

NPi

UPDATE

information on the National Pollutant Inventory — a national internet database of pollutant emissions

Issue 1 June 1998

FROM THE FEDERAL ENVIRONMENT MINISTER, ROBERT HILL

Welcome to the first edition of the *NPI Update*.

The National Pollutant Inventory is an important tool for protecting Australia's environment. For the first time we are using consistent methods to gather information on pollutants emitted to the air, land and water. This information will be used by governments, industry and the community.

A continuing commitment from Australia's industries to the NPI will ensure that it becomes a central part of policy making for not only government at all levels, but for the way in which individual facilities operate.

To date many Australians have participated in the formation of the NPI and I would like to thank each of them for their involvement.

Currently, industries have an opportunity to be directly involved in determining the way in which they report emissions for the NPI. Reporting handbooks are being developed for each sector and are being circulated for comments to industry associations, community groups, and to individuals who have registered their interest. I encourage you to become a part of this process—after all the NPI will only be as good as the quality of the data it contains.


ROBERT HILL



Above: The National Environment Protection Council, on 27 February 1998, after agreeing to establish the National Pollutant Inventory. (Front middle) Federal Environment Minister, Robert Hill, (front right) SA Environment and Heritage Minister, Dorothy Kotz, (front left) Victorian Conservation and Land Management Minister, Marie Tehan, (back left) Tasmanian Environment and Land Management Minister, Peter Hodgman, (back middle) WA Environment Minister, Cheryl Edwardes, (back right) NSW Environment Minister, Pam Allan. Qld Environment Minister, Brian Littleproud and NT Lands, Planning and Environment Minister, Mick Palmer, participated in the Council meeting by phone. The ACT was in care-taker government when the Council met.

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The National Pollutant Inventory is funded by Environment Australia, and is being cooperatively implemented by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments.

Environment Ministers sign off on the NPI

A LANDMARK AGREEMENT between Australia's Environment Ministers has paved the way for the National Pollutant Inventory (NPI)—a national internet database of pollutant emissions—to go ahead.

From July 1 1998, larger Australian industrial facilities which use more than a specified amount of the chemicals listed on the NPI, will be required to estimate and report annually their emissions for the NPI.

This information, along with estimates of emissions from facilities using less than the specified amount of the chemicals listed on the NPI, will be made available on the Internet.

Governments will also estimate emissions arising from the community such as nutrient emissions to our inland waterways and air emissions from everyday activities, like driving to work and mowing the lawn.

Information explaining what the substances listed on the NPI are made from, what they are used for, and the risks to human health and the environment associated with them, will be included on the database.

The data from the first year is expected to be available in early 2000.

Federal Environment Minister Robert Hill says the NPI increases the access of local communities to information that affects their families and their lifestyles.

"The National Pollutant Inventory is based on our belief that the community has a right to know what pollutants are being put into their local environment—whether they are emitted into the air, land or water.

"This information will now be as close as the nearest computer.

"From there they will be able to identify the pollutants being released into their local environment," Senator Hill said.

By estimating emissions for the NPI, industry may find that there are operating areas which could be cleaner and/or more efficient. Individual facilities will also be able to assess whether their emissions are increasing or decreasing from year to year.

Senator Hill said the NPI data would become a valuable tool for governments at all levels to use in environmental planning and management.

To help industry report for the NPI, handbooks are being developed as a step-by-step guide to estimating emissions. Various industry sectors are being consulted to ensure the handbooks meet their needs. Facilities are not required to report emissions for the NPI until a handbook has been produced for their sector.

With funding from the Commonwealth, State and Territory environment authorities will work with industry and the community to estimate and compile the NPI data. Environment Australia will then make this information available on the Internet.

In the first two reporting years for the NPI, facilities will be required to report their emissions of 36 of the 90 chemicals listed on the NPI to air, land and water. In late 1999 a review of the NPI will consider whether reporting

requirements should extend to the full list. It will also consider whether to include off-site transfers of substances which contain chemicals listed on the NPI (for example to landfill and sewers).



THE NPI, NEPC AND NEPMS

THE NATIONAL POLLUTANT INVENTORY (NPI) is being implemented as a National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM) made by the National Environment Protection Council (NEPC)—but what does this mean?

