ATMOSPHERE

Achievements/commitments

Past responses to sources of air pollution such as banning of leaded fuels have led to noticeable differences in the ambient air quality. Because of its comparatively lower population and levels of industrial activity, Adelaide enjoys better average air quality than other Australian cities.

Several major corporations are playing an active role in helping to improve air quality. For example, a major upgrade to the OneSteel steelworks, known as Project Magnet, is reducing particulate emissions in Whyalla. In addition, 'tenby10', a program aiming to reduce blood lead levels in children in Port Pirie is being implemented by Nyrstar, Port Pirie Regional Council, the Department of Health, and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA).

In 2007, the state government passed Australia's first climate change legislation, The Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Act 2007. This contains a commitment to a target to reduce emissions to 60% below 1990 levels by 2050, and to increase the use of renewable energy by 2014.

Trends

- Residential sector energy & transport emissions have INCREASED 28% since 1990.

Moving forward

High priority should be afforded to planning for adaptation to climate change, considering potential implications of this for the state's biodiversity, regional communities, and

Torrens Island Power Station. Photo: Tim Lubcke

Recommendations for Action

R1.1   Implement an Air Quality Strategy for South Australia that identifies current and future risks, priorities and management objectives.

R1.2   Develop adaptation strategies based on assessed vulnerability and opportunities under different climate change and population scenarios for:

- Human health
- Water security
- Biodiversity and natural resources
- Asset protection, infrastructure and emergency services, especially in relation to fire and sea level rise.

R1.3   Promote public discussion and understanding of the possible consequences of climate change, with an emphasis on what South Australians can do to reduce their emissions and adapt to climate change.

R1.4   Fast-track procurement of low emission vehicles for the government fleet (including smaller vehicles where appropriate).

R1.5   Develop and use measures of greenhouse gas intensity as a means to evaluate the sustainability of government policies by 2012.

R1.6   Progress work on the 'developmental' South Australia's Strategic Plan target for adaptation to climate change with a view to incorporating it into the 2010 update of the Plan.

Smoke clouds from 2007 bushfires on Kangaroo Island. Photo: DEH

industries, pa rticularly those that rely heavily on existing natural resources. Further monitoring and research, and better coordination and integration of available data will be needed to inform this planning.

While air pollution levels are below the national average, monitoring has shown non-compliant levels of particulates occurring within most airsheds in South Australia. If South Australia's population target of two million results in a corresponding growth in motor vehicles travelling on roadways, there is likely to be a significant impact on ambient air quality. The volume of these added emissions are expected to offset gains made through fuel quality and engine improvements. Likewise, increased mining activity is expected to increase freight transport within the state and elevate greenhouse gas emissions.

The government needs to take the lead by investing in improvements to public transport infrastructure (encouraging reduction in private motor vehicle usage), improving regulation of wood heaters, and supporting industries that demonstrate best practice emission management.

Further Information

Australian Government Department of Climate Change
www.climatechange.gov.au

Climate Change in Australia (CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology)
www.climatechangeinaustralia.gov.au

National Pollutant Inventory
www.npi.gov.au

South Australian Government
www.climatechange.sa.gov.au
www.sustainableliving.sa.gov.au