



Steve Dimopoulos MP

Minister for Environment
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MBR-241000961

Professor Kate Auty
Chair
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Dear Professor Auty

Kate

STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS: MINISTERIAL GUIDANCE FOR ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY VICTORIA

I am pleased to provide you with my expectations for the Governing Board and staff of Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) to guide EPA's annual planning processes.

Legislative framework

As Minister for Environment, I am responsible for administering the *Environment Protection Act 2017* (EP Act), *Pollution of Waters by Oil and Noxious Substances Act 1986* and the *National Environment Protection Council (Victoria) Act 1995*. This statement should be read in the context of the objectives, obligations and functions outlined in these Acts as amended. This statement should also be read in the context of any other legislative and non-legislative obligations on the EPA.

Emerging risks and priorities

Based on consultation with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and EPA, about the government's priorities and emerging risks, my expectations for EPA are as follows.

Embedding a preventative regulatory approach

The EP Act empowers the EPA to prevent harm to human health and the environment from pollution and waste. I therefore consider that monitoring and proactively addressing these risks of harm should be a key focus for the EPA to ensure the protection of the health of Victoria's community and environment.

It is my expectation that the EPA embed a focus on reducing the key risks of harm for which it is responsible, delivering a preventative regulatory approach, including in its monitoring and prioritisation of risks, design and delivery of effective interventions, and evaluation and communication of outcomes.

The Victorian Government maintains its zero tolerance for unsafe waste management practices. I expect that the EPA will continue to improve its use of strengthened environment protection legislation and work across government to address illegal activities and combat waste crime in Victoria. This includes the growing issue of illegal waste dumping, which can have environmental, economic and amenity impacts on local communities.

Strengthening a culture of environment protection

The General Environmental Duty and other duties in the EP Act make it clear that all businesses and individuals have a role in protecting the environment by reducing the impact of their activities.

It is my expectation that the EPA equips business and the community to understand the condition of their environment, and their role in its protection. This may include broad approaches to education and communication with the community and small businesses, to raise awareness and support compliance with the environment protection duties.

Housing Statement implementation

The delivery of 2.24 million new homes by 2051 is a key priority of the Victorian Government. This will require effective coordination by State Government entities, and with local government. To this end, I commend the EPA on the establishment of the Office of Land Renewal, to support delivery of new homes for Victorians, in particular the safe remediation of former industrial and contaminated land for brownfields and infill development.

It is my expectation that the EPA continues to take a problem-solving approach to its regulatory role, providing technical advice, streamlining processes and utilising the powers and tools in the EP Act to ensure the development of land for housing and other beneficial community use is timely, efficient and does not result in unacceptable risks to human health and the environment.

Risk of harm from climate change

The Victorian Government is taking strong and lasting action to reduce Victoria's emissions and ensure communities, businesses and institutions are better prepared to deal with the impacts of climate change.

It is my expectation that the EPA exercises its powers and perform its duties and functions under the EP Act and *Climate Change Act 2017* and supports the government to achieve its climate change policy goals, including its interim and net zero emission reduction targets.

To achieve this outcome, it is my expectation that EPA develops a regulatory approach to respond to risks of harm from climate change through the EP Act permissioning framework and general environmental duty. The regulatory approach should include guidance to assist the community, businesses, and permission holders to understand their obligations as well as the EPA's role in responding to climate change.

Caring for Country and Traditional Owner Self-Determination

The Victorian Government has a commitment to Aboriginal Self-Determination, Treaty and Truth and Victoria's Traditional Owners have caring for Country responsibilities and commitments. The EP Act provides a new framework, including new tools for the prevention of harm and protection of human health and the environment. It is my expectation that the EPA will continue to embed Traditional Owner cultural values as part of the state of knowledge for the protection of the environment. To achieve this outcome, it is my expectation that EPA will work to achieve long-term sustainable collaborations with Traditional Owners and co-design initiatives that ensure the opportunities of the EP Act support the prevention of harm to Country from pollution and waste and the healing of Country where harm has occurred.

Organisational improvement

As the EPA enters year three of its 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, I understand that it is embedding the organisational changes needed to deliver the intent and opportunities of the EP Act.

Within this context, I expect EPA to continue to strengthen its organisational performance, prioritising continuing to develop leadership and regulatory capability, an inclusive culture and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of its staff.

It is my expectation that EPA will continue to demonstrate good fiscal management and apply contemporary business strategies and operations that ensure compliance with all requirements. I also anticipate that the EPA will continue to develop appropriate frameworks and systems to achieve its outcomes and instill and demonstrate continuous improvement.

Working collaboratively


While appreciating and valuing the independent regulatory role of the EPA, I expect the organisation will continue to work collaboratively with other entities in the environment portfolio, and across the Victorian Government more generally, to support the delivery of legislative requirements and Victorian Government priorities.

Finally, I request the EPA to incorporate these expectations into its annual delivery plans and include milestones for when the EPA will meet these expectations. These plans should also include appropriate milestones to review the content of this letter and to advise me when it needs to be updated or renewed.

I look forward to working with you and the Governing Board to meet these priorities and emerging risks.

If you have any questions about this matter, please contact Sebastian Chapman Executive Director Land and Environment Policy, DEECA on 03 9637 8372 or at sebastian.chapman@deeca.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



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Member for Oakleigh
Minister for Environment

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