

Victorian EPA Enquiry Submission

Bob Penfold, 3222

What do you think are the key environmental challenges which will impact the EPA in the future?

Please refer to my written attachment

What aspects of the EPA's work do you value and wish to preserve in the future?

Please refer to my written attachment

How can the EPA effectively work in partnership with other government agencies to meet the environmental challenges of the future?

Please refer to my written attachment

How can the EPA's role in safeguarding the community against the health impacts of pollution be clarified or strengthened?

Please refer to my written attachment

How could statutory frameworks more effectively prevent future environmental risks and land use conflicts?

Please refer to my written attachment

What role should the EPA play in emergency management?

Mandatory communication and exert it's authority/guidance on all emergency services. I.e SES, Fire brigades, Ambo's, Police etc

How can the EPA better identify and, where necessary, address problems that are the result of past activity?

Please refer to my written attachment

What role should the EPA play in improving environmental outcomes beyond those necessary to safeguard human health?

Please refer to my written attachment

What role should the EPA play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions?

Please refer to my written attachment

How do you see environmental justice being applied to the work of the EPA?

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No! there should have been a lot more done at the Alcoa plant where I worked - in relation to asbestos, toxic chemicals & dust, oil and other contaminants (1,000' of litres) in under-ground water under rolling mills

What can we adopt from other regulators and regulatory models to implement best-practice approaches and ensure that the EPA can rise to key future challenges?

Worksafe & Vichealth co-ordination, - I got hand-balled from one to the other ... and back again on a number of issues

Are there any other issues relevant to the Terms of Reference that you would like to raise?

No Answer

What can the EPA do to avoid potential future problems?

Please refer to my written attachment

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ATTACHMENT

Preamble.

Please find below a list of the challenges / hurdles that I believe the Vic EPA face and need to overcome to effectively protect all aspects of our precious environment both now and into the future.

The items below are a very basic summary, and much more detail can be supplied if requested, or, as you are probably aware, of a lot of these items through the news media / general awareness.

Issue No 1

The Vic EPA cannot effectively protect the "Environment" in Vic if the Commonwealth Government continues to support / promote fossil fuel and other similar environment destroying industries in Vic and other states.

The EPA Vic. needs to have interaction and negotiation with the Commonwealth Gov't on climate change issues.

It has been shown that if we leave environmental the issues with the Federal Gov't. we will get poor outcomes for the environment. There seems to be too much priority towards company profits & jobs, and parliamentary budgets, rather than the long term effects on the country's environment. Our standard of living relies on the air and water and land we live on. We need to reduce green-house gases and pollution effects on a country wide basis, before we can even think about localized Vic issues.

Issue No 2

The Vic EPA needs to have an input into the support of the Renewable energy resources dictated by the Commonwealth Government to ensure the huge benefits of renewable energy to the environment in Vic are obtained.

We seem to see-saw between different priorities as we see-saw between political power & views of the day. We need a consistent approach to this very important step for the environment.

Issue No 3

The Vic EPA needs to take a very pro-active stance to controlling environmental issues rather than a reactive stance which is what happens now. Currently all the EPA recourses are taken up with "infringements" to the environment.

The EPA do not have any jurisdiction over the introduction of new factories / business facilities to ensure they are able to meet their environmental obligations. It has been seen time & time again, that Businesses who "self-regulate" will, through lack of planning or inattention, will cause environmental issues. (Even when the EPA has "guidelines & references" for them to work to!!)

Large companies/corporations are only concerned with their profits & power, so they can continue to do what they want. It is unbelievably sad and something must be wrong with our system when it is possible for these large businesses to sue our governments (Us!!) for decisions made against them. (Refer to news items)

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Issue No 4

The large companies should not be able to write exemptions into the Acts of Parliaments (Like they currently have done !!) which give them exemptions like

- a) Not having to consult with the community (or the EPA) on issues which relate toxic, carcinogenic, genetically harmful and hazardous materials
- b) Not having to consult with the community or allow council decision-making (!!) on revising Land Zoning issues. I.e revising from Rural to commercial / business zoning.

