



# National Clean Air Agreement – work plan 2021-23

The 2021 to 2023 work plan builds on collaborative achievements of the previous work plans, and includes 12 projects across the following four strategic approaches:

- 1) better knowledge, education and awareness
- 2) emissions reduction measures to reduce air pollution and population exposure to air pollution
- 3) building and advancing partnerships and cooperation
- 4) improved standards for reporting and monitoring air pollution.

## 1 Better knowledge, education and awareness

This work plan includes four projects aimed at improving knowledge, education and awareness of air quality in Australia.

### 1.1 Ensure national consistency of public air quality information and health advice

Following the 2019-20 black summer bushfires, the need for consistent public health messaging on air pollution levels and associated health advice has been widely recognised, including by the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

A new nationally consistent framework has been agreed by all jurisdictions, through the inter-jurisdictional Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC). States and territories are currently updating their systems and websites to adopt the new framework, which provides:

- a nationally consistent approach for hourly air quality information, including consistent air pollutant categories and colours
- consistent public health advice for each category of air quality for communities and importantly, vulnerable groups to take preventative health actions.

This project is being led by the New South Wales Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and the South Australia Environment Protection Authority.

### 1.2 Improve bushfire smoke forecasting frameworks, nationally consistent alerts program

The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements highlighted the significant health impacts of bushfire smoke on the community, and the need for the public to receive advance notification of smoke events in order to take preventive health actions (such as restocking asthma and other medications, staying indoors and avoiding exercising outdoors).

A nationally consistent smoke alerts program (forecasting and real time) will advise the community of bushfire smoke events, expanding an existing Bureau of Meteorology /CSIRO

capability. A prototype system will be progressively trialled in all jurisdictions over the 2020-21 and 2021-22 summer seasons.

This project is being led by Commonwealth Department of Home Affairs, Bureau of Meteorology, and CSIRO.

### **1.3 Provide guidance for low-cost sensors to measure air pollution**

Members of the public are increasingly using air quality monitoring sensors in their homes and contributing to community monitoring networks.

New guidance will help people use low-cost sensors, understand the accuracy and limitations of results and access private and public sources of air quality information.

This project is being led by the New South Wales Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and the South Australia Environment Protection Authority.

### **1.4 Fill knowledge gaps through the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) Sustainable Communities and Waste Hub (Extension)**

The National Environmental Science Program Sustainable Communities and Waste Hub research program will deliver research findings and practical guidance for decision-makers, including:

- transfer of international air quality science to the Australian environment
- effective new technologies aimed at reducing the concentration of air pollutants
- evaluate local planning and zoning regulations to reduce air pollutants.

This project is being led by the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

## **2 Emissions reduction measures to reduce air pollution and population exposure to air pollution**

This work plan includes four projects that aim to reduce emissions and exposure to air pollution.

### **2.1 Evaluate the potential for a national approach to non-road diesel engine emissions (Extension)**

Non-road diesel engines include agriculture, mining and construction machinery, for example, tractors, cranes, excavators, bulldozers, forklifts, pumps and generators. These engines are unregulated and a significant source of air pollution in Australia. They produce double the particulate matter of all on-road vehicles and 6% of national greenhouse gas emissions.

In 2019, this project completed a market analysis which found there is potential to reduce noxious emissions from non-road diesel engines in Australia. A cost benefit analysis is underway examining the impact of options to manage these emissions. Results will be delivered to environment ministers in 2022.

This project is being led by the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, and the New South Wales Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

## **2.2 Review aromatics levels in petrol**

Many chemical compounds in petrol (known as aromatics) present health risks for the public. An example is benzene, a carcinogen. Air in locations such as shopping centre carparks and household garages can contain high levels of harmful fumes.

This project is an outcome from a 2018 Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement, Better Fuel for Cleaner Air, which identified opportunities to reduce health impacts from Australia's fuel quality. The review will be delivered by the end of 2021.

This project is being led by the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

## **2.3 Share information to reduce pollution from wood heaters (Extension)**

In cooler regions of Australia, wood heaters are major sources of air pollution.

Significant progress has been made since 2014 to improve wood heater emissions performance with standards now adopted in legislation in every state and territory, except the Northern Territory where wood heaters are not generally used.

Jurisdictions will collaborate on best practice management of wood heaters, education and community outreach, and measures to encourage compliance with recently updated wood heater installation standards.

This project is being led by the Australian Capital Territory Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

## **2.4 Evaluating the need for more stringent standards to reduce noxious emissions from light (petrol and diesel) and heavy (diesel) road vehicles in Australia**

Noxious emissions from on-road vehicles are particularly harmful sources of pollution – the community generally has a higher level of exposure to vehicle emissions than most other sources.

The then Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications released draft Consultation Regulatory Impact Statements to determine appropriate timing to adopt international standards for cleaner vehicle models. Consultations closed in February 2021, following which the Australian Government may decide whether to implement new standards.

This project is being led by the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.

# **3 Building and advancing partnerships and cooperation**

There are two projects in this work plan that will require all jurisdictions to work collaboratively to manage and reduce air pollution in Australia.

## **3.1 Develop a nationally consistent air pollution emissions inventory**

This project will deliver an agreed methodology for developing nationally consistent air emissions inventories across Australia.

Nationally consistent air emissions inventories will increase the quality of data available for national exposure assessments, national standard setting and policy development. These air emissions inventories will also enable each jurisdiction to identify cost-effective pollution reduction measures based on a clear understanding of pollution formation within their jurisdiction.

All jurisdictions will work together to have the methodologies and processes in place to produce a nationally consistent air pollution inventory for Australia by mid-2023.

