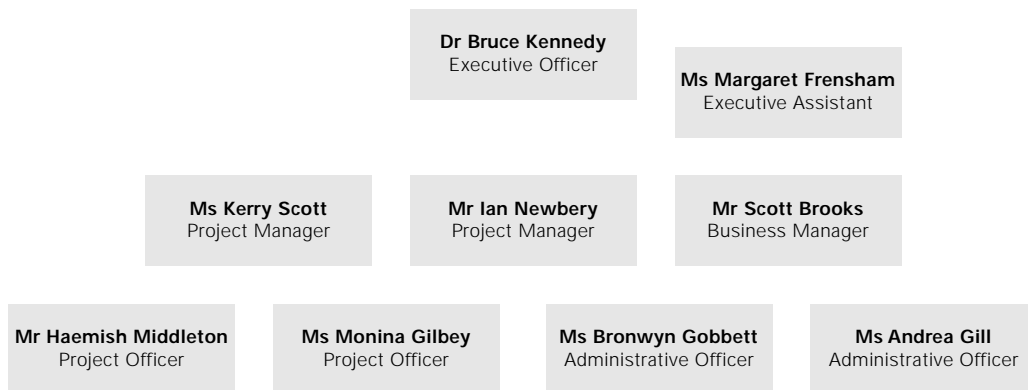


ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND STAFFING

The organisation structure of the NEPC Service Corporation is set out in Figure (3).

Figure (3): NEPC Service Corporation Organisation Chart



NEPC WEBSITE

The EPHC website <www.ephc.gov.au> incorporates information relating to both the NEPC and EPHC.

The EPHC website utilises the latest technology with few graphics to ensure faster times in opening webpages and downloading of documents in portable document format (PDF).

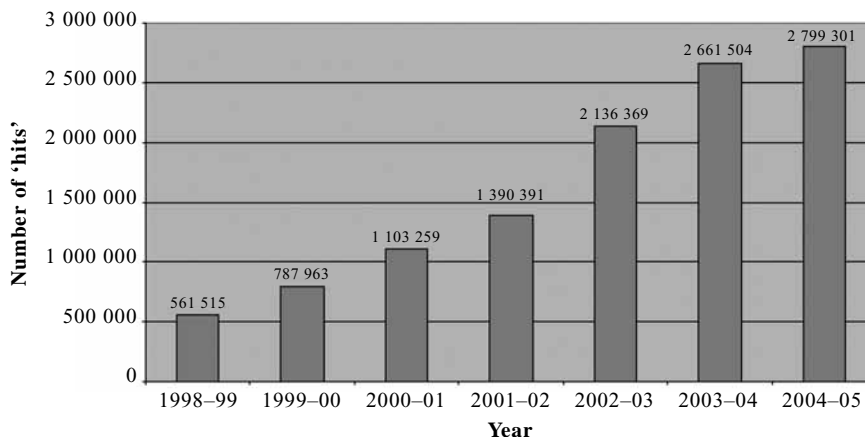
The EPHC website:

- is compliant with World Wide Web Consortium standards
- has metadata (for reference to documents and hyper text markup language (html) pages) which are compliant with the Dublin Core specifications.

In March 2005, e-mail distribution of Committee and Council agenda papers was replaced by a secure web-based system. Devised by the Service Corporation, this new system has eliminated previous problems for some jurisdictions relating to recipient mailbox/server limitations. The feedback from jurisdictions on the new system has been universally positive.

It can be seen from Figure (4) that the number of hits on the EPHC website continues to increase each year.

Figure(4) : EPHC website statistics – ‘Hits’



AIR QUALITY

Air Toxics NEPM

The NEPC had previously initiated the development of a National Environment Protection (Air Toxics) Measure covering benzene, formaldehyde, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, toluene and xylenes.

The aim of the NEPM is to improve the information base regarding air toxics through the consistent monitoring of sites where significantly elevated levels of air toxics are likely to occur and the potential for significant population exposure exists. Investigation levels will be developed to assist jurisdictions in assessing the results of monitoring and to ensure the evaluation of the source of any levels of air toxics that may be of concern.

In May 2003, the NEPC approved the release of the draft Air Toxics NEPM and associated Impact Statement for public comment. A large number of public submissions was received resulting in further workshops with health experts and toxicologists to determine appropriate investigation levels. Investigation levels based on an annual averaging period were developed for benzene and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and investigation levels based on a 24-hour averaging period were developed for toluene, xylenes and formaldehyde.

The NEPC made the Air Toxics NEPM in December 2004.

Ambient Air Quality NEPM – Peer Review Committee

The Peer Review Committee was established to assist in the development and assessment of jurisdictional monitoring plans for the Ambient Air Quality NEPM. The Peer Review Committee comprises two nominees from industry, two from the environment movement, and one from each jurisdiction. Dr Mike Manton of the Bureau of Meteorology chairs the committee. Executive support is provided by the NEPC Service Corporation.