I.e. I have recently been involved in a new vehicle service permit application and was amazed that the **Victorian Act of Parliament (Planning and Environment Act 1987** and it's regulations) had exemptions for Service stations of an area less than 3,000 square meters, which allowed for the exceptions a) & b) as above.

(3,000 sq m was probably regarded as "small" when the exemption was written, but it allows for 12 vehicles, 3 Semi-trailer trucks, convenience store, food sales, multi car park area etc etc.!!! There is even no specific definition of what the service station area comprises of.!!)

This service station was built at the start of a valley which runs through farming land into a bay near Geelong. Thousands of liters of fuel will be stored under-ground at this location with potential to leak through farming properties/dams and into the bay.

The EPA needs to be advised when any council receives a planning permit application which has any environmental (and health) considerations and the EPA then needs to implement rules and requirements to ensure the permit and all subsequent works / monitoring comply with the EPA requirements.

Ironically all the "managerial statements" at the commencement of the Acts of parliament and council regulations / documentation, state words to the effect that "there will be extensive community consultation and the utmost regard for environmental considerations"

This is completely contradictory to what these above exemptions a) & b) do, and the Acts & Regulations need to be revised with these exemptions deleted, so that the EPA and the community can have a realistic and effective input.

The EPA should have a regulatory framework to ensure all relevant businesses comply with EPA regulations, and backed up by severe penalties as required.

*(For info, likewise, the Dangerous goods regulations (Part 22(2) of the **Dangerous Goods (Storage & Handling) 2012** have been modified to exclude the necessity to advise the public / community who are using the service station fuels about all their harmful and toxic chemicals & consequences to people & the environment !!)*

Issue No 5

The land developers seem to have an open cheque-book for destroying rural / farming land areas. and erecting thousands of houses which will be consuming huge amounts of energy and water etc. and polluting the environment with their waste)

The Vic EPA and the communities need to have an input into how this is managed for the benefit of all our critical environment areas of air quality and waterways, flora & fauna and human quality of life.

These "progressive??" new development areas usually become the slum & unwanted areas in the future as demand wanes in that area for work, location or other reasons.

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Issue No 6

The "Environment" does not have borders.

There needs to be collaboration / team effort between all the States & Territories of Aust to ensure there is commonality of the systems as much a possible, with integration with the Commonwealth agenda. This all needs to be in agreement with community guidelines and relayed and implemented by politicians as Acts of Parliament.

There needs to be consistency & simplicity for people complying with EPA conditions across state & territory borders to ensure ease and best chance of public compliance and a sustainable, healthy environment.

In summary,

I do NOT believe the EPA has any chance of doing a reasonable job with the mammoth task that it is required to do in it's current condition.

It will require a tremendous amount of teamwork and co-operation between all levels of government, corporations, and the community to achieve a good result..

If we can just get started on the points mentioned, that would be a huge step in the right direction, but to protect the Environment for years into the future will required an ongoing dedication by all concerned.

I would be extremely disappointed if our grandchildren and their children have to survive in a toxic, unhealthy environment that is devoid of all the good environment of flora and fauna and clean air and water & healthy ground which supports food etc as we know it now.

Let's face it, we have many issues now which are already showing their fate with difficult to resolve contamination issues !! (Asbestos, varieties of chemicals etc)

Let's do the best we can to maintain a healthy world.

We can only reflect on what is happening in other parts of the world with over-population, sparse food availability, and degree of clean air & water etc. I am sure you are aware of these, but we should plan as strongly as we can, to ensure the circumstances in other countries do not duplicate themselves here in Aust.

I will be interested to see the outcomes of the Vic EPA inquiry

Please contact me if you have any questions or need further information / explanation.

Regards, Bob Penfold.

Email – [REDACTED]

P.s if any of this info is not applicable to your particular "Enquiry", I would appreciate it f you could advise me who the relevant department is and where they could be contacted.