This project is being led by the Victorian Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and the New South Wales Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

**Note:** The initial timing for this project, as approved by the senior officials' group (SOG), was the end of 2022. However, the change to mid-2023 reflects the likely timeline required for this work, as advised by EPA Victoria and agreed by NSW.

### **3.2 Measure and assess motor vehicle emissions**

This project represents a coordinated effort across jurisdictions to measure, assess and cost-effectively reduce on-road vehicle emissions.

Transport departments will collaborate through workshops to identify and address challenges regarding measuring air pollution from vehicles across jurisdictions and develop an action plan to improve vehicle emissions monitoring and compliance programs.

This project is being led by the Queensland Department of Environment and Science and the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

## **4 Improved standards for reporting and monitoring air pollution**

This work plan includes two projects aimed at reviewing and strengthening existing measures.

### **4.1 Improve understanding of air toxics and options for their management (Extension)**

This project considers the current approach to managing air toxics in Australia, including whether a national approach is needed, and a National Environment Protection Measure is needed. An independent review would be completed by the end of 2023.

This project is being led by the South Australia Environment Protection Authority and the Northern Territory Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security.

### **4.2 Harmonise dust amenity guidelines**

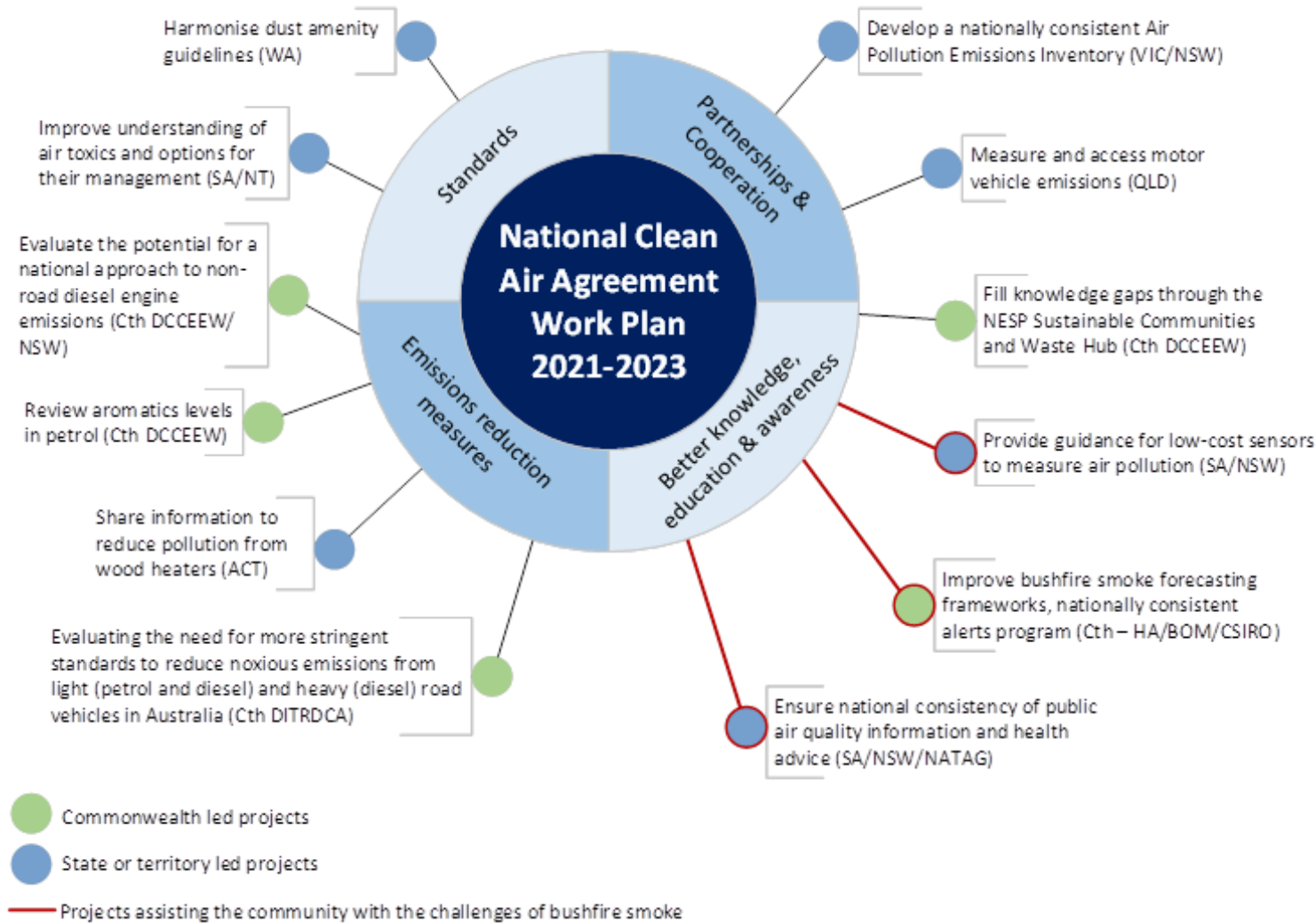
Current dust amenity guidelines were developed in the early 1990s, based on a study in a mining region of the Hunter Valley, New South Wales. This rating system for dust's impact will be updated to reflect how dust can affect people and communities over the short term.

This project is being led by the Western Australia Department of Water and Environmental Regulation.

Figure 1 below is a visual representation of the 12 projects included in the work plan 2021-23.



**Figure 1 Visual representation of the 12 projects included in the 2021-23 work plan**





**Australian Government**

**Department of Climate Change, Energy,  
the Environment and Water**

### **Acknowledgement of Country**

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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