



MEDIA RELEASE

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**PEAK AIR QUALITY BODY WELCOMES
PROMISE OF CLEANER AIR**

The Clean Air Society of Australia and New Zealand (CASANZ), the peak body for air quality professionals, welcomes the National Clean Air Agreement released last Monday by Commonwealth, State and Territory environment ministers.

CASANZ President, Dr Mark Hibberd said, "The framework of the National Clean Air Agreement is an encouraging sign that air quality is firmly on the national agenda. If the actions in the two-year work plan are undertaken, then we should see a real improvement in air quality."

A key measure is the proposed strengthening of reporting about fine particle pollution ($PM_{2.5}$). This has been an advisory standard since 2003 but will now have the same status as Australia's other ambient air quality standards. Fine particulate pollution increases mortality and ill health, in particular through its contribution to respiratory and cardiovascular disease, and cancer. Health impacts can occur both over the short and long term.

Unfortunately, the decision to set the national limit for coarse particle pollution (PM_{10}) at 25 micrograms per cubic metre for the annual average is not consistent with recommendations from the World Health Organisation (WHO). And some States are already proposing to use the value of 20 micrograms per cubic metre recommended by the WHO.

Dr Hibberd said, "The proposed national value of 25 micrograms per cubic metre is not based on the latest scientific evidence which is for an annual PM_{10} limit of 20 micrograms per cubic metre. We also know that there is no safe limit for particulate pollution. The greater the reductions we can achieve, the better the health improvements will be."

Health costs of air pollution from wood heaters are estimated at over \$20 billion annually in Australia, so it is laudable that wood heater emissions are included in the Agreement. However, the emissions standard for new wood heaters sold in Australia will remain at almost double the current New Zealand limit until 2020. CASANZ's position is that there is also an urgent need to take action on existing non-compliant heaters, which otherwise could remain a problem for a long time. No new resources have been allocated to address this issue, which Dr Hibberd notes, "Is technically probably one of the simplest and cheapest air pollution issues to fix."

CASANZ welcomes the plan to set up a National Air Quality Data Service so that nationally consistent air quality data and statistics are regularly available to stakeholders.

Dr Hibberd hopes that the service will provide much more than the quarterly reports proposed in the plan, "Accurate and readily available air quality data is essential for understanding the impacts of poor air quality on Australians. It's also really important that the community has easily accessible information. While we welcome the proposed data service, I think we can do much better at a national level especially given the technology that is available and the type of real-time information that is already being provided by some States."

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For interviews, further information, and images, please contact:
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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About CASANZ

The Clean Air Society of Australia and New Zealand (CASANZ) brings together people with an interest in environmental science and management with particular reference to air quality, climate change, and related issues. The Society promotes the protection of the environment through the advancement of robust scientific knowledge and understanding. It has over 600 members, with a demographic predominately from within Australia and New Zealand, but also extended to various parts of the world. Established in 1966, the Society is a non-government, non-profit Organisation. For more information about CASANZ, please visit: www.casanz.org.au.

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