

23 September 2021

## **Media Release: Researchers welcome new World Health Organization air quality guidelines, urge Australian Government to adopt stronger air quality standards**

Researchers from the Centre for Air pollution, energy and health Research (CAR) today welcomed the release of [new air quality guidelines from the World Health Organization](#) (WHO).

The new guidelines recommend that annual mean concentrations of fine particles less than 2.5 thousandths of a millimetre in diameter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) do not exceed 5 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m<sup>3</sup>), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels do not exceed 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup> and mean 8-hour ozone concentrations do not exceed 100 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (WHO, 2021).

In comparison, Australia's national guidelines - the [Australian National Environmental Protection \(Ambient Air Quality\) Measures](#) (AAQ NEPM) - were revised in April 2021 and adopted annual mean limits of 8 µg/m<sup>3</sup> for PM<sub>2.5</sub>, 56 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (0.03 ppm) for NO<sub>2</sub> and 157 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (0.08 ppm) for ozone averaged over 4 hours.

CAR strongly urges the Australian Government to align its air quality standards with the latest WHO guidance. The current evidence suggests that there are no 'safe' levels of air pollution. Adverse health effects from air pollution are seen at very low levels, well below concentrations set out in the Australian guidelines.

CAR Chief Investigator and Co-Chair of the Guidelines Development Group for the new WHO guidelines, Distinguished Professor Lidia Morawska from Queensland University of Technology's School of Earth and Atmospheric Science, said:

"Research shows that even here in Australia, at these relatively low levels compared to elsewhere in the world, exposure to air pollution reduces life expectancy and sickens the community."

CAR supports a [joint statement](#) by medical, public health and scientific societies from around the world calling on governments to align national standards with the new WHO air quality guidelines to achieve ambitious air quality and emissions reduction policies to improve the health of all.

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### **Contact**

For further media information contact Rod Chester: 07 3138 9449, [rod.chester@qut.edu.au](mailto:rod.chester@qut.edu.au)

### **About**

The Centre for Air pollution, energy and health Research (CAR) is a National Health and Medical Research Council Centre for Research Excellence in Australia. It is the only group of its kind nationally to bring together researchers focusing on the impacts of air pollution and new versus traditional forms of energy on our health. Our vision for a healthier community is the driving force behind our research.

