



Albury Wodonga Hume Freeway Project - Air Quality Questions and Answers

Some answers to frequently asked community questions are provided below.

Has air quality been considered in the studies for this project?

Environmental issues such as air quality were carefully considered during the Environment Impact Statement, Environment Effects Statement and subsequent Panel Inquiry before planning approval was granted by the Acting Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning in January 1998.

In 2003 the RTA conducted an environmental review of the project considering additional scientific reports. The part of the review relating to air concluded the following:

- The current and predicted pollutant levels described in the specialist air report for the Environment Impact Statement and Environmental Effects Statement remain within the air quality goals established for NSW and Victoria.
- These levels are based on the protection of public health for sensitive individuals. They are for the well-known air pollutants such as carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, lead, ozone, particulate matter, acid gases and sulphur dioxide.

Will air quality change in Albury?

Air quality in Albury will not change substantially due to the new route. There would be increased levels near any new arterial road route, and a corresponding decrease in levels or benefits to those areas from where the traffic has been removed.

The number of vehicles forecast to use the new route has not significantly changed from the 1995 traffic studies to the more recent *Albury Traffic Survey Report* (2001). Both sets of forecasts conclude that the Albury Wodonga Hume Freeway route would not increase the number of vehicles travelling through Albury.

The screening of air pollutants in Albury conducted by the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation (then the Environment Protection Authority) determined that the pollutants are likely to be below the National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM) goals, with the exception of Particulate Matter (PM₁₀) where exceedances may occur due to the high number of wood fires in this area in winter.

Who monitors air pollution?

The agency responsible for monitoring air pollution levels in NSW is the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC). This agency has located a monitoring station for Particulate Matter (PM₁₀) levels in Albury, related mainly to the high use of home wood fires.

In NSW, this department establishes goals for air quality based on goals set by other agencies such as the National Environment Protection Council, World Health Organisation, and the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia. These goals take into account impacts on human health and are intended to protect those in the community that are more sensitive to air pollution.

What is the RTA doing to manage air pollution?

The RTA is committed to working towards meeting these air goals on all projects.

Diesel emissions from trucks and heavy vehicles have an impact on air quality. Around 60% of all road transport particle emissions come from diesel vehicles and the key source of air pollution is from old, less maintained vehicles. Several government initiatives are underway to reduce the community's exposure to diesel emissions while scientific research continues. The NSW Government's 25 Year Air Quality Management Plan, *Action for Air*, includes strategies for reducing diesel emissions. In addition, the NSW Premier announced the *Cleaner Vehicles Action Plan* in 2001 for reducing emissions from vehicles.

Clean Fleet Program for Diesel Vehicle Maintenance

The RTA has worked closely with the Commonwealth Government to develop the Diesel National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM) and is now working with truck groups on implementing NEPM programs. A voluntary "test, repair and re-test" program has enabled the RTA to identify the critical repair and maintenance factors that most impact on emission performance in diesel vehicles. These factors form the basis of the voluntary Clean Fleet Program for Diesel Vehicle Maintenance.

A pilot of the program is currently being undertaken and the full program will be implemented later this year.

Alternative fuels

Another strategy to reduce emissions includes the evaluation of alternative fuels. Trials using biofuels has shown that a reduction in particle emissions is possible from using biodiesel. Other fuels and fuel mixes are being tested to determine emission reductions. Finally, the RTA is partnering with the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation in a program to fit devices to diesel vehicles to see what further emissions reductions are feasible.

Heavy vehicles and Albury

The Albury Wodonga Freeway project will cater for all vehicles including trucks. Documented evidence notes that many trucks will continue to use Albury as a resting place, a refuelling place, for vehicle maintenance, or as a home. As such, in providing a route separate from the main street of Albury, the project will give the Albury shopping community and those residing next to the main street an air quality benefit.

Some trucks will continue to a location in Albury using local streets. Importantly, however, most heavy vehicles will primarily be on the new roadway with buffers on either side.

In summary, the 2003 investigations into environmental, safety and social issues confirmed that the project could proceed, and the RTA has met all legislated requirements. Investigations into reducing vehicle (in particular diesel) emissions will continue.
