



24 September 2014

The Hon. David Davis MLC
Minister for Health
Parliament of Victoria
1 Treasury Place
MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Ask for: Natalie Walker
Phone: 9932 1096
Our Ref: A1996840

Dear Minister,

Study of health impacts of air quality in Western Melbourne

I recently attended the Local Government Ministerial and Mayors Forum, where I raised with you the Council's concerns about the impacts of poor air quality on residents' health in the western Melbourne region.

While we acknowledge the impact on air quality from truck movements, our primary concern is emissions from industry, especially in relation to the residents of Brooklyn. Situated 10 km west of Melbourne's central business district, the suburb crosses two local government areas - Brimbank and Hobsons Bay - and is adjacent to Maribyrnong City Council. Brooklyn is largely an industrial suburb, with a small pocket of low-density residential in the south, in Hobsons Bay.

There is strong evidence from the EPA of the presence of air pollution in Brooklyn, in the form of particulate matter (PM₁₀). The EPA began measuring air quality in Brooklyn in 2009. Under their guidelines, the EPA recommends exposure of no more than 10 days per year to particulate matter with a diameter of 10 micrometres (PM₁₀). Furthermore the World Health Organisation's guidelines indicate that people should not be exposed to high levels of particles for more than five days a year.

The below data shows that the Brooklyn community is consistently being exposed for longer than is recommended.

- 2009-2010 38 days over PM₁₀
- 2010-2011 16 days over PM₁₀
- 2011-2012 28 days over PM₁₀

No monitoring has been undertaken for PM_{2.5} which are smaller particles that are able to be inhaled deeper into the lungs.

This data is very concerning and I respectfully request that the State Government, working towards the intension of the National Clean Air Agreement, commit to a longitudinal study of human health in this area, through the development of an Industrial Risk Assessment and a Brooklyn Human Health Risk Assessment.

Council will continue to work cooperatively with its neighbouring municipalities but urges the State Government to commit to supporting and helping address this critical issue for the residents of the western suburbs of Melbourne.

I have attached a summary of what we would like to see included and considered in the assessments.

The Council would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this issue further. Please don't hesitate to contact my office on 9932 1044 or email aagius@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au .

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sandra Wilson', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Cr Sandra Wilson
Mayor of Hobsons Bay

Study of health impacts of air quality in western Melbourne

Industrial Risk Assessment

The aim of this assessment would be to gather data on:

- What type and to what extent pollutants (both regulated and not regulated) are currently being released into the environment by industries
- Levels of particulate matter present in the air in Brooklyn, at both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} levels
- Ambient (background) levels of air pollution in Brooklyn
- Levels of dust generated from unsealed roads
- Impacts these pollutants have on the natural, economic, health and social environment
- What industries are currently doing to reduce pollutants and associated health risks
- Recommendations for what more could be done to reduce risks

Some or all of this information may have been collected by the EPA. It is suggested that this assessment would be best undertaken by the EPA or an independent organisation that has similar qualifications and experience.

Brooklyn Human Health Risk Assessment

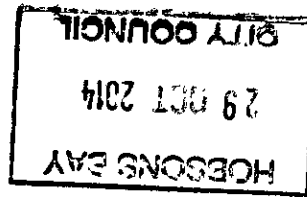
The aim of this assessment would be to further understand the current Brooklyn community by developing:

- A wellbeing profile of Brooklyn residents including health status, with a focus on health outcomes aggravated or caused by air pollutants. The profile should also include social determinants that influence health and wellbeing such as education, employment, and lifestyle behaviours.
- Recommendations as to what could be done to further support the community in the short term and long term.

A major constraint to this assessment is the inability to access health status data for this postcode. Options for collecting primary data could include a wellbeing survey of the Brooklyn population and health assessments of a sample group. If this study was to be adopted, it is recommended that Council work in partnership with an organisation, such as a university or health agency, to develop the profile and recommendations.



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Cr Sandra Wilson
Mayor of Hobsons Bay
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Dear Cr Wilson

Thank you for your letter of 24 September 2014 to the Minister for Health, Hon David Davis MP, regarding air quality and dust issues in Brooklyn. As the matter that you have raised relates to public health, your letter has been forwarded to me for a response.

The Department understands that the potential health impacts of air quality in Brooklyn and inner-western Melbourne have been an ongoing concern for Hobsons Bay City Council. Dust is understood to arise particularly from the use of trucks on unsealed roads and earthworks.

As you are aware the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is responsible for investigation of air quality issues and for ensuring control measures are undertaken to improve air quality. I am advised that the EPA has been actively working with your council, neighbouring municipalities, local industry and VicRoads to address air quality issues in the inner-west.

Further, the EPA continues to work with the Department to protect community health by monitoring air quality throughout Victoria and providing preventative health messages to vulnerable communities on days of poor air quality via an email alert. These alerts advise that weather conditions, generally northerly winds, are often associated with poor air quality in Brooklyn.

Although there is improved dust management in the area, the Department understands that dry conditions and consistent northerly winds contribute to exceedances of air quality standards in Brooklyn during 2014.

Departmental officers have contacted the EPA to suggest air quality alerts are sent to Hobsons Bay City Council to assist in communicating preventative health messages to the broader community. If Council would like to receive air quality alerts please contact Andrew Marshall from the EPA on (03) 8458 2398.

The Department's Health Intelligence Unit provides information on the health of the Victorian population and they have advised that the department's health survey has consistently shown lifetime prevalence of illness (namely cancer and asthma symptoms) in the previous 12 months to be no worse in Hobsons Bay than in any other areas of the state. This is also applies to neighbouring municipalities of Brimbank and Maribyrnong. Given this, the Department believes that preventative health messaging and continued work with local industries and municipal councils are the most practical means for protecting public health whilst long-term solutions are being implemented to control dust in the area.

The Department's Health Status Atlas and the Victorian Population Health Survey are available at www.health.vic.gov.au/healthstatus/interactive/atlas.htm and www.health.vic.gov.au/healthstatus/survey/vphs2008.htm respectively.

The EPA has advised that Richard Marks, Manager Metro Region will contact you to discuss the EPA's air quality monitoring information for Brooklyn.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P De Carlo', written in a cursive style.

Pier De Carlo
Acting Deputy Secretary
Regulation, Health Protection and Regions