



NEPC Report on the implementation of the
Ambient Air Quality NEPM

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PART 1 — GENERAL INFORMATION

NEPM details

Title: National Environment Protection
(Ambient Air Quality) Measure

Made by Council: 26 June 1998

Commencement date: 8 July 1998
(advertised in *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*
No. GN 27, 8 July 1998, p. 2211)

NEPM goal (or purpose)

The goal of the National Environment Protection
(Ambient Air Quality) Measure is set out in clause
6 of the Measure as follows:

6. National environment protection goal
The National Environment Protection Goal
of this Measure is to achieve the National
Environment Protection Standards as assessed
in accordance with the monitoring protocol
(Part 4) within ten years from commencement
to the extent specified in Schedule 2 column 5.

Desired environmental outcomes

The desired environmental outcome of the National
Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure
is set out in clause 5 of the Measure as follows:

5. Desired environmental outcome
The desired environmental outcome of this
Measure is ambient air quality that allows for
the adequate protection of human health and
well-being.

Evaluation criteria

The assessment of the effectiveness of the National
Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality)
Measure is based on the following criteria:

General criteria (specified in the NEPC Implementation Reporting Protocol)

- progress in implementing the NEPM
- compliance by parties bound by the NEPM with
NEPM protocols and/or other NEPM reporting
requirements
- progress toward achievement of the NEPM goal,
the desired environmental outcomes and any
NEPM standards
- issues arising that reflect on the efficiency and
simplicity of NEPM administration.



PART 2 — IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEPM, AND ANY SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

This part provides a summary of jurisdictional reports on implementation and the Council’s overall assessment of the implementation of the NEPM.

Legislative, regulatory and administrative framework

Table 1: Summary of implementation frameworks

Jurisdiction	Summary of implementation frameworks
Commonwealth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Commonwealth implements the NEPM administratively; however, it is not required by the NEPM to undertake monitoring as it does not have authority over regions with a population of 25 000 or more.
New South Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NEPM is implemented under the <i>Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997</i> and through programs in the NSW government’s 25-year Air Quality Management Plan, Action for Air. Amendments to the Protection of the Environment Operations (Clean Air) Regulation 2002 came into force in 2006.
Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The key legislative instruments are the State Environment Protection Policy (Ambient Air Quality) and the State Environment Protection Policy (Air Quality Management) made under the <i>Environment Protection Act 1970</i>.
Queensland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NEPM is implemented under the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1994</i>, the Environmental Protection (Air) Policy 1997 and by programs under the South-east Queensland Regional Plan 2005–26.
Western Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NEPM is implemented under the <i>National Environment Protection Council (Western Australia) Act 1996</i> and by programs under the Perth Air Quality Management Plan. Fuel quality standards are set through the Environmental Protection (Diesel and Petrol) Regulations 1999.
South Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NEPM operates as an environment protection policy under the <i>Environment Protection Act 1993</i>. Fuel quality standards are set through Environment Protection (Motor Vehicle Fuels Quality) Policy.
Tasmania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NEPM is a state policy under the <i>State Policies and Projects Act 1993</i>. The NEPM standards are also incorporated under the Tasmanian Air Quality Strategy 2006. The Environment Protection (Air Quality) Policy 2004 was made under the <i>Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994</i>. Control of the import, sale and installation of wood heaters is administered through the Environmental Management and Pollution Control (Distributed Atmospheric Emissions) Regulations 2007.
Australian Capital Territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NEPM is implemented by the Environment Protection Regulation 1997 under the <i>Environment Protection Act 1997</i>.
Northern Territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The key legislative instruments are the <i>Waste Management and Pollution Control Act 1998</i> and the <i>National Environment Protection Council (Northern Territory) Act 2004</i>.



Table 2: Summary of implementation activities

Jurisdiction	Summary of implementation activities
Commonwealth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Commonwealth focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – chairing the Peer Review Committee and participating in the EPHC Standard Setting Working Group – funding the Clean Air Research Program, the EPHC Children’s Health and Air Pollution Study, Stage 2 of the National In-Service Emissions Program and the Launceston Clean Air Industry Program – establishing the National Air Quality Database in collaboration with the Bureau of Meteorology – commissioning a study into woodheater use which will inform the development of a revised test method to strengthen woodheater standards – continuing to tighten fuel quality parameters under the <i>Fuel Quality Standards Act 2000</i>.
New South Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New South Wales focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – implementing the Action for Air management plan – campaign monitoring at a number of regional sites – trialling a diesel retrofit program and evaluating vapor recovery – publishing a web-based local government toolkit – providing councils with a resource kit to assist in educating communities – finalising the NSW Air Emissions Inventory.
Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – chairing the Ambient Air Quality NEPM review – participating in the EPHC Standard Setting Working Group and the EPHC Children’s Health and Air Pollution Study – reducing pollution from motor vehicle use – upgrading and maintaining the monitoring network – monitoring ‘hot-spots’ using the mobile air monitoring laboratory – continuing programs to reduce woodheater smoke – drafting a Protocol for Environmental Management for the mining and extractive industries.
Queensland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – monitoring six of the ten regions identified in its Ambient Air Quality monitoring plan – releasing the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program 2007–2026 aimed at reducing transport-related emissions.
Western Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western Australia focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – progressing NATA accreditation for NEPM monitoring activities – monitoring ten-minute sulfur dioxide concentrations – continuing to implement the Perth Air Quality Management Plan.



