



November 23, 2006

To: Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs

Re: Review of Air Quality Objectives - Meeting on Monday, 27 November 2006

Dear Honourable members:

The purpose of Air Quality Objectives (AQO) are

- to establish how sick our society wants our children to be
- to set a target so a plan can be implemented to achieve the objective
- to prevent current bad practices continuing without being improved
- to provide direction to evaluate which new methods will meet the target

You may ask, “If we are failing our current objectives, why make the task even harder by giving ourselves a more difficult goal?” We compare the Government to a very bright child who is failing in class. Do you push her harder, challenge her more and give her the tools to succeed, or stand by and let her fail. The cost of failure, in this case, is measured in sick children and early death.

We say push the Government harder. With the correct policy framework to create a level playing field and demand compliance using the existing licensing mechanisms for vehicles, power plants, development and existing building energy controls systems, we can establish standards used in other highly developed cities that have been proven to not only to stop the decline in air quality, but actually improve it and the economy as well. There is no downside to setting our AQOs based on health.

It is claimed that there is not enough “public support” to clean up the air. This is false. The “support” is actually being suppressed. For example, traffic can be reduced significantly in the Central to Causeway Bay corridor, and the cross Harbour Tunnel. Yet, the Government refuses to allow the consultant on the Road Congestion Charging project to canvas the public for support, determine the pre-conditions for support, and then propose a solution that the public has already said they will accept. This needs to change.

In conclusion, the AQOs need to be set such that our health is protected. To hide behind the failures of the last nine years is to condemn the people to sickness with no hope for the future or the future of their children. The people and our elected representatives must require our Government to set the goal based on health – and to drive the Government – just as you drive an underperforming but bright child - to achieve the goal - no excuses.

Clear The Air