At the 1990 Special Premiers' Conference, the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers agreed to develop an Inter-governmental Agreement on the Environment. From this agreement, the NEPC Act was formally established in 1994. All parliaments in Australia then passed their own enabling legislation.

The Council is a national, statutory body which has law making powers. Members are ministers appointed by the first minister—Prime Minister, Premier, or Chief Minister—in each jurisdiction. Currently all the members are environment ministers, but this is not a requirement of Council membership. The Council secretariat, the NEPC Service Corporation, is based in Adelaide.

The Council's objective is to ensure that Australians enjoy the benefit of equivalent protection from air water and soil pollution and from noise, wherever they live. In order to achieve this the Council makes NEPMs (or Measures) and assesses and reports on their implementation and effectiveness.

A Measure is a national objective for protecting particular aspects of the environment. Two-thirds of the Council must agree to a Measure for it to be made. The Measure will not become law if it is disallowed by either House of the Commonwealth Parliament. The NPI is the first Measure to be made by the Council.

In November 1996 the Council decided to prepare a draft Measure for the NPI which was released for the statutory two month public consultation period in June 1997. Further consultation with key stakeholders followed in October 1997.

To assist in the development of the draft Measure, a Non-Government Organisation Advisory Group was established to ensure industry, environment and community concerns were considered by the Council. Membership included environment, industry and union associations. A Technical Advisory Panel was also established to undertake the process of evaluating substances on the NPI reporting list.

When developing a draft Measure, the Council prepares an impact statement that considers the environmental, economic and social impacts, any relevant international agreements, and regional environmental differences. This helps to ensure that the development of a Measure is as open and transparent as possible.

Because the Commonwealth, States and Territories are all represented on the Council, Measures are developed cooperatively. Implementing Measures is the responsibility of each participating jurisdiction.

Other NEPMs currently being developed include:

- Ambient air quality
- Movement of controlled waste across State and Territory borders
- Assessment of contaminated sites

For more information on the development of other Measures contact the National Environment Protection Council Service Corporation on Ph (08) 8419 1200 or email exec@nepc.gov.au internet nepc.gov.au

NPI ON TRIAL IN SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND

THE PROJECT TEAM in Queensland's Department of Environment is well advanced in its NPI trial in South East Queensland.

To date, the focus has been on developing emissions estimation handbooks for use by those industry groups expected to trigger specific material-handling or fuel-use thresholds. After the trial team develops the handbooks they are forwarded to Environment Australia so that they can be distributed for national consultation.

The need for documents to record and report emissions estimations data from point sources has led to the development of reporting forms for the South East Queensland trial. These are to help the

smooth transfer of information from the facility to the NPI Queensland trial database.

Diffuse sources and aggregated emissions to air, land and water will be estimated and represented geographically on the database being developed by Environment Australia.

Aggregated emissions include those from point sources not expected to trigger the reporting threshold. The project team is collating data required to make these estimates.

For information contact

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NPI INDUSTRY HANDBOOKS OUT FOR COMMENT

DRAFT INDUSTRY HANDBOOKS are currently being developed for the NPI and are available for public comment.

The handbooks are a kit designed to help facilities estimate their emissions of NPI reporting substances. The handbooks are made up of a NPI Guide and one or more Emission Estimation Techniques Manual for different types of industrial processes.

The NPI Guide provides general information on the NPI and will help facilities work out if they need to report for the NPI. The Emission Estimation Techniques are a series of manuals designed to help facilities estimate their emissions from different industrial processes. A facility may need one or more of these manuals depending on the number of processes used at their facility.

The Queensland Department of Environment, the New South Wales Environment Protection Authority and the Western Australian Department of Environmental Protection are developing handbooks in conjunction with Environment Australia.

Industry associations, individual operators, and community groups are invited to review and comment on the draft handbooks as they become available.

We encourage you to register your interest in the handbooks by contacting Environment Australia on 1800 657 945, fax (02) 6274 1610 or email npi@ea.gov.au.

THE KALGOORLIE MINING TRIAL

METHODS FOR TESTING the parameters of the National Pollutant Inventory (NPI) in a regional mining environment are currently being trialed in Western Australia.

The trial, which commenced in April 1998, is centred around the twin mining towns of Kalgoorlie-Boulder which are situated in the Goldfield region.

