

Sydney's air quality

Fact sheet

Summer 2018



Sydney's air quality is good by world standards, according to international comparisons by the World Health Organisation who set guidelines.

Air pollution

Air pollution in Australia is measured by six main air pollutants; carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, photochemical oxidants, sulphur dioxide, lead and particles. Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and nitric oxide (NO) are referred to together as oxides of nitrogen (NO_x). Nitric oxide is not harmful to health at typical ambient concentrations, but nitrogen dioxide can be. Of all the pollutants assessed, PM_{2.5} (tiny particles of matter, one-fortieth the width of a hair) is considered to present the greatest potential impact to our health.

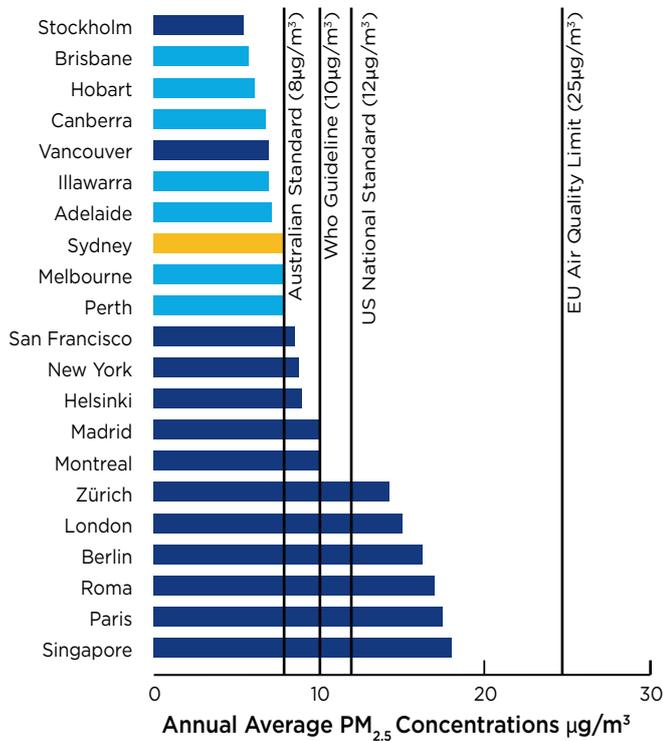
Australian standards

Australia has strict regulations and standards regarding air pollution which guide air quality management as our population continues to grow. Both federal and state governments also have emission reduction strategies in place.

Measuring, monitoring and regulations

The National Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure (Air NEPM) was developed in consultation with health professionals, environmental groups and the community. Both state and federal governments are required to report against the six main air pollutants and our national standards for PM_{2.5} are the most stringent in the world.

In NSW, the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) monitors, analyses and publishes information about air quality. They operate a comprehensive air quality monitoring network to provide the community with accurate and up-to-date information about air quality. The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) regulates air quality and implements measures for managing and reporting air pollution. They assist NSW in maintaining a balance between managing competing demands on the environment and supporting sustainable growth.



Air quality in Sydney and internationally.
Source: World Health Organisation

Main pollution contributors

Sydney is a major international centre with residential, commercial, industrial, and natural occurrences such as bush fires, all contributing to air pollution. Motor vehicles are an important contributor to emissions, contributing 14 per cent of PM_{2.5}, and 62 per cent of nitrogen oxides. Other major contributors include wood heaters, which contributes 51 per cent of PM_{2.5}, and industry – which contributes 18 per cent of PM_{2.5} and 19 per cent of oxides of nitrogen.

Further reading

Sydney's Air Quality Info

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/AQMS/hourlydata.htm>

About Air Quality

<http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/air/>

ACTAQ

<http://www.chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au/reports/advisory-committee-on-tunnel-air-quality>

Current Air Quality

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/aqms/aqi.htm>

Vehicle Emission Standards

<https://infrastructure.gov.au/roads/environment/emission/>

Reducing vehicle emissions

Despite there being more cars on the road, a number of initiatives and technological developments have resulted in substantial reductions to Sydney's vehicle emissions over the past two decades. The number of cars is expected to further increase as the population of Sydney continues to grow, however total emissions from motor vehicles are set to continue to fall over the next decade due to new cleaner vehicles replacing older technology vehicles.

Government initiatives and technological developments that have been implemented in recent years to assist in further reducing vehicle emissions include:

- National Clean Air Agreement
- clean fleet program
- smoky vehicle camera systems within operating tunnels
- vehicle import duties on second-hand cars
- improvements in technologies and design e.g. electric vehicles.



Cars built after 2013 emit **97%** less

oxides of nitrogen than vehicles built in 1976

Diesel trucks built after 2013 emit **92%** less



particles of matter than trucks built in 1996



131 450

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For more information



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