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

1. POPULATION GROWTH in Victoria, especially in Melbourne. This growth increases both the amount of waste/pollution generated and the consumption of natural resources (land, water, minerals, etc). In fact any measures taken to better manage waste/pollution and resource consumption will simply be eroded by the addition of more people. 2. FURTHER LOSS OF NATURAL PLACES due to land clearing for more buildings, road, farming etc. Victoria is the most cleared state in Australia - a shameful situation. The ongoing loss of such places is reducing the populations of other species either directly or through reducing their habitat, and damaging our quality of life which is dependent on having accessible natural places. 3. OUR CURRENT CONSUMPTION-DRIVEN LIFE-STYLES. This is a factor in the unsustainable quantities of natural resources we consume and the amount of waste we produce. 4. THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN URBAN LIVING AND THE NATURAL WORLD. Increasing urbanisation means more people have less affinity with, and knowledge/understanding of the natural world - which are crucial factors in playing their part in protecting the environment.

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

Its work on environmental research, environmental monitoring, improving environmental policies/regulations, and ENFORCING COMPLIANCE with those policies/regulations.

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

No Answer

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

No Answer

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

No Answer

What role should the EPA play in emergency management?

No Answer

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

No Answer

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

1. A MUCH BROADER ROLE IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, OTHERWISE CHANGE THE EPA'S NAME. When the EPA was formed 45 years ago, the environmental issues of the day were primarily about pollution levels and, in large measure, their impact on human health. Whilst public health is a key focus of the Inquiry, it is not the only focus, and today's environmental issues, those that we know about and which concern the community, are much broader. They include, but are not limited to: (a) over-consumption of natural resources (eg fresh water, productive land, minerals), (b) reduction in the numbers and health of other species either directly or through loss of habitat; (NB the Environmental Protection Act principles includes "conservation of biological diversity), and (c) loss of green areas for recreation, which is a undeniable public health issue. Environmental protection means addressing all of these issues. So either the EPA's mandate is broaden to include these matters, or its name should be changed to align with its relatively narrow focus. Persisting with a name that implies a broader role than the EPA actually has, handicaps others from filling the void. 2. GREATER ROLE IN LAND-USE PLANNING. How society "uses" the land has not just a major impact on the environment but also a long-lasting impact. For example, erecting buildings on what was previously bushland, tends to have a permanent impact on the natural environment. The current small role that EPA plays in land-use planning (eg with regard to land contamination) is incredibly narrow. 3. MEASURE AND PUBLICISE OUR ECO-FOOTPRINT. Some time ago the EPA took a leading role in promulgating the concept of our ecological footprint. It was/is a very useful measure and demonstration of the human consumption of the planet's finite resources (including its capacity to absorb/recycle waste) which is arguably a good measure of our total impact on the environment. It could also demonstrate our impact on Victoria's environment. Measurement is essential for management. Please bring back this role to the EPA.

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

Whilst the EPA retains its name (as discussed above) it should have a leading role in managing GHG emissions, which is clearly one of today's major environmental issues.

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

No Answer

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?

No Answer

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

1. THE EPA'S ATTENTION TO ECONOMIC MATTERS. The discussion paper (page 5) seeks comments on how the EPA "might ... support a healthy environment, economic viability and sustainable jobs." My view is that whilst the EPA should remain cognisant of the impact of its activities/decisions on the economy and jobs, its overriding consideration must be how best to protect the environment, irrespective of these other considerations. Let them remain the focus of other arms of government, and if there are any conflicts or trade-offs, they should be resolved by cabinet and/or parliament. 2. A PROTECTED ENVIRONMENT IS MORE THAN A "HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT". This may seem pedantic, but I disagree with sentiments (as expressed in EPA's vision) that the goal of environmental protection is to have a healthy environment. The community's concerns also include the abundance of other species and natural areas, which is not adequately captured in the phrase "healthy environment". Examples that illustrate this point are concerns about killing of whales, and concerns about the further loss of bushland.

What can the EPA do to avoid potential future problems?

As stated above, one of the major environmental challenges facing the EPA is the state's growing population. This will increase the amount of waste/pollution generated and therefore be a fundamental problem for the EPA. What can the EPA do? (a) Opening acknowledge that the state's population is a direct factor in the level of pollution and waste. Avoiding this fact is, in my view, unacceptable. (b) Discuss measures to address (curtail) the forecast growth in population. Whilst any measures would be very controversial, the EPA has a clear responsibility to tackle the issue. (c) Show leadership by advocating within the government and community about the need to address population growth given it is an undeniable problem in protecting the environment.