

Thematic Discussion: Integrated approach to addressing air pollution and atmospheric problems

Comments from Australia – 4 May 2006

- Australia has made significant progress in combating air pollution in our cities by addressing fuel quality and emissions controls. Air pollution continues to decrease with the implementation of progressive fuel quality standards for petrol, automotive diesel, biodiesel and autogas. A standard for fuel ethanol is under development.
- Standards are being tightened gradually, along with introducing incentives to produce and import better quality fuels to reap early environmental benefits.
- Lower sulphur fuels mean much better air quality in Australia's urban environments and by 2020, the cleaner petrol and diesel program is expected to save an estimated \$AU3.4 billion in avoided health costs.
- From this base, Australia has been able to assist other nations in the Asia-Pacific to address the barrier of capacity building in relation to fuel standards and reducing pollution from motor vehicles.
- Australia hosted participants from Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Vietnam and Bangladesh for a Fuel Quality Strategy Training Workshop in 2003. This workshop focused on improving fuel quality of gasoline and diesel as part of the Clean Air Initiative for Asian Cities.
- This is an example of transfer of capacity from a highly developed country to other countries where capacity building may be a significant barrier to progress in managing air quality.
- Regular collection and analysis of pollutant monitoring data is another essential component of effective domestic responses to atmospheric pollution. This enables countries to identify both improvements in air quality and emerging problems.
- Australia uses its National Pollutant Inventory and State of the Environment Reporting initiatives for this purpose. These tools provide data and the necessary contextual and interpretive material to aid understanding to enable government, industry and the community to develop timely and effective responses.
- These tools are very useful in overcoming the barrier of limited public engagement in responding to air quality concerns.