
LEAD *Action* NEWS

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New Vehicle Emission Test Clears the Air

The following is a media release put out by The Hon. Ms Pam Allan, MP.

The NSW Government today launched a major new initiative to tackle air pollution with a cost-effective program to slash vehicle emissions through testing and maintenance in the Sydney, Illawarra and Hunter regions. Environment Minister, Pam Allan and Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads, Carl Scully, said the program will be gradually introduced. All passenger and light commercial vehicles, four or more years old, in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong will be tested each year, by 2004.

Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads, Carl Scully said the joint program by the roads and traffic Authority (RTA) and the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) was based on extensive research since the early 1990s. On local and overseas approaches.

Environment Minister, Pam Allan said EPA survey work shows that 10-20% of cars produce much of the pollution so more than 80% of cars are likely to pass the \$30 test.

“The first stage will begin mid-next year in Sydney, with testing applying to likely high-polluting, vehicles, such as modified vehicles or those that have been officially observed emitting smoke” said Mr Scully. “At this stage, owners of other vehicles can have their cars tested if they wish at 1 or 2 RTA stations, in eastern and western Sydney.

“The second stage will begin in 2000 with the annual testing at the time of registration, of all passenger and light commercial vehicles four or more years old in Sydney. Repairs would not be required for the first year.

“At this sate, private testing-only stations will exist to make testing readily available and to remove any conflict of interest between the testing and repair functions.

“Stage three will commence in 2004 with the inclusion of the Lowe Hunter and Illawarra. If vehicles are shown to be emitting more pollution than would be expected from that model then repairs will have to be made.

“Testing will be cost effective and any repairs can still be done by the existing inspection stations. Removing conflicts of interests is likely to benefit the repair industry,” said Mr Scully.

Ms Allan said work will continue at the national level to find an effective emissions test for heavy vehicles, although at present there is no suitable test anywhere in the world. Light diesels covered in the program will have to pass an annual smoke test. “Air pollution is one of the main issues facing the community and vehicles are the main source of many pollutants including hydrocarbons, oxides of nitrogen, carbon monoxide and fine particles,” said Ms Allan.

“Studies by NSW Health and the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) show that Sydney’s air pollution can cause significant health impacts with hospital admissions going up on high pollution days. “The EPA expects that this program will reduce hydrocarbons by 15% carbon monoxide by 25% and oxides of nitrogen by 9%.

“Over the past four years, there has been extensive general consultation with industry on this program.

“Given our recent record air pollution, this is a small price to pay for significantly better air, especially when you realise that without the repairs, the vehicles' long-term survival is questionable anyway.

“Between now and the beginning of testing mid next year, we will work with the welfare sector to

develop provisions for those who cannot afford repairs. “The annual testing will also reduce tampering which is still a source of extra pollution, as well as improve fuel economy and so reduce greenhouse emissions.

“The test to be used will simulate on-road conditions, Motorbikes will not be involved at this stage as they cannot safely be run on a treadmill, while vintage cars and those travelling less than 2,000 km per year may also be exempted.” Ms Allan said this testing and maintenance program will form an important plank in the Government’s Air Quality Management Plan. “When the plan is introduced to the community in the first half of 1998, it will provide a comprehensive attack on smog as well as brown haze,” said Allan.



Toormina kids at risk from petrol station fumes

This article is a media release from the Total Environment Centre.

"The recent development consent for a petrol station to be built metres from a pre-school in Toormina flies in the face of common sense and ignores a recommendation from the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) for an air quality assessment to be undertaken." Ms Immig, Chemicals Campaigner, Total Environment Centre (TEC) said today.

"Placing a petrol station next door to a kindergarten is extremely worrying because, in our view, it's very likely that increases in dangerous air pollutants such as benzene and lead will place the children's health at significant risk," Ms Immig said.

"A report released by the EPA last week on air toxics indicates that there is no safe level for benzene, which is a recognised cancer causing agent."

"The local community, who oppose the development, rightly believe their concerns have not been adequately addressed and are currently seeking legal advice about health and safety issues. Obviously, the EPA are also concerned about the health impacts or they wouldn't have recommended an air quality assessment to be carried out," said Ms Immig.