Following the approval of monitoring plans for all jurisdictions, the Peer Review Committee has had an important role in providing advice on proposed variations to monitoring plans, on quality assurance in respect of monitoring and other methods used to assess air quality, and on the national consistency of

technical reporting under the NEPM. These activities will help to deliver a scientifically robust, consistent national database of ambient air quality performance for the Australian community.

The Peer Review Committee met once during 2004–05. Activities undertaken included:

- providing advice to the NEPC Committee on the national consistency of technical reporting under the NEPM
- providing advice to the NEPC Committee on the proposed changes to jurisdictions' monitoring plans
- reviewing technical papers in light of emerging information.

All technical papers developed by the Peer Review Committee are available on the EPHC website.

The Peer Review Committee also convened a workshop on quality assurance and data handling with the aim of increasing cooperation between jurisdictions to produce nationally consistent approaches to quality assurance.

Ambient Air Quality NEPM – Review of Ozone and Sulfur Dioxide Standards

When the Ambient Air Quality NEPM was made in 1998, the NEPC agreed to commence reviews in 2003 of the practicability of setting a ten-minute sulfur dioxide standard and a tighter one-hour ozone standard. These reviews commenced in October 2003 with the establishment of a review team, chaired by the representative from New South Wales, with representatives from the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, enHealth Council and the CSIRO.

Sulfur dioxide

The 2003–04 NEPC Annual Report described in some detail the issue paper's preparation and consultation phases associated with the sulfur dioxide component of the review. A report on the findings of the sulfur dioxide review was presented to Council late in 2004.

Following consideration of the review report, Council concluded that a ten-minute sulfur dioxide standard is not required, and that the current situation where individual jurisdictions manage short-term peaks of sulfur dioxide through their legislation and environmental improvement programs should continue.

Council further directed that discussions take place between the environment protection and health sectors regarding the need for alternative approaches to address community and some health agency concerns about the health effects arising from exposure to short-term sulfur dioxide peaks in affected communities. These discussions are ongoing.

Ozone

Activity in 2004–05 focused on the ozone component of the review. In 2003, Council agreed that the practicability of tightening the one-hour ozone standard should be considered as part of the review of the NEPM as a whole, but that preliminary work would commence in advance. This work focussed on which averaging periods would be most appropriate for ozone standards for the protection of the health of the Australian population. It would also identify issues relating to the achievability of tighter ozone standards for consideration in the review of the NEPM.

The major impetus for this work was the findings of the Woolcock Institute review of the health impacts of ozone, as reported in the 2003–04 NEPC Annual Report. This review found that, internationally, countries and organisations including the World Health Organisation, the European Union and the United States are implementing ozone standards with eight-hour averaging periods (on the basis that extended exposure to ozone is found to be significant in terms of the health effects in these countries), sometimes in combination with one-hour standards.

A workshop for health experts held in 2004 recommended that an analysis be undertaken of the profile, time and duration of elevated ozone levels in the major urban airsheds in Australia. This analysis was carried out by the CSIRO. Another workshop was held in 2004 with ozone monitoring and modelling experts to discuss ozone trends, background levels and formation patterns in individual states.

An Issues Paper was prepared which incorporated key advice from the Woolcock Report, the experts workshops and the CSIRO analysis. The paper included updated information on the health effects of ozone, overseas ozone standards, background ozone levels, ozone trends and issues relevant to the analysis of the achievability of the ozone standards. The paper was placed on the EPHC website in May 2005 along with

the ozone data analysis. Comment was sought from a range of industry, community and government stakeholders. A report on the findings of the preliminary work on ozone is scheduled to be presented to Council in October 2005.

Ambient Air Quality NEPM Review Scoping

The NEPM set national standards and goals for air quality and provides a nationally consistent framework for the monitoring and reporting of six criteria pollutants: nitrogen dioxide, ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, particles and lead. Criteria air pollutants are those that are emitted from a variety of sources and are widely distributed in ambient air in Australian cities. They are also associated with photochemical smog and secondary particle haze formation, and with adverse health effects. The NEPM contains health-based air quality standards for these pollutants and an associated goal that sets a maximum number of exceedances of the standard to be met within ten years of making the NEPM.

When the NEPM was made, the NEPC committed to commencing a full review of the NEPM in 2005. The overall purpose of the review is to evaluate the performance of the current Ambient Air Quality NEPM in achieving the desired environmental outcome of the NEPM, and to recommend to Council any changes required to the NEPM to reflect changes in science or policy that underpins the NEPM. This will allow Council to make informed decisions about the need to vary any aspects of the NEPM.

In April 2005, the NEPC initiated the review of the NEPM and agreed to prepare an Issues Scoping Paper to be considered by the NEPC in October 2005 for public release.

The Issues Scoping Paper will identify the issues for consideration during the review, will seek the input of the public and key stakeholders on the range and scope of these issues, and subsequently will lead to the development of a fully scoped project plan to undertake the subsequent stages of the review.

PM_{2.5} equivalency program

When the variation to the Ambient Air Quality NEPM was made in 2003 to incorporate advisory reporting standards for PM_{2.5}, provision was made for a program to determine whether manual gravimetric methods of