



Submission to: The Victorian Government inquiry into the Environment Protection Authority Victoria

My name is Regina Gleeson, I live in Anglesea and have been involved in the action to close the Alcoa coal mine and power plant. I live here with my family and have a small eco-tourism business on the Surf Coast which relies upon a clean and green image of the coast and the Great Ocean Road. My experience with the EPA has been disappointing during the five years I have been a member of Surf Coast Air Action and part of this campaign.

The EPA needs to be strong, accountable, independent and well funded if it is to fulfil the expectation attributed to its name, that is, to protect the environment for the health and well-being of the community. Since the establishment of the EPA its powers and responsibilities have been altered, hamstringing the authority from doing the job the community expects it to do.

I humbly submit that the Review considers the following points:

- The EPA should take a leading and advocacy role rather than the reactive and limited role which currently epitomises its actions. Restore the powers given to the authority at its inception. For example, the EPA should be consulted as a referral authority on all industrial land use and planning applications.
- The EPA should operate on the basis of leading edge research in pollution rather than relying on the NEPM standards which are limited in their range and are outdated. The EPA should only licence companies on this basis as the NEPM reform process is snail-paced.
- The EPA should implement the monitoring of industrial pollution. Self monitoring allows companies to be like allowing the fox to be in charge of the chicken coup.
- The EPA should require companies to comply with accepted standards through proper pollution amelioration technology such as sulphur dioxide scrubbers in all coal power plants. Heavy metals and other toxins should not be emitted from smoke stacks. Dust, such as coal dust needs to be better managed and not be permitted to blow across communities.

- The EPA should strongly advocate on behalf of community health and well-being and defend the community when it comes to polluting commercial ventures. Currently the EPA is 'off the radar' when issues occur. For example, the Hazelwood Mine Fire demonstrated the EPA's limited response to this emergency. The EPA should have been advocating for this community and should have been party to processes to require Engie(GDF Suez) to have a higher level of preparedness to avoid the toxic fumes emitted during this fire. It is intolerable that this lack of preparedness on the part of Engie was not foreseen.
- Companies should be required by the EPA to be transparent in their actions and to not be exempt from Freedom of Information requests in regard to pollution. The EPA should expedite these information requests through well funded and efficient processes.
- The EPA should provide real time data of companies' pollution emissions to the community to allow it to make decisions, such as whether children should stay indoors if readings are high. In Anglesea, the primary school was 500 metres from the power station stack and the children were often outside at the time of the highest readings. To rely on a company, in whose interest it was to obfuscate and avoid transparency, to report this data is unacceptable. The EPA should drive this process.
- The EPA Act also needs to be updated to deal with the issue of carbon pollution given the dire threat that climate change poses. Where processes produce excessive carbon, such as coal mining, these operations should not be licensed.

Thank you for allowing for public input into this review process and I look forward to the implementation of policies which are in the best interest of the community's health and wellbeing.

Please contact me if you would like me to expand upon any of these points.

Regina Gleeson

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27th October 2015.