Jurisdiction	Summary of implementation activities
South Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Australia focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – installing and developing monitoring stations additional to the current network – campaign monitoring in regional centres – developing a new system to determine licence fees – maintaining NATA accreditation – developing The Air Pollution Model – continuing to support local government in administering the Burning Policy – implementing the Port Pirie Lead Implementation Program targeting a reduction in blood lead levels in children – reviewing the air monitoring system.
Tasmania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tasmania focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – implementing the Environmental Management and Pollution Control (Distributed Atmospheric Emissions) Regulations 2007. These regulations make the emission of excessive smoke from wood heaters, fireplaces, hot water and cooking appliances and barbecues an offence – informing manufacturers, retailers and owners of the new regulations – implementing the five-year Tasmanian Air Quality Strategy, which includes programs to implement NEPM standards for PM_{2.5} – continuing to upgrade the Tasmanian Air Quality Monitoring System.
Australian Capital Territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Australian Capital Territory focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – reducing woodheater emissions – continuing PM_{2.5} monitoring at Monash – operating the NATA-accredited monitoring network.
Northern Territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Northern Territory focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – continuing to monitor particulate matter as part of the three-year Australian Research Council Bushfire Smoke Project – reviewing its approach to air quality management and monitoring – continuing to discuss fire management.

Council evaluation and assessment of jurisdictional implementation activities

In this reporting year, jurisdictions have:

- improved monitoring capacity, including upgrading networks
- strengthened legislation and regional air quality strategies
- continued to work with industry and the community to reduce hazardous emissions

- implemented a number of programs to reduce woodsmoke emissions.

This demonstrates that jurisdictions are committed to achieving the NEPM goals.

This is the second year of reporting under the PM_{2.5} Equivalence Program that has been implemented by most jurisdictions. Data collected over a three-year period will be used to compare monitoring methods for developing reporting standards.



PART 3 — ASSESSMENT OF NEPM EFFECTIVENESS

Monitoring results indicate that the NEPM standards are being met and that air quality in Australia is generally good by international standards. Bushfires and dust storms are the major causes for standards being exceeded. Other causes include increasing vehicle use and localised industrial sources.

Several jurisdictions have raised concerns about increasing background ozone levels and possible increased bushfire activity associated with climate change and the drought, which will subsequently affect monitoring standards and outcomes.

Jurisdictional data collected at NEPM monitoring stations show that the levels of nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and lead are generally below the NEPM standards in all jurisdictions.

Changes to Australian Design Rules for motor vehicles have led to a decrease in carbon monoxide levels in all urban airsheds. Similarly, the phasing out of lead from petrol has reduced lead in ambient air to levels that in many cases can no longer be measured. Reduction in lead levels has resulted in jurisdictions no longer monitoring lead in urban airsheds not impacted by significant industrial sources.

The NEPC has initiated a review of the Ambient Air Quality NEPM. The NEPM Review will consider, among other things, climate change impacts and the monitoring standards.

PART 4 — REPORTING REQUIRED BY THE NEPM

Jurisdictions have submitted reports in accordance with clause 18 of the NEPM. These reports have been prepared in accordance with the Peer Review Committee's *Technical Paper No. 8 Annual Reports for Ambient Air Quality NEPM*.

Annual compliance reports have been reviewed for national consistency and technical rigour by the Peer Review Committee. The reports provided clear and valuable information. The Peer Review Committee reported that:

- the overall quality of the reports for this reporting year is very high
- the reports generally demonstrate a high degree of national consistency in the implementation of the NEPM
- the overall level of data availability is increasing.

More detailed monitoring data are available in jurisdictional compliance reports which are available from <www.ephc.gov.au>.

PART 5 — REPORTING ON IMPLEMENTATION BY JURISDICTIONS

The Annexes to this report are in Appendix 6:

Annex 1: Commonwealth	163
Annex 2: New South Wales	165
Annex 3: Victoria	172
Annex 4: Queensland	180
Annex 5: Western Australia	185
Annex 6: South Australia	191
Annex 7: Tasmania	198
Annex 8: Australian Capital Territory	201
Annex 9: Northern Territory.	203