"We have advised Toormina Pre-school to monitor air toxics and if the development proceeds and the petrol station is built that they continue to monitor air toxics. Any increases in levels of pollutants will give them grounds on which to proceed legally," said Ms Immig.

"Conflicting information is being provided about the actual distance the petrol station will be from the kindergarten and it's high time that the local council and developers heed the advice of the EPA and carry out an air quality assessment before finalising location."

"The development has become so controversial that the developers would be well advised to consider a less hazardous location for their petrol station," Ms Immig concluded.

Quotable Quote: "...The bleak, sometimes horrific conditions that oppress us are created not only by the polluters, but also by the architects of policy, science, and health care who at best patch things up with distracting, ineffective and sometimes dangerous "solutions". ["The Place of Women in Polluted Places" by Lin Nelson, published by Earth Scan, 1994.]

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Stop the Plunder in Nigeria – Boycott Shell

The following is a series of extracts from an article by Norm Dixon, Green Left Weekly, September, 1997. Reproduced with kind permission. It is an appeal by Ledum Mitee of Ogoniland, in Nigeria.

...Shell first struck oil in the lush Niger River delta in the 1950s. Since oil production began in 1958, money has poured from the delta into the coffers of Shell and the pockets of the corrupt central government and military high command. But the environmental and social cost has been great.

When we talk about oil installations in Nigeria, we are not talking about some remote facilities in the bush or in the sea. We are talking about oil wells, gas flares and pipelines right next door...They burn 24 hours a day, for years, producing toxic fumes..."It was not long before these pipelines, which run between oil wells and flow stations, started to burst, spilling large amounts of crude oil...Between 1982 and 1992 Nigeria was the site of 40% of Shell's oil spills worldwide - 7.4 million litres. Drinking water in the region contains levels of the petroleum hydrocarbons 350 times that allowed in the Europe union...

We found out that, apart from pollution, the flare that burns 24 hours a day also attract all the insects. Crops are devoured, and pollution kills them. So the land dies. People who lived on subsistence farming go hungry. The pollution enters the sea, and the mangrove[s]...The land is polluted, the seas are polluted, the wildlife is scared away."

In the face of this, the 500,000 Ogoni people decided to organise for their rights. "We decided to launch MOSOP [Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People], led by Ken Saro-Wiwa, in 1990...

"We...thought that Shell should clean up the mess they had made. We demanded that the resources taken from our land should be used for development of the region..."

Mitee told the audience: " Since Shell came to the delta, billions worth of oil and gas have been taken out, yet the people have no electricity, no running water, no hospital, no schools. It costs Shell about \$2.70 to produce one barrel of oil, and they are selling that oil for \$19 or \$20 a barrel. As

a result, Shell is one of the world's largest and most profitable companies."

MOSOP presented its demands to Shell, Mitee explained. It also launched a campaign of mass action. In January 1993, in defiance of the regime's ban on public demonstrations, more than 300,000 Ogoni and their supporters marched in a massive show of support for the MOSOP demands. Soon after, Saro -Wiwa was detained several times, prompting more large scale protests

...The military sent in their troops. People were shot, people were wounded. About 15 villages were completely destroyed...Mitee said that the repression is continuing "Since 1993 an estimated 2500 people have been killed..."

...Mitee urged solidarity activists to pressure the Australian government to take action against Nigeria at the October Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meeting. Mitee has been lobbying Commonwealth countries for Nigeria's expulsion but has been disappointed at the response. He has also called for sanction against oil exports from Nigeria.

"When the Commonwealth took the decision to suspend Nigeria after the Ken Saro-Wiwa murder, they said that unless the dictatorship respected human rights, released political prisoners and returned Nigeria to democracy within two years, they would be expelled.

"That two years has ended!Even though Commonwealth governments I have met with all agree with me that things are getting worse , they are not prepared do to anything. It is because it would pit them in a struggle against one of the world's most influential and profitable companies."

Mitee also encouraged activists to think of ways to hit Shell's profits. He reminded them of the success of Greenpeace's Shell boycott in protest at its plan to scuttle the Brent spar oil platform in the North Sea...

Friends Of the Earth say CHOGM resolved in October 1997 to delay expulsion for one year and

to “consider” an oil embargo against Nigeria. ■

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