

The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand response to the Draft NSW Clean Air Strategy

The Society operates in compliance the Medicines Code of Australia. Please see the TSANZ Sponsorship Policy for [more information](#).

Introduction

The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ) is a health promotion charity whose mission is to lead, support and enable all health workers and researchers who aim to prevent, cure and relieve disability caused by lung disease. The TSANZ is the only Peak Body in Australia that represents all health professionals working in all fields of respiratory health and has been doing so since 1961.

The TSANZ has a membership base of over 1800 individual members from a wide range of health and research disciplines. The TSANZ is a leading provider of evidence-based guidelines for the treatment of respiratory disease in Australia and New Zealand, undertakes a large amount of professional education and training, is responsible for significant research administration, and coordinates an accredited respiratory laboratory program.

As the leaders in lung health, we promote the:

- highest quality and standards of patient care
- development and application of knowledge about respiratory health and disease
- highest quality air standards including a tobacco smoke free society and effective regulation of novel nicotine delivery systems
- collaboration between all national organisations whose objects are to improve the wellbeing of individuals with lung disease and to promote better lung health for the community
- professional and collegiate needs of the Membership.

The TSANZ thanks the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment for the opportunity to respond to this consultation regarding the Draft NSW Clean Air Strategy (the Strategy).

Preamble

The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand has a strong focus on leading, supporting, and enabling all health workers and researchers to prevent, cure, and relieve disability caused by lung disease. Ensuring air quality is of a high standard is instrumental to achieving this goal, as it not only stops the exacerbation of symptoms of those with respiratory conditions^(1, 2) but also prevents the development of many chronic respiratory conditions including asthma⁽³⁾. Reducing pollution will also help prevent potential loss of life in more serious cases; ambient air pollution is responsible for an estimated 4.2 million deaths globally per year⁽⁴⁾. Thus, improving air quality in NSW should be a priority.

Air pollution can cause adverse health effects even at low levels⁽⁵⁾. It is therefore imperative that the NSW Clean Air Strategy speak to all forms and sources of air pollution. Air pollution is a complex problem which impacts many different aspects of life including health, education, employment, and other socioeconomic factors which make up an individual's overall wellbeing. The Strategy should therefore involve all levels and sectors of government to ensure meaningful changes can be implemented to address these issues.

The TSANZ commends the NSW Government for its work in developing the Draft NSW Clean Air Strategy, and its ongoing commitment in supporting respiratory health for all Australians.

Recommendations

The TSANZ is supportive of the Draft NSW Clean Air Strategy in general and has provided the below recommendations for consideration.

Recommendation 1:

The Strategy should take action to assist vulnerable people who are socio-economically disadvantaged and/or have lung and other health conditions, by providing financial support for housing repair/maintenance programs and/or the purchase of effective air purifiers for high exposures.

Recommendation 2:

The Strategy should encourage phasing out woodfire heaters in NSW with the introduction of a replacement subsidy and ban on the installation of new woodfire heaters.

Recommendation 3:

The Strategy should provide funding to develop and implement an AirSmart public education campaign that is relevant, practical, and accessible to the wider community to improve environmental health literacy and facilitate the implementation of specific emission-reduction strategies.

Recommendation 4:

The Strategy should involve the installation of more air quality testing stations, especially in Western Sydney, which has some of the highest emissions from industry and transport.

Recommendation 5:

The Strategy should provide support to local institutions to upgrade facilities to reduce indoor air pollution.

Recommendation 6:

The Strategy should take steps to minimize the health impacts of hazard reduction burning through a co-ordinated response that informs local communities of planned burns well in advance and considers mechanical fuel load reduction.

Concluding Remarks

The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand is fully committed to optimal lung health for all Australians. There is already an established evidence base on best practice for lung health and it is now time for implementation of this knowledge. This would have long term health benefits for all Australians, and also result in significant financial savings. Australia cannot afford to wait any longer for these actions.

Proper implementation of the NSW Clean Air Strategy is crucial to its success. An implementation plan that includes identifying responsible agencies, rollout milestones and associated costings should be considered. Ideally, this would be developed in partnership with stakeholders and with the community in order to improve uptake and to ensure that the Strategy's goals are feasible. The TSANZ thus strongly recommends an implementation plan is tied to the Strategy.

The TSANZ stress again that air pollution can cause adverse health effects even at low levels; **there is no safe level of air pollution**. Together, we must remain focused on proven effective strategies to reduce air pollution.

References

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4. WHO. Ambient air pollution: A global assessment of exposure and burden of disease. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO Document Production Services; 2016.
5. Zosky G, Cubas A, Morgan G, Tham R, Heyworth J, Marks G, et al. Centre for Air pollution, energy and health Research-CAR Position paper: There is no 'safe' level of air pollution. 2021.