The Kalgoorlie Mining trial is a partnership approach between Western Mining Corporation Resources Ltd (WMC), the Western Australian Department of Environmental Protection and Environment Australia.

The Department of Environmental Protection is also developing two industry handbooks to provide guidance to industry on how to estimate their emissions, these are: nickel mining and smelting; and gold mining and refining.

For more information on the Kalgoorlie Mining Trial or gold and nickel industry handbook development, contact 08 9222 7148 or email graham_storey@environ.wa.gov.au

EMISSIONS FROM SMALLER FACILITIES WILL BE LISTED ON THE NPI

ANNUAL EMISSIONS FROM facilities using less than a specified amount of the chemicals listed on the NPI will also be included on the database even though the facility operators are not required to report emissions.

The amount of emissions from these sources will be compiled by estimating the average emissions for each facility in a sector and then multiplying this figure by the number of facilities in the sector operating in the region. For example, your local bakery is unlikely to be required to report for the NPI, but the appropriate State or Territory environment authority will estimate its emissions.

State and Territory environment authorities will collect these estimated emissions figures and Environment Australia will make the information available on the NPI database.

TRIAL THE NPI DATABASE

A TRIAL VERSION of the National Pollutant Inventory (NPI) database is available on the Internet.

The trial database demonstrates the capabilities of a national database, and incorporates air emission data previously collected in four study regions: Dandenong, Newcastle, Launceston and Port Pirie. Data from the trials of the NPI in South East Queensland, and the planned trial in Kalgoorlie/Boulder region, will be incorporated into the trial database later this year.

The database will include contextual information on the health and environmental effects of pollution and information on the substances reported for the NPI. This information will explain what the substances are derived from, what they are used for, and the level at which they can be used safely.

The NPI handbooks will also be made available on the Internet.

Implemented in Java, the trial database includes an advanced query interface which allows a range of query combinations and map outputs. A simpler interface has also been developed in the html format.

Environment Australia has recently let a contract to undertake phase two of the NPI database implementation, using the latest developments in Internet technologies. The new database will have a full Geographic Information System which can zoom and select spatial data including emissions figures from households and everyday activities.

The fully implemented database will be able to transfer data from the States and Territories to the Commonwealth. Phase two of implementation will be complete in August 1998.

The trial database can be found at

www.environment.gov.au/net/npi.html



National Pollutant Inventory

FIRST THREE REPORTING YEARS 1998–2001

1ST NPI REPORTING PERIOD

First reporting year is from

1 July 1998 – 30 June 1999

Industry will be expected to report on
36 of the 90 NPI substances

2ND NPI REPORTING PERIOD

Second reporting year is from

1 July 1999 – 30 June 2000

Industry will be expected to report on
36 of the 90 NPI substances

OCTOBER 1999 REVIEW

- Reporting list
- Transfers
- Reporting process

3RD & SUBSEQUENT REPORTING PERIODS (SUBJECT TO THE REVIEW)

Third reporting year is from

July 1 2000 – 30 June 2001

Industry will be expected to report on
all 90 NPI substances

Penalties (ie public naming) will apply

N.B. Reporting facilities will only be required
to report if an industry handbook has been
published by Environment Australia.

KEY DATES

27 February 1998

National Environment Protection Measure for the
National Pollutant Inventory was made by the National
Environment Protection Council.

The NPI reporting period (12 months) commences on
1 July each year

First reporting period will commence **1 July 1998**

Facilities will provide information on the previous
reporting period to the nominated agency of each State
or Territory on or before

30 September each year

The State or Territory agency will then provide this
information to the Commonwealth on or before

30 November each year

The Commonwealth will release information by
31 January for the preceding reporting year

Review of the NPI NEPM will commence in
October 1999

YOUR INPUT INTO NPI UPDATE

NPI UPDATE AIMS to provide information to industry and the community about the NPI. Over the coming months NPI Update will explore a number of issues while mainly focusing on the emissions reporting process.

Your feedback is sought, so please let us know about the issues related to the NPI which are of concern or that you have questions about. It may be possible to include an article addressing these concerns or questions; if not, they will be answered individually.

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Ph (03) 9628 5907

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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TASMANIA

Department of Environment
and Land Management
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WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Environment Australia
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SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Department of Environment,
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