



Less trucks for the inner west

2022-23 budget proposal

The following budget proposal has been prepared by the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group (MTAG). MTAG is a non-political community lobby group of residents advocating for a reduction in trucks on residential streets in the City of Maribyrnong.

We appreciate Council's consideration of this proposal and can be reached at info@mtag.org.au if you have questions or require further information.

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Proposal Idea / Name:

Appointment of an Air Quality Advocacy and Action Executive Officer

Projected Cost: \$150,000-200,000 pa (including on costs)

Brief overview of proposal:

The health of residents in the City of Maribyrnong is severely impacted by exposure to consistently poor air quality levels compared to other suburban areas of Melbourne. This issue needs to be taken seriously and additional measures are required to address this problem. A lack of resources should not be used by the City of Maribyrnong as a reason for inaction.

The poor air quality in the City of Maribyrnong is a result of a number of factors:

- The number and age of the trucks traversing the city – currently estimated at 34,000 per day.
- Dust and odour from industrial operations, and landfill sites in the Inner West have significant impacts on the community's amenity and remains a priority concern.
- Extensive areas of unsealed land and the stockpiling of materials, such as waste soil and industrial chemicals, which can create wind-blown dust containing unknown hazardous chemicals.
- Wood smoke from domestic heaters and fires.

Council must take strategic actions to address the undeniable health and social issues associated with air pollution in Maribyrnong, and ensure adequate resources are provided to find solutions and improve resident health outcomes. Progress to date appears to have been limited partly due to there being no clear lines of responsibility within Council regarding the necessary actions.

Appointment of an Air Quality Advocacy and Action Executive Officer will ensure there are dedicated resources to drive actions to reduce air pollution and improve the health and amenity of the Inner West, with responsibilities to include:

- Ensuring the completion and adoption of a Maribyrnong City Council (MCC) Air Quality Improvement Plan.
- Developing a system for monitoring implementation of the actions contained within the new (MCC) Air Quality Improvement Plan.
- Overseeing the establishment of an air pollution monitoring network in Maribyrnong to identify areas of high pollution and enable strategies to mitigate problem areas.
- Coordinating a program of regular reporting on air quality to Council and the broader community, including the possible production of an air quality map of the city, to aid in the identification of whether strategies to address pollution hotspots are resulting in improved air quality.
- Driving advocacy to the State Government and relevant government departments and agencies regarding actions needed by these entities to address air pollution in Maribyrnong.
- Continuing to advocate for the introduction of curfews and a truck ban on Williamstown Road in accordance with the Council resolution passed on 31 July 2019.
- Providing advice to Council regarding the implementation of proposed legislated truck bans planned for the City of Maribyrnong streets when the Westgate Tunnel Project (WGTP) is completed.
- Coordinating consultation and liaison with relevant community groups within the City of Maribyrnong, such as the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group (MTAG), Save Willy Road, Brooklyn Residents Action Group (BRAG), Yarraville On The Nose (OTN), and the Inner West Air Quality Community Reference Group (IWAQCRG).
- Building relationships between the City of Maribyrnong and the transport sector, including the Victorian Transport Association.
- Building relationships between the City of Maribyrnong and Port of Melbourne Authority with the aim of encouraging the implementation of a clean ports program.
- Driving advocacy to the Federal Government regarding relevant actions needed by the Federal government to address air pollution in the City of Maribyrnong.
- Monitor the implementation of recommendations relevant to the City of Maribyrnong from the Inner West Air Quality Community Reference Group.
- Building relationships with neighbouring councils and identifying joint advocacy that can be undertaken by Maribyrnong, Hobsons Bay and Brimbank councils.

While it will be up to Council management to determine the reporting line within the organisation for this position, it is suggested that a direct line of reporting to the CEO would ensure that the appropriate level of authority will be available to the Air Quality Advocacy and Action Executive Officer. Alternately, the role could potentially sit within the Officers for the Protection of the Local Environment (OPLE) area. Regardless of where the position's reporting lines lie, close links with many areas across Council will be required, include staff in OPLE, engineering services, asset management, road maintenance, traffic management, active transport, capital works and strategic planning. It should be a senior appointment, with a suitable level of remuneration to attract the right candidate.

Details as to how the proposal will benefit the residents of Maribyrnong

This initiative will ensure that the health of residents in the City of Maribyrnong is better protected.

People who live and work in the Inner West experience health problems associated with air pollution at rates that are some of the highest in Australia. These include:

- High rates of hospitalisation for heart failure, asthma and heart disease.
- Lung cancer rates well above the Australian averages.
- Hospital admission rates for stroke way above our neighbouring councils and well above the Australian average.
- Early deaths from lung cancer are among the highest in Australia
- Some of the highest adolescent asthma hospital admissions rates in Australia, with asthma rates 50% higher than the state average.

These alarming health statistics cannot be fully explained by factors such as socio-economic status. The City of Maribyrnong has a very young demographic and the lowest smoking and obesity rates in the west. Air pollution is likely an important contributory factor to our poor health outcomes.

There is overwhelming historical medical evidence documenting the serious adverse health effects of exposure to poor air quality caused by dust, coal, odour and emissions from transport. This includes asthma attacks, various cancers, strokes, heart attacks, adverse birth outcomes, effects on the immune system, multiple respiratory effects and neurotoxicity.

Children exposed to high amounts of air pollution are more likely to end up in hospital emergency rooms for mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, suicidality, personality disorders and schizophrenia.

Diesel exhaust is now ubiquitous in our local environment. Diesel trains, the proliferation of diesel-powered cars, diesel buses and trucks, all contribute to the toxic load in our environment.

The City of Maribyrnong already has a number of adopted strategies and objectives in place to address the health and well-being of the community. This includes the “Wellbeing Commitment” contained in the Maribyrnong Council Plan (2017-21), which reads: “Council is committed to promoting and protecting the wellbeing of our community across all life stages. We will achieve this through working to create and improve the physical, social, natural, cultural and economic environments that promote health and wellbeing.”

Council’s Health and Wellbeing priorities for 2017-21 include: Community safety; Open space in natural and urban environments; Sustainable transport options; Truck and traffic pollution; and Climate change, air pollution, tree planting. The initiative will support the delivery of these priorities.

The initiative will also support the delivery of the Maribyrnong Integrated Transport Strategy 2011 (MITS) which contains a number of policies and recommendations aimed at reducing truck traffic and improving the air quality in Maribyrnong.

The position will also indirectly support the implementation of a number of other Council policies and strategies, including the ‘Climate Emergency Action Plan’ (CEAP) which refers to the need to reduce vehicle emissions, the ‘Greening Footscray Strategy’ which encourages the planting of more trees to improve local air quality, and the ‘Maribyrnong Street Tree Strategy’ which aims to establish 10,000 new street trees to 2023.

While Council may have only a limited direct capability and capacity to take action to improve air quality, including an inability to take direct action to reduce the number of heavy trucks in the municipality, this is not an excuse for Council to abdicate its responsibilities completely. Advocacy actions are particularly vital given how heavily

Council relies on State Government intervention to lessen the impacts on health from the diminished air quality.

Creating this position of an Air Quality Advocacy and Action Executive Officer will show that Council takes this issue very seriously and is fully committed to finding real and lasting solutions to improve the health of its residents.

APPROVED:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Wurt', written in a cursive style.

Martin Wurt, President
Maribyrnong Truck Action Group (MTAG)

30